

FAITH
A STUDY IN RELIANCE



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Romans 14:23

STUDY THEME

As Christians, we trust a God who has revealed Himself paradoxically as a three in one being — Father, Christ, and Holy Spirit. We demonstrate our trust by acknowledging, seeking, trusting, and thanking God in every area of life. This trust leads us into purposeful relationship with other believers within the local church — a visible expression and representation of the global invisible Church. This booklet will explore the four elements of our faith: The Father, The Christ, The Holy Spirit, and The Church.

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SERIES PREFACE

You know those negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, or habits that are seemingly impossible to overcome? Or, how about those relationships and circumstances where you feel completely trapped, powerless, or out-of-control?

For me, this was a deep-rooted bitterness toward my dad, an inability to share my feelings, and a 20-year addiction to pornography. My wife, Lacey, struggled with fear that fed an explosive anger producing a need to control people and circumstances.

**If our heart and mind are poisoned with feelings of
being unloved or unsafe, we hurt.**

We are all created in the image of God. This identity is intrinsic. However, it can be distorted and devalued. When we feel loved and safe in our relationships, our heart and mind feel at peace. If our heart and mind are poisoned with feelings of being unloved or unsafe, we hurt. This pain affects how we see ourselves and others. As a result, we hurt others while continuing to hurt ourselves. This devalued and distorted identity is what led Lacey and I into our negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. It wasn't until we were set free from our distorted and devalued identities that we were able to truly live a joy-filled life.

**We are all created in the image of God. This
identity is intrinsic.**

We truly believe that every person has the potential to live a life of freedom and overflowing joy as Jesus promised. That is why our vision is to see Christians live free, joy-filled lives. The power of one person's story of freedom and victory is life-changing. It is the best evangelistic tool a Christian has. Our mission is to encourage and equip Christians to live free of those negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits and empower them to live joy-filled in every relationship and circumstance. Our hope is that Christians — through their life and story —

would be the best testimony the world has of God's transforming love, grace, mercy, and truth. This is the prayer behind the *Christian Living Study Series*.

On behalf of my wife Lacey and me, it is an honor to be able to share these studies with you. They are the result of our combined heartache, healing, education, and transformation. To get the most out of this series, we recommend that you participate in each study in two ways:

First, choose a partner. Due to the nature of the questions, we recommend, if married, your partner be your spouse. If you're not married, choose a partner of the same gender. You and your partner will independently begin each study with prayer. Then, work through the study — reading the main Scriptures (*indicated by* ) and text. Finally, together prayerfully discuss the *Response Questions* (*indicated by* ) and implement the *Next Steps*.

Second, journal. Personal journaling through the lessons will help solidify what the Holy Spirit is doing in your heart and mind. Write out your answers and discussions to the *Response Questions*; your experience with the *Next Steps*; and your own thoughts, objections, and struggles with the studies. This journal will be a record of God's grace and transformation in your life, mind, and heart.

While each study booklet may stand-alone, the *Christian Living Study Series* is a process — a linear progression of theology and application. With this in mind, we recommend going through the booklets in order. A full list of studies is available in the back of this booklet.

Our prayer is that you would be vulnerable — challenging yourself to openly discuss and answer the questions with your partner. Also, that you would allow the Holy Spirit to convict, comfort, and encourage you — empowering you to accomplish Jesus' mission for God's glory, other's good, and for your joy.



Your friend,

NATHANAEL P. STEEL

THE FATHER



1 Peter 1:13-21

With any study of God, we must first reconcile that we will not — nor are capable of — fully understanding God’s existence. It is beyond the scope of our finite human experience. However, we can understand, in a limited capacity, the aspects of His character and purpose that He has chosen to reveal. He has revealed these characteristics for one purpose. He is a good and loving Father who desires relationship with us, His creation.¹



What is your foundational view of God (i.e., “God is ____.”)? What factors, outside of the Bible, contributed to this view of God? Explain.

TRI-UNITY



Romans 11:33-36

In studying God, we must begin with the starting premise that as finite beings we are incapable of fully knowing and understanding the infinite, incomprehensibility of who God is. There are two laws that we must accept before we examine God:

1. GOD IS INFINITE

God, the Creator of everything, is infinite. This means He is limitless in space, time, extent, or size — impossible to measure, calculate, or quantify. Creation is always lower than it’s creator. Everything God creates, by the very nature of being created, is finite.² With this in mind, logically we cannot fully comprehend the fullness of God.

¹ Luke 11:13; James 1:17; Romans 8:15; Matthew 6:9

² 1 Corinthians 2:9-11; 8:6; 11:12b; Colossians 1:16-17

“We are talking about God.
What wonder is it that you do not understand?
If you do understand then it is not God.”³”

~
St. Augustine

Nor can we fully understand the completeness of His character and attributes, or the extent of His will or purposes.⁴ The perfect unity of God’s attributes is far beyond the scope of human experience or even that of other spirit beings (i.e. angels, demons, etc). God eternally exists and functions in a holy, perfectly integrated yet infinitely complex way.

