

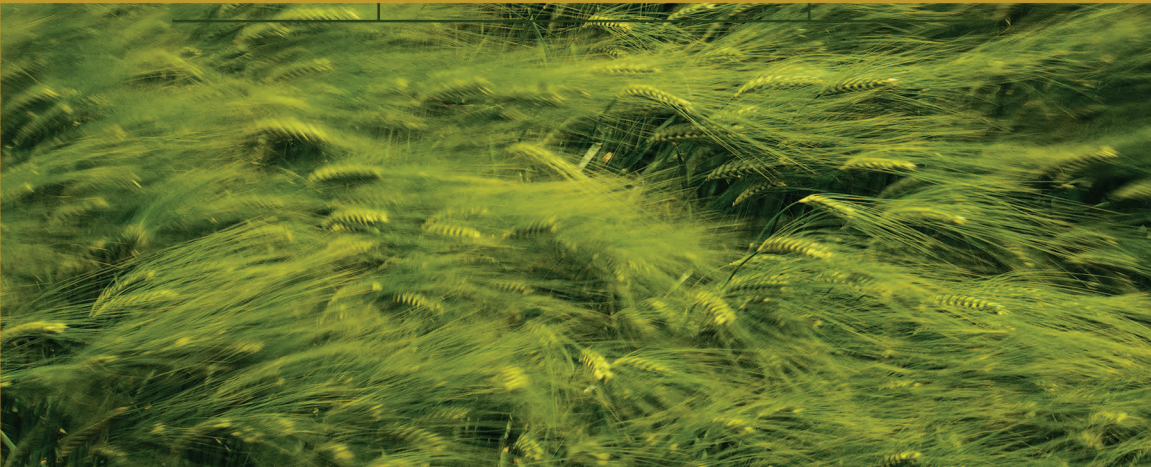
REVISED & EXPANDED

CHARLES F. STANLEY BIBLE STUDY SERIES



RELYING ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

DISCOVER WHO HE IS
AND HOW HE WORKS



CHARLES F. STANLEY

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THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

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CONTENTS

Introduction: Why We Need the Holy Spirit	5
LESSON 1 The Spirit-Filled Life is for Every Believer	7
LESSON 2 Who Exactly Is the Holy Spirit?	19
LESSON 3 Relying on the Holy Spirit's Power in Us	31
LESSON 4 Relying on the Holy Spirit's Presence	43
LESSON 5 Relying on the Holy Spirit in Prayer	55
LESSON 6 Avoiding Sin Against the Holy Spirit	67
LESSON 7 Reproducing Christ's Character in Us	79
LESSON 8 Relying on the Holy Spirit for Spiritual Gifts	91
LESSON 9 Putting It All Together on Spiritual Gifts	103
LESSON 10 Making Our Ministries Effective	115
LESSON 11 How to Acquire Spiritual Discernment	127
LESSON 12 Relying on the Holy Spirit for Daily Guidance	139
Leader's Guide	151

INTRODUCTION

WHY WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT

As Christians, we have each had an experience with the Holy Spirit—otherwise, we wouldn’t be Christians. But many believers today have been taught erroneously about the Holy Spirit. I know people who have taken one verse out of the Bible and built an entire theology of the Holy Spirit on it. For a proper understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and how He works in our lives, we must have the *whole counsel* of God’s Word on the subject.

As in all areas of study, we err if we base our believing on just one isolated concept. Truth in God’s Word is expressed repeatedly. Verses build on verses to create the whole meaning of God’s message to us. Our perspective is limited, and in error, unless we take in the whole of God’s truth. This is the goal of the study you are holding in your hands—to explore what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit so we can have a fuller experience with Him.

This book can be used by you alone or by several people in a small-group study. At various times, you will be asked to relate to the material in one of the following four ways.

First, what new insights have you gained? Make notes about the insights you have. You may want to record them in your Bible or in a separate journal. As you reflect on your new understanding, you are likely to see how God has moved in your life.

Second, have you ever had a similar experience? You approach the Bible from your own unique background . . . your own particular set

of understandings about the world that you bring with you when you open God's Word. For this reason, it is important to consider how your experiences are shaping your understanding and allow yourself to be open to the truth that God reveals.

