

FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

STUDY ONE

Let's Get Reacquainted with the Spirit

Selected Scriptures

This series explores the real side of the Spirit of God and some of the unspoken dimensions of His work—things that will alter our course in a sin-cursed world.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN Christian art, the Holy Spirit is represented as a flame. The symbol recalls the day of Pentecost when “what looked like flames or tongues of fire” settled on the believers in the upper room and filled them with power (Acts 2:3).

It's a fitting image, because, like flames in a furnace that forge iron into steel, the Spirit has power to transform our lives. Flames also give heat and light—like those in a crackling campfire that warm us on a cold night and protect us from predators. So also, the Spirit reassures us with His presence and keeps us safe from the evil one.

And yet, many believers feel unsure and uninformed about the Holy Spirit. Bible lessons on the Trinity tend to spotlight the Father and the Son and leave the Spirit in the shadows. Also, we intuitively know how to relate to the heavenly Father because we have earthly fathers, and we identify with the Son who lived among us. But how do we relate to a flame? Even His name, Holy *Spirit*, conveys the idea of a wispy phantom who is hard to grasp or get close to.

This *Searching the Scriptures* series is designed to clear the fog of mystery surrounding the Holy Spirit and help you know Him personally, even intimately. For too long, He has been consigned to the pages of theological textbooks, when His true place is in the everyday, dishes-and-laundry part of our lives. It's time to draw near to the Spirit, to invite the flame of His empowering presence to warm our hearts, and to learn to walk with Him as our closest companion and most trusted spiritual guide.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Ready to take your first step? As you open the Word, invite the Holy Spirit to illumine your heart with His truth. You may wish to pray as Pastor Chuck Swindoll prays before he studies the Word: "I often pray, 'Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.'"¹ Write your prayer below if you wish.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Searching the Scriptures is a four-step Bible study method. In the observation phase, we look at what the biblical passage says. The next phase is interpretation, in which we seek to understand the meaning the author intended for his audience. Correlation draws on similar passages to understand our passage within the broader biblical context. Finally, application answers the practical question, "How should I respond to the truth I learned?"

For helpful instruction from Pastor Chuck Swindoll on this method, consult the Insight for Living Ministries online instructional web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)." There, you can also follow the [link to purchase a copy](#) of Pastor Chuck's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.



Observation: Discovering the Holy Spirit's Significance

Scripture study begins by reading the passages carefully and writing down what you see. Take your time. Notice who is speaking and the setting. View the action, commands, statements, and events as logical building blocks that form a foundation upon which to build your interpretation.



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His Permanent Presence with Us—John 14:1–17

On the night before His crucifixion (the *time*) in the upper room (the *place*), Jesus told His disciples He would be leaving them soon (the *message*). The thought of losing their Master must have unsettled the disciples, who had never left His side. But the Lord calmed their nerves with what promises in *John 14:1–3*?

Jesus reassured them He was their direct link to the Father—“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me” (John 14:6)—because He was “in the Father” and the Father was in Him (14:11).

According to *14:16–17*, what did Jesus say He would ask the Father to give His followers in His absence? Observe these verses closely and write down what you notice about the name of the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ promises regarding the Spirit as a gift to His followers, including us.

We will never know a moment in our lives when we don't have the Spirit. We come to know Christ, and part of that marvelous spiritual package is the presence of the Holy Spirit.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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His Unparalleled Dynamic among Us—Acts 1:4–8

After His death and resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples in His resurrected body and “talked to them about the Kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Just before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave them what final instructions, according to [Acts 1:4–8](#)?

The power that was at creation, the power that was there when the Red Sea opened, the power that was evidenced in the lives of the prophets, the power that brought Christ back from the dead—that power will be ours! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Dynamic Nature of the Holy Spirit's Power

In the interpretation phase, let's seek to understand the meaning of the Greek word for “power” in [Acts 1:8](#), *dunamis*. It wasn't physical strength to break iron bars or political control to bend others' wills. Rome ruled by flexing that kind of power. No, Jesus promised *dunamis*, from which is derived the English word, *dynamic*.

If not physical or political, what is the nature of the power Jesus promised? Why is this kind of “dynamic” essential for Jesus' followers to carry on His ministry? Dig into your Bible study resources to discover the meaning of *dunamis* within the context of Acts 1:8. You can use a commentary on Acts or [The Swindoll Study Bible](#). For an online resource, consult [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#).



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The divine agent of this power is the Holy Spirit. We speak and act in His *dunamis*, not our own. Why does the Spirit enable us, according to *Acts 1:8; 4:31* and *2 Corinthians 4:5–7*?

Summarize in a sentence or two what you've learned about the Spirit's power.

The power was the unparalleled aid which the Holy Spirit granted. Jesus' followers had ability beyond their own natural-born strength, and that is the power you have been given.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Relying on the Spirit's Power

In correlation, we look for supportive passages to enhance our understanding. Brilliant and capable, the apostle Paul could have leaned on his own intellect and skill in his ministry. Instead, what did Paul say he depended on, according to *1 Corinthians 2:1–5*? What were his reasons for not relying on his own strength?



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In the next *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll examine other examples of the Spirit's dynamic. We'll see the Spirit energizing the witness of early Christians, sustaining them under persecution, and emboldening them to face accusers unafraid. But this otherworldly dynamic isn't confined to the past; it's just as active in us today . . . if we choose to fly closer to the flame.

The Spirit's power gives us a sense of invincibility and confidence, regardless of the odds against us. It's the kind of dynamic we need in a world like ours. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Removing the Resistance between Us and the Spirit

To come closer to the Spirit, we may need to get past a few barriers. The first barrier is *the barrier of the fearful unknown*. Have you felt fearful about knowing the Holy Spirit more intimately? If so, what are your fears?

Another barrier may be *the wall of traditional limitations*. We may need to challenge some of the assumptions our religious tradition has taught us about the Holy Spirit. What messages about the Spirit have shaped your thinking and perhaps led you to keep the Spirit at a distance?



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In addition, we may need to overcome *the obstacle of personal excuses*. It may seem safer to discuss the Holy Spirit in theological terms than to risk getting to know Him intimately. We can always find excuses for not making ourselves vulnerable. What could be holding you back from a closer walk with the Spirit?

What do you want to see happen in your life through your biblical study of the Holy Spirit?

So far, we've learned from Scripture that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, never leaves us, and leads us into all truth (John 14:16–17). Not only does the Spirit *indwell* us, He also *enables* us to carry on Christ's ministry as witnesses (Acts 1:8).

We'll build in these truths in coming studies, but before going any further, we urge you to make them personal. Read the previous paragraph again replacing "us" with "me." Now, slip these truths in your heart, and rehearse them in your mind through the day. Your walk with the Spirit is just getting started.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for giving me such a wonderful gift. Nothing on this earth compares to the indwelling and enabling presence of the Holy Spirit. Give me the courage to grow closer to Him and know Him as my dearest companion on my path through life. Fill my heart with the joy of walking in step every day with the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.