2. WE ARE FINITE

By nature of being created, we must accept that we are limited in our understanding, experience, and abilities. Any discussion we have or conclusion we come to, with regard to God, will always be inadequate. In our finiteness, we must be willing to concede and accept that there will be questions left unanswered. It is at this very point that our intellect must concede to our faith. Additionally, God, in His sovereignty, has chosen not to reveal Himself fully. In His infinite wisdom, He knows that we are incapable of fully understanding or comprehending Him.⁵ In addition to our finiteness, we have chosen to habitually incline our minds away from understanding what God has revealed about Himself. We have inhibited the ability He gave us to know Him. We’ve chosen to distort, devalue, pervert, and confuse the truth of who He is.⁶



Matthew 28:19⁷

The most fundamental theological doctrine of Christianity is that God is one and that there is only one God.⁸ God eternally exists in three persons who are:

³ St. Augustine (author), Vernon J. Bourke (translator), *Confessions (Fathers of the Church Patristic Series)*. (The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), pg.11

⁴ Isaiah 40:13; 55:8-9; 1 Corinthians 2:16

⁵ Deuteronomy 29:29

⁶ Romans 1:18-26

⁷ Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 6:8; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 4:4-6

⁸ Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5

CO-ETERNAL IN BEING & NATURE

God has always existed. God is an eternal being never created and never extinguished.

CO-EQUAL IN POWER & HONOR

Though distinct in forms, the Godhead exhibits the same divine nature, attributes, and perfections. God is all-powerful (**omnipotent**), all-knowing (**omniscient**), and all-present (**omnipresent**).

DIFFERING ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The distinctions of the Godhead are revealed through the varying functions and tasks for which each person is responsible.

Persons, in this sense, do not mean different people. This belief is tri-theism (or three gods). These persons, however, can be seen and understood by relationship and distinction to one another. These three persons are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This belief of the three-in-oneness of God is called the Trinity.⁹ The word, **trinity**, comes from the Latin word *trinitas* which means three united in one or tri-unity. While the belief was widely held before the 4th century, the doctrine was affirmed as orthodoxy in 325CE at the Council of Nicaea.¹⁰ In light of God being three persons, it is more accurate to say that God is personal rather than refer to Him as a person.¹¹ The perfect relationship within God means that He does not need — as is necessary for completion or wholeness — relationship with us. Rather, it is out of this perfect and complete relationship and union within Himself that He created us as relational beings.



Genesis 1:26¹²

God exists as three distinct persons with differing yet perfectly unified wills. God created us in His image and likeness — with three distinct parts. These parts consist of our body, our soul, and our mind. The wills associated with each part, however, conflict with one another as a result of our cursed flesh.¹³

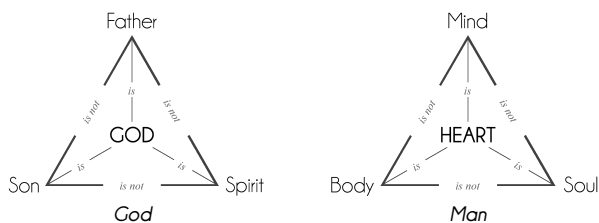
⁹ The Trinity can be seen in the following passages: Genesis 1:27; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 3:13-17; 28:19-20; John 14:16; 16:13-15; 20:21-22; Romans 8:9; 15:16, 30; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 2:18; 4:4-6; 1 Timothy 6:13-16; Jude 20-21

¹⁰ Lois Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. (Eerdmans Publishing, 1938), pg.82

¹¹ Ibid, pp.85

¹² Mark 12:28-30

¹³ Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12



This diagram illustrates how we are, limitedly, the best analogy of the Triune God. It is not meant to correlate the Father with our Mind, the Son with our Body, etc. It is simply a visual aid in seeing the three distinct parts with which God has created us. For more information regarding our human nature, see the *Salvation Booklet* and *Identity Booklet*.



In studying God, what is one question or frustration that you have regarding who He is, His character, or His purpose? Are you okay not having that issue resolved? What aspect of God, His one-ness or His tri-unity, do you struggle with the most? Why?

GOD'S ESSENTIAL NATURE



Leviticus 11:44

God has many characteristics or attributes that emanate from His essential nature. **Attributes** are essential characteristics or personality traits that make up who someone is. There are two primary categories for God's attributes:¹⁴

1. COMMUNICABLE

These attributes are those that God limitedly shares with us — humans created in His image and likeness. Examples of these include mental (e.g., knowledge, wisdom, truth, etc.), moral (e.g., good, love, mercy, peace, jealousy, wrath, righteousness, etc.), and purpose (e.g., will, freedom, etc.).

¹⁴ *The ESV Study Bible™, ESV® Bible.* (Crossway, 2008), pg.2511-2512, *The ESV Study Bible™* has, in my opinion, one of the greatest articles regarding the nature of God, His attributes, and His nature.

2. INCOMMUNICABLE

These attributes are those that God alone possesses. Examples of these include independence (e.g., self-sufficient, unity, etc.), immutability (e.g., unchanging, fixed, etc.), and eternal (e.g., self-existing, all-present, etc.).

Although God has many characteristics or attributes, they all emanate — or receive their uniqueness — out of God's essential nature or core attribute, holiness.¹⁵ **Holiness** is the quality of being altogether separate, perfectly different, and fundamentally unique from what is temporal or imperfect. His holiness is what makes everything He is and does perfect, unique, and fundamentally different than His creation.



What attribute of God do you find most difficult to accept? Explain. What attribute of God do you find easy to accept? Explain. How is your relationship with your biological father? In light of this relationship, how might this influence your view of God and His attributes? Explain.

THE FATHER'S HEART



1 Chronicles 16:34¹⁶

Everything the Father does is motivated by His ability to be glorified.¹⁷ To **Glorify** someone means that they are considered worthy — based on their character — to be acknowledged, trusted, sought after, and thanked. The primary means by which He receives glory is in us living free, joy-filled lives. Our joy is ultimately found in our receiving God's immeasurable, unconditional, never stopping, never giving up, always and forever sacrificial love for us.¹⁸ His desire is that we would remain in relationship with Him — or be reconciled back to Him — thereby experiencing a truly fulfilled life.¹⁹

¹⁵ Exodus 3:5; 15:11; 26:33-34; Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:1-2; 20:7; Joshua 5:15; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Chronicles 30:27; Psalm 99:9; Isaiah 5:16; 6:3; 8:12-15; 41:14; 57:15; Luke 4:34; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 1 Peter 1:15-16; Revelation 3:7; 4:8; 15:4

¹⁶ 2 Chronicles 5:13; Psalm 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1-4, 29; 136:1-26

¹⁷ Romans 1:23; 11:36; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 1 Peter 4:11

¹⁸ Sally Lloyd-Jones and Jago, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*. (ZonderKidz, 2007).

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 30:11-20; John 15:7-11; Romans 8:28; Galatians 5:1



**When is it most difficult for you to feel
unconditionally loved by God?**

CONCLUSION

God is infinitely unknowable. Yet, He has chosen to limitedly reveal Himself, His character, and His purpose to us. God, our Father, longs for deep personal and intimate relationship with us, His children. Only in our acknowledgement, seeking after, trusting, and thanking Him do we find overwhelming unconditional love, joy, and fulfillment.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above  questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

Choose one attribute of God you struggle with or find difficult to understand. Study it out in Scripture. How might this attribute affect your view and relationship with God?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Exploring Our Christian Faith

W.T. Purkiser

Beacon Hill, ©1978

On Who Is God? (A Book You'll Actually Read)

Mark Driscoll

Crossway Books, ©2008

THE SON



Galatians 5:1-12

Jesus is our representative, restorer, and redeemer. As God, He forgave sin. As man, He overcame sin. As the God-Man, He mediates before God the Father, on our behalf for our sin. It is only by trusting in who Jesus is and what He accomplished through His life, death, and resurrection that we are free from both the penalty of sin and the power of sin.



What aspect of Jesus, His divinity or His humanity, do you struggle with the most? Why?

JESUS' RESPONSIBILITIES



John 1:1-5¹

Jesus is co-eternal in being and nature, co-equal in power and honor, and has the same attributes and perfections as the Father. Jesus — as the God-Man — however, has a different role and responsibility than the Father. Jesus' responsibilities are:

1. REPRESENTATIVE

Jesus, as God, is the Father's representative on earth to humans.² God made Himself known to humankind through Him. Jesus, as human, is also our representative in heaven to God.³ Created exactly as we are, He identified with our suffering and temptation.

¹ Matthew 1:23; 3:17; 17:5; 26:63-65; Mark 1:24, 34; 10:17-18; 14:61-64; Luke 4:33-34; 4:40-41; John 5:18; 6:38, 41-46; 8:58-59; 10:30-33; 14:6; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; 3:4; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20; 2 Peter 3:18

² John 1:1-18; 14:8-14; Philippians 2:5-6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Corinthians 10:1-5; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Hebrews 1:3

³ 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 2:5-18; 4:14-5:10; 9:23-28; 1 John 2:1

2. RESTORER

Jesus, as God, restores our relationship to the Father.⁴ He took upon Himself the wrath of God so that we could have unhindered relationship with the Father once again. Jesus, as human, restores our physical nature to its original state.⁵ He renews our mind in the Spirit and will renew our bodies in the resurrection.

3. REDEEMER

Jesus, as the God-Man, redeemed us from the demands of the law.⁶ His death purchased for us, our freedom from sin and our cursed physical body. He redeemed us from the enemy's power over us.



With what negative thoughts or actions do you feel controlled by?

JESUS' ROLES



Matthew 5:17-18; John 19:30

Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Old Testament offices (or roles) of Prophet, Priest, and King. These Old Testament roles foreshadowed the Messiah.⁷

1. PROPHET

A true prophet of God proclaims God's truth to people. Those in Jesus' day expected the Messiah to fulfill this prophetic role. As the true Prophet, Jesus is the ultimate source of truth.⁸ Jesus' prophetic authority is greater than that of earlier prophets in the Old Testament in that He spoke for God as God.



When is it difficult for you to hear the voice of God?

⁴ Romans 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Colossians 1:15-23

⁵ Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:49-58; Ephesians 2:5; 4:21-24; Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:9-17

⁶ Romans 3:24; 8:23; Galatians 3:13; 4:5; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 2:14-15; 9:15

⁷ *The ESV Study Bible™, ESV® Bible*. (Crossway, 2008), pg.2522-2524

⁸ John 1:1-18; 14:6-14; Hebrews 3:1-4:13

2. PRIEST

A priest represents the people before God and represents God before the people. He was to atone for sin and mediate between God and the people. As the perfect Priest, Jesus stands in the presence of God as both sacrifice and mediator.⁹ Jesus' priestly role is greater than that of Old Testament priests in that He is both God and Man.



When is it difficult for you to entrust your sin to God? When is it difficult to entrust the sins of others (especially toward you or someone you love) to Him?

3. KING

The kings of the Old Testament had limited reign, authority, and land. They were to rule the God's Kingdom and people on God's behalf. As the anointed King, Jesus sits on the right hand of God until He returns as the crowned King.¹⁰ Jesus' kingly role is greater than that of Old Testament kings in that His kingdom is forever. It began with John proclaiming the Kingdom's presence and will continue to fill the whole earth until Jesus' returns to reign.¹¹



When is it difficult for you to submit to the will of God?

JESUS' HUMANITY



Colossians 1:15-20 and 1 Timothy 2:5-6

Jesus is and always has been God. In the first century CE, Jesus added to His divinity, humanity.¹² He lived as we live. He suffered as we suffer. He was tempted as we are tempted. Yet, He chose not to sin. To be a truly accurate and completely effective representative, restorer, and redeemer of humanity, Jesus had to be and have the same experience and nature as us. This section will exclusively address Jesus' humanity. The following are ways in which Jesus was exactly human:

⁹ Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14-5:10; 7:1-13; 9:10-18

¹⁰ Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:31-35; Acts 2:32-35; Mark 1:15; Philippians 2:9-11

¹¹ Matthew 10:7; 11:12; 13:1-50 (cf. Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45; Haggai 2:20-23)

¹² John 1:1-18

DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS



Luke 2:52

Jesus, in His humanity, had to learn, mature, and develop physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Jesus cognitively developed through personal experience and interactions with His environment. He learned in progressive stages through these interactions.

“[Jesus] grew. What that means is that he had to learn how to do things... One of the ways we learn how to do things is we don’t get it right the first time. We fail. It’s not immoral. It’s not sinful. It’s not ungodly. It’s part of your humanity.”

~

Pastor Mark Driscoll

Jesus developed culturally and behaviorally through interactions with other members of His society. This influenced how He thought and behaved. Jesus physical body (e.g., hormones, brain development, cognitive processing, skin, bones, organs, blood, etc.) was exactly human. As a result of the curse and sharing Mary’s DNA, Jesus had a body that could inherit or develop diseases, succumb to gestational issues or chemical imbalances, and ultimately, die. His gestation process, birth, infancy, toddlerhood, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood were the same as every human (except that of Adam and Eve).¹³

MATURITY OF DESIRES



Hebrews 5:7-10

Jesus, in His humanity, had the same needs and desires as we do. As He matured, He learned to discern between trusting God and trusting Himself. Jesus matured physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. He matured from trusting Himself and others to trusting God alone. Jesus fulfilled these God-given physical needs and desires through trusting the Father.

¹³ Isaiah 7:10-17; John 1:14; Luke 2:39-40; Romans 1:3; 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Colossians 1:22; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:10-18; 1 John 4:2

“Luke is not afraid to tell us Jesus matured. Which means there was actually times in his life he was immature. Not immature for who he was, [but] immature for who he was going to be... Jesus matured. What’s interesting is how often we think that a perfect twelve year old would act like a forty year old.”

~
Pastor Bill Clem

While Jesus never developed ungodly, sinful, and destructive cravings, He was thoroughly tempted. Through overcoming the temptation to fulfill God-given needs and desires through selfish or self-seeking methods, Jesus became our example and helper when we are tempted. Growing up, He built habits that encouraged a trusting relationship with His Heavenly Father.¹⁴

EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT



Philippians 2:6-8

Jesus, in His humanity, did not rely upon His deity or His humanity to minister and live. Jesus revealed His deity only to forgive sin and declare the authority by which He taught. He did not cling to His deity. Made in everyway as we are, Jesus lived His earthly life submitted to the Holy Spirit. He trusted and was empowered by the Holy Spirit for life and ministry. We have the same ability that Jesus had to trust the Father.¹⁵



When is it difficult for you to trust that Jesus was created, lived, and was tempted exactly like you? Why? What is the most encouraging aspect of knowing Jesus can identify with us in every respect?

¹⁴ Matthew 26:39, 42, 44 (see also John 5:30; 6:38); Luke 4:1-13; Hebrews 4:14-16; James 1:13-15; Romans 6:6 (see also Galatians 5:24); Luke 5:16

¹⁵ Matthew 3:16; 12:28; Mark 2:8; 8:12; Luke 4:1, 14, 18-21; 10:21; John 6:63; 11:33; Acts 2:22; 10:38;

CONCLUSION

Jesus is both God and man. He added to Himself true human flesh and experience. Jesus is more than our example. He is our sinless representative before the Father. He restores our relationship with the Father and will restore our physical body when He returns. He is our sacrificial redeemer who empowers us to be victorious over Satan, sin, and death. Jesus, in every way, can relate, identify, and understand our pain and suffering; our joy and sorrow; our grief and shame. Jesus trusted and was empowered by the Holy Spirit to live victorious over sin. We too have the ability to trust the Holy Spirit and live empowered by Him to overcome sin.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above ❓ questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

Read the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. What passages highlight Jesus' divinity? What passages highlight Jesus' humanity? What passages reveal Jesus' reliance upon the Holy Spirit?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The Day I Was Crucified: As Told By Jesus the Christ

Gene Edwards

Deeper Life Publishers, ©2004

The Jesus I Never Knew

Philip Yancey

Zondervan, ©2002

THE SPIRIT



Galatians 5:16-26

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, unrighteousness, and rebellion. He empowers us with abilities that envision, equip, encourage, and empower the Church. Trusting the Holy Spirit will enable us to accomplish Jesus' mission and live empowered and equipped for life and ministry. It is through Him that Christians are able to be victorious through temptation.



What is your experience or understanding of the Holy Spirit? What, if anything, was taught about the Holy Spirit in the church you grew up in (if you attended church in your growing up years)? What, if anything, is taught about the Holy Spirit at the church you currently attend?

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S RESPONSIBILITIES



John 16:7-15

The Holy Spirit is co-eternal in being and nature, co-equal in power and honor, and has the same attributes and perfections as the Father. The Holy Spirit, however, has a different role and responsibility than the Father. The primary role of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life is that of conviction. **Conviction** is the Holy Spirit's voice revealing areas in our heart, mind, and life that are not fully trusting and submitted to God.¹ Fully trusting and submitting our heart, mind, and lives to Him enables us to live free, joy-filled lives in all circumstances. The various forms conviction takes is as follows:

¹ Romans 1:18-25; 14:23; Hebrews 11:6; Luke 14:26; Colossians 2:8-15

1. CONVICT OF SIN

Sin — or ungodliness — is simply our unwillingness to acknowledge, seek, trust, and thank God in our lives.² The Holy Spirit will convict us whenever we choose to ignore God's sovereign hand in our life.

2. CONVICT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Righteousness is living empowered by the Holy Spirit — fulfilling our God-given desires and needs in the most abundant, life-giving way.³ The Holy Spirit will convict us when we try to live without His power or in line with how He created us to live.

3. CONVICT OF JUDGMENT

Jesus, when He died on the cross, disarmed and condemned Satan. However, we can give the enemy power by believing his lies.⁴ The Holy Spirit will convict us of disagreeing with God's judgment of the enemy when we empower him through listening to and agree with his lies.



When is it difficult for you to agree with God that Jesus has defeated the enemy? How do you/could you trust the Holy Spirit to empower you in these difficult times?

THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS



1 Corinthians 12:1-11⁵

The Scriptures never give an exhaustive list of abilities that the Holy Spirit empowers us with. However, it does give some examples of how the Holy Spirit may empower someone in a unique way to fulfill God's mission and purpose. The "gifts" of the Holy Spirit are unique abilities that envision, equip, empower, and encourage us for life and ministry. **Grace** is defined as unearned or undeserved attention, support, or assistance. Grace, as it relates to abilities, is the natural or

² Deuteronomy 8:11-20; Romans 14:23; Galatians 2:16; 1 John 3:23

³ Acts 17:31; Romans 6:13; 8:5; Philippians 3:9; 1 Timothy 6:11

⁴ John 9:39; 12:30-32; Luke 10:17-20; Colossians 2:8-15; Hebrews 2:14-18; Revelation 12:7-12

⁵ Exodus 28:3; 31:1-11; 35:10, 25, 30-31; 36:1; 1 Kings 7:14; 2 Chronicles 2:11-16; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14:40; 1 Peter 4:10-11

supernatural God-given ability or capacity to do or to act. **God's Natural Grace** enables us to do or act because of our life's experience, natural abilities, or personality. This can also work through the things we are passionate about or activities that bring us life and enjoyment. **God's Supernatural Grace** is the Holy Spirit's empowerment beyond the scope of who we are or what we can naturally do. This can be an ability completely unique to who we naturally are or the enhancement of an ability we already possess. This also may include knowledge or wisdom that goes beyond our own natural experience. Expecting and trusting the Holy Spirit to work through us will enable us to glorify God.⁶



What abilities have others affirmed in you? How do you or could you purposefully encourage others? What specifically have others done or said that made you feel encouraged?

PERSPECTIVES OF THE ABILITIES



1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40

There are several perspectives that we must keep in mind with regard to the abilities empowered by the Holy Spirit. These perspectives will enable and encourage us to use these abilities with humble confidence. We do not limit the use of God's empowering abilities. Rather, God directs and guides these abilities as He wills.

1. ORIGINATE FROM THE TRINITY

The abilities that the Holy Spirit empowers us with are not unique to Him. They are qualities possessed by the Triune God. They proceed from God as He wills.⁷ This perspective will help guard against developing a hierarchy view of the Trinity; that is, viewing the Holy Spirit — or “the Gifts of the Holy Spirit” — more superior than that of Jesus or the Father. God is the one who works all things according to His will — including spiritual abilities.⁸

⁶ Ephesians 4:1-16; Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 9:12; 1 Corinthians 14:3; Hebrews 10:15

⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

⁸ Ephesians 1:11

2. NOT AN INDICATOR OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Spiritual abilities are given to all Christians regardless of spiritual understanding or maturity. Certain abilities are not the mark of spiritual growth, enlightenment, or maturity. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the mark of maturity.⁹

3. SUBMITTED TO CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Spiritual abilities do not supersede spiritual authority but rather are submitted to it. Spiritual abilities are used under the guidance, direction, and approval of church leadership.¹⁰

4. TESTED AGAINST GOD'S WILL

Spiritual abilities are not taken at face value or by popular opinion. We affirm God's will and the use of our abilities through Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason.¹¹

5. ACKNOWLEDGED AND AFFIRMED

Spiritual abilities are not to be ignored, denied, or rejected. We should desire to be filled and empowered with the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of others. We have to be willing to be used in ways that may be unusual or uncomfortable.¹²

6. FOCUS ON JESUS

Spiritual abilities are not focused upon or should bring attention to the one working in them. Attention drawn to a particular person, place, or feeling by an ability is the antithesis of the purpose in which the ability was given. Jesus and His Gospel will always be the focus.¹³



What is one example where you've seen spiritual gifts selfishly used/rejected? What is one example where you've seen spiritual gifts humbly, confidently, and accurately used?

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is what emanates out of a Christian's life. It is the measure by which our maturity may be evaluated.¹⁴

⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:7; see also Galatians 5:22-24

¹⁰ Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 14:26-40; Ephesians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:17; 2 Timothy 1:6-7

¹¹ 1 John 4:1; Matthew 24:5; Acts 20:29-30

¹² 1 Corinthians 12:11; Luke 11:14-16; Acts 10-11

¹³ 1 Corinthians 12:3, 12; John 15:26; Revelation 19:10; Luke 17:20-23

¹⁴ Galatians 5:16-26; Luke 6:43-45; Romans 6:22



Galatians 5:22-26

The extent to which we trust the Holy Spirit is evident in how we live and what we say. Fruit is the by-product of pruning. **Pruning** is the process of removing dead, fruitless, or excess characteristics, habits, and beliefs from our life. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.¹⁵ For a detailed explanation and application of the fruit of the Holy Spirit see the *Identity Booklet — Study Three: The New*.



What negative or destructive characteristics, habits, or beliefs do you believe God is currently trying to prune from your life?

God uses suffering as the means by which He prunes us.¹⁶ Suffering comes in three key forms:

TESTS

Tests reveal our capacity — what we know about who God is and what He has done. Failure in tests reveals a lack of understanding God's character and will.¹⁷

TRIALS

Trials reveal our quality — the motivation of our heart and the extent to which we trust God's character. Failure in trials reveals a lack of genuine submission to the Father.¹⁸

TEMPTATIONS

Temptations reveal our character — areas in our mind and heart that we have given the enemy access by not trusting God. Failure in temptation reveals a lack of love and trust in the Father, His character, or His design for us.¹⁹



How have you judged your own Christian maturity, by abilities or by fruit? Explain. How have you judged the Christian maturity of others, by abilities or by fruit? Explain.

¹⁵ Galatians 5:22-23; see also Romans 7:4; 8:5; Ephesians 5:9

¹⁶ John 15:1-2; Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4; Hebrews 2:10; 12:5-11

¹⁷ Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Hebrews 3:8; 11:17; James 1:3-8

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; James 1:12-15; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13

¹⁹ Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 1 Corinthians 10:6-14

CONCLUSION

Our hearts are neither good nor bad. Rather, our heart is a vacuum. What we focus on and fill our minds and hearts with will influence and affect the fruit we bear — our actions and words.²⁰ Acknowledging, seeking, trusting, and thanking the Holy Spirit will empower us to live free, joy-filled lives.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above ❓ questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

What habit could you implement into your life on a daily basis that would help remind and encourage you to acknowledge, seek, trust, and thank the Holy Spirit? When will you begin this new habit? Who will you ask to hold you accountable for the first 30 days while initially implementing this new habit?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit

Francis Chan and Danae Yankoski

David C. Cook, ©2009

The God I Never Knew: How Real Friendship with the Holy Spirit Can Change Your Life

Robert Morris

WaterBrook Press, ©2013

Holy Fire: A Balanced, Biblical Look at the Holy Spirit's Work in Our Lives

R.T. Kendall

Charisma House, ©2014

²⁰ Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 12:33-37; Galatians 5:16-24; Romans 8:5-8

THE CHURCH



Hebrews 10:24-25

The church is both global and local. This spiritual unseen global church is made up exclusively of every believer throughout the world — the Body of Christ. The physical representative of the global church is the local church. However, this local church is made up of both Christians and non-Christians. The local church meets together on a regular basis to be envisioned, equipped, encouraged, and empowered for Jesus' mission.



Who (either leader or otherwise), in a church you've attended, has hurt, wounded, or offended you? Explain. What affect, if any, did this have on your involvement or participation within the church? Was this conflict resolved? If so, how? If not, why?

THE CHURCH IS ESTABLISHED



Matthew 16:13-19

Jesus is the foundation of the Church. He is the Chief Pastor and Cornerstone of the Church.¹ He establishes, in general, the global, unseen Church, made up of all believers. He also establishes, in particular, the local, institutional church.²

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

The Keys of the Kingdoms is the Christian's authority and responsibility to proclaim and invite — through their words and actions — people into the Kingdom of God. People are free

¹ 1 Peter 5:4; Ephesians 2:20

² Revelation 1:17-20; 2:5

(loosed) from the Law and the enemy's entitlement when they are reconciled to the Father — receive the Gospel message. People are enslaved (bound) to the Law and the enemy when they reject the Gospel.³ The Kingdom of Heaven — that is, the global Church — is already established and has requirements to participate. We simply proclaim how to participate in that Kingdom. This participation in the Kingdom happens when people acknowledge, trust, submit, and thank God.



How are you purposefully living in the Kingdom of Heaven (freedom) for others to see? When is it most difficult for you to live in freedom?

THE GLOBAL CHURCH



Ephesians 5:22-33

The global Church is God's people scattered throughout the world. It is represented by the relationship of a husband and wife. Jesus is the loving sacrificial Husband. Collectively, the global Church is the submissive respectful Bride. An object or picture cannot be a symbol if it lacks meaning.⁴ God has given each of us meaning. The New Testament has several other symbols of our relationship with Him:

1. **Vine & Branches:**⁵ Jesus is the true Vine and we are the branches. The only way we can be life-giving and bear fruit is if we are connected to the vine.
 2. **Head & Body:**⁶ Jesus is the Head and we are the body. We live and thrive when we submit to Jesus, fulfilling our God-given needs and desires through His perfect design.
 3. **Shepherd & Sheep:**⁷ Jesus is the true Shepherd and we are the sheep. We can live in peace and rest when we trust and submit our lives to Him and receive His provision for us.
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³ Matthew 18:15-20. This is the most clear understanding of the Keys of the Kingdom especially in light of it being used in relation to church discipline. See also John 20:23

⁴ See Joshua 4. God told the Israelites the purpose and meaning behind the pile of rocks. It represented God's faithfulness and provision.

⁵ John 15:1-17

⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

⁷ John 10:1-21

The global Church in general and Christians in particular live in relationship and unity with one another through the power of the Holy Spirit. These relationships and unity represent to an un-reconciled world God's love, grace, mercy, and truth.



In what relationship is it difficult for you to be life-giving? When is it difficult for you to trust God's provision? In what circumstances is it difficult for you to rest and be at peace?

THE LOCAL CHURCH



Acts 2:42-47

The local church is God's people gathered in a common geographical location. We gather for unity in the Spirit, discipline in holiness, and we're sent out to fulfill the great commission by way of the great commandment.⁸ We meet together on a regular basis to do the following:

1. **Motivate each other.**⁹ **Motivation** means to cause something to happen, provoke, or confront. We are to reprove, rebuke, and exhort each other toward acknowledging, seeking, trusting, and thanking God. It is 'iron sharpening iron'.
2. **Encourage each other.**¹⁰ **Encouragement** means to give support, hope, or confidence. We are to build up one another. For those struggling in their life or faith, we are called to inspire and motivate them.
3. **Benefit from each person's spiritual abilities.**¹¹ Abilities from the Holy Spirit are for God's glory, other's good, and our joy. We can operate comfortably and grow confidently in these abilities in the local church. God gives us different gifts for the edification of the local church.

⁸ Ephesians 1:9, 22-23; 4:15; 5:23; Hebrews 3:1; Matthew 16:18; 1 Peter 5:4

⁹ 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 3:2; Galatians 2:22-14; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:15; Hebrews 3:13; see also Proverbs 27:17

¹⁰ Acts 2:24; Romans 1:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Timothy 5:1;

¹¹ Exodus 28:3; 31:1-6; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 14:26-33; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:7-11

4. **Generously Give.**¹² We are to be generous with our finances as God generously gave everything for us. This is not simply tithing — giving 10% of ones gross income. Rather, this is generous, grace-based giving as demonstrated throughout the Bible. New Testament teaching on giving is viewed in light of God's generosity toward us along with His command for us to sacrificially love others. The purpose of giving in the local church is to steward what is given for the common good of believers. It also provides a living for the leaders God has appointed over the church. The act of graciously giving financially is a representation of God graciously giving Jesus for our sins. Giving generously trusts God's provision over our abilities and effort.



How are you generously financially giving to your local church? Additionally, how are you generously financially giving to see the Gospel spread throughout the earth?

QUALITIES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

There are several qualities that the local church is marked by:

1. **Geographically beneficial for all attendees.** The local church should be appropriately and conveniently located.
2. **Organized under qualified leadership.** The local church is submitted to uniquely called and able men, as the global Church is submitted to Christ.
3. **Gathers regularly for preaching and singing.** The local church uses preaching as a means of God's encouragement, conviction, and comfort. Singing is a means to corporately worship to the preached Word of God.
4. **Observes the Biblical sacraments of baptism and communion.** The local church is joined together by through these symbols. **Baptism** is an outward, visible symbol of our trust in who Jesus is and our identification with what He has done. **Communion** is an outward, visible symbol of our trust in Jesus' death for our sin.

¹² Numbers 18:21-29; 28:1-29:40; Deuteronomy 12:10-11, 17-19; 14:22-29; Leviticus 19:9-10; 1 Chronicles 19:14; Nehemiah 10:28-39; Malachi 3:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:12-14; 16:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:16-8; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:1-15; Acts 2:46; Matthew 6:19-24; 12:41-44; 23:23; Luke 11:42; 21:1-4. The Old Testament actually required over 25% of one's income to go to the priests and temple.



When were you baptized? How often do you take communion to remember what Jesus has done for you?

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

To accomplish these tasks, Jesus has given us leadership and authority over the local churches to equip, guide, direct, protect, and build up the church.¹³



Matthew 18:15-20

To those who care and steward the local church, God has given authority to correct and rebuke unrepentant Christians — both leadership and church members — with the goal of their repentance. As ones who love the whole church, leadership must protect the congregation through this rebuke and discipline.¹⁴ The desire for the disciplined individual is that they would repent and be brought back into fellowship, love, grace, and mercy of the church.¹⁵ There are several key points that must be considered with regard to church discipline:

1. **The goal is for reconciliation.**¹⁶ Reconciliation can only happen when both repentance and forgiveness are extended and received. One may extend forgiveness but it may not be received. Likewise with repentance.
2. **Cares for the whole church.**¹⁷ Leaders protect and care for the whole church by disciplining those that are not living according to the Spirit.
3. **Only reserved for Christians.**¹⁸ Church discipline, operating with the 'Keys', is only for those who profess a relationship with Jesus. Non-believers do not accept or live by the Spirit. Therefore, they are not held to the same standards of living.

¹³ Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:5-2:15; 1 Peter 5:1-5

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; Galatians 6:1-10

¹⁶ Matthew 5:23-26

¹⁷ Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 5:1; Revelation 2:2

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 5:12-13



Have you seen church discipline enacted? If not, does this concern you in-light of this section? If so, was it done with grace and hope or harshness and hopelessness?

CONCLUSION

While the global Church is only made up of believers, the local church is made up of both Christians and non-Christians. The Bible does not describe or prescribe any order of worship in a church service. It is important, however, that local churches not be frustrating or distracting for both the Christians and non-Christians who may attend. They are to be Christ-focused, selfless, orderly, and purposeful.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above 🗣️ questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

What is one way you are interested in getting involved in your local church? When will you talk to a leader or pastor to sacrificially serve? Who will hold you accountable to this commitment to serve?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutional and Organized Religion

Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck
Moody Publishers, ©2009

Vintage Church: Timeless Truths and Timely Methods

Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears
Crossway Books, ©2008

FINAL JOURNAL THOUGHTS

1. In **Faith** (*The Father, The Christ, The Holy Spirit, The Church*), what passage of Scripture has been the most convicting or challenging for you? Explain. What passage of Scripture has been the most encouraging or empowering for you? Explain.
2. What content or discussions regarding **Faith** (*The Father, The Christ, The Holy Spirit, The Church*) have you disagreed with? Or, have difficulty accepting or understanding? Or, find most difficult to apply? Explain.
3. What content or discussions regarding **Faith** (*The Father, The Christ, The Holy Spirit, The Church*) have you agreed with? Or, find easy to accept and understand? Or, find easy to apply? Explain.
4. Specifically, how has *Study Two: The Christ*, affected your understanding of Jesus' humanity? What has been the most encouraging aspect of Jesus' humanity to you? Specifically, how has *Study Four: The Church*, encouraged you to be involved in your local church?
5. Since beginning the study on **Faith**, what area in your life (*actions & words*), mind (*thoughts & beliefs*), and heart (*motivations & passions*) have you noticed the most significant change — positive or negative? Explain. Or, in light of this study, what do you desire to change? Explain.
6. What was your favorite discussion with your partner? Why? What was your least favorite or most difficult discussion with your partner? Why? Who could you encourage with what you've learned from this unit? How will you do this?

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The power of one person's story of freedom and victory is life-changing. It is the best evangelistic tool a Christian has. Our mission is to encourage and equip Christians to live free of those negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits and empower them to live joy-filled in every relationship and circumstance. Our hope is that Christians — through their life and story — would be the best testimony the world has of God's transforming love, grace, mercy, and truth. This is the goal behind the *Christian Living Study Series*.

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NATHAN & LACEY STEEL were married in 2004. They met at Alaska Bible Institute, located in Homer, Alaska. Nathan graduated from ABI's Biblical Study Program in 2004 and Christian Ministry Program in 2006. Nathan was born with a genetic disease called Cystic Fibrosis. This disease led the Steels to adopting their

two girls, Lydia and Arianna. Through God's grace and provision, the Steels have shared Jesus' love, grace, mercy, and truth all over the world. Nathan and Lacey's vision is to *See Christians Live Free, Joy-Filled Lives*. They designed the *Christian Living Study Series* as a catalyst for one-on-one discipleship, a curriculum for church small groups, and a course for discipleship schools. They developed and teach the *Christian Living Course* at Alaska Bible Institute (ABI). ABI exists to *Train and Equip Christians for Life & Ministry*. You can find out more at www.AlaskaBible.org. For more information about the Steels, visit their website at www.NathanLaceySteel.com. They currently reside with their two girls in Homer, Alaska.