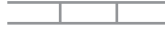
Third, how do you feel about the material? While you should not depend solely on your emotions as a gauge for your faith, it is important for you to be aware of them as you study a passage of Scripture and can freely express them to God. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit will use your emotions to compel you to look at your life in a different or challenging way.

Fourth, in what way do you feel challenged to respond or to act? God's Word may inspire you or challenge you to take a particular action. Take this challenge seriously and find ways to move into it. If God reveals a particular need that He wants you to address, take that as His "marching orders." God will empower you to do something with the challenge that He has just given you.

Start your Bible study sessions in prayer. Ask God to give you spiritual eyes to see and spiritual ears to hear. As you conclude your study, ask the Lord to seal what you have learned so you will not forget it. Ask Him to help you grow into the fullness of the nature and character of Christ Jesus.

I encourage you to keep the Bible at the center of your study. A genuine Bible study stays focused on God's Word and promotes a growing faith and a closer walk with the Holy Spirit in each person who participates.

LESSON 1



THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE IS FOR EVERY BELIEVER

IN THIS LESSON

Learning: What does the phrase “Spirit-filled life” actually mean?

Growing: Who can have a Spirit-filled life?

In all likelihood, the words “Spirit-filled life” evoke one of three responses in you. You may say, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” If this is your response, you are not alone. Many people don’t know much about the Holy Spirit . . . and they know even less about how He works in the life of every Christian.

You may say, “I’m not sure I want anything to do with the Holy Spirit. Everything I’ve heard about Him seems too divisive or too emotional for me.” If that’s your response, I have encouragement for

you. If you are a born-again Christian, you already have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, whether you have acknowledged Him or not! Furthermore, He is not divisive or invasive. People may be . . . but He is not.

You may say, “Oh, yes! The Spirit-filled life is the most wonderful life a person can know. I wouldn’t trade the Spirit-filled life for all the riches in the world or for any other experience!” If that’s your response, I say *amen*—so be it. The Spirit-filled life is the only way for a Christian to experience all that God wants us to be, say, and do. It is life to the fullest . . . the true abundant life that Jesus promised. As He said to His disciples, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

The Spirit-filled life is not based on emotions, though you are likely to feel various emotions as the Holy Spirit works in you to produce the character of Christ and to replicate the ministry of Christ in your life and the world. A believer may feel the Holy Spirit in one time and place but not in another time and place . . . but this is simply due to the capricious nature of human emotions. Feelings rise and fall, come and go—but the Holy Spirit does not. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, your salvation was sealed forever by the Holy Spirit at the moment you confessed your sins and received God’s forgiveness.

The Spirit-filled life is marked by purpose, power, and effectiveness. It is not something you can study from afar—it is to be *experienced*. It is lived out in real life and involves facing real—and sometimes difficult—circumstances and situations. In the end, the Spirit-filled life is not something you *do* but something you *have* because of who is living and working inside you. God wants each of His children to live a Spirit-filled life, and He expects you to be led by the Spirit each day.

1. “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the

Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38–39). Why does Peter refer to the Holy Spirit as a “gift”? What does this teach about His character? His availability?

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- 2.** According to the apostle Peter’s words in this passage, what is required of a person to receive the Holy Spirit and start living a Spirit-filled life?

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OUR NEED FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

Most of us have no difficulty admitting, “I need God the Father in my life.” We recognize God the Father as our all-powerful, ever-present, and holy Creator. In a similar way, most of us have no difficulty admitting, “I need Jesus Christ in my life.” We recognize we are sinful creatures by nature and must have the all-sufficient

atonement made possible by Christ Jesus on the cross if we are to experience forgiveness for our sins and receive eternal life. We understand He came into the world so we might be restored to a full relationship with our heavenly Father, who desires to bless us as His children. In many ways, we need Christ Jesus in our lives because of our need for a relationship with the Father. But do we need the Holy Spirit?

To answer this question, we need to recognize the Holy Spirit is part of the holy Trinity—Father, Son, *and* Holy Spirit. You need Him just as much as you need the Father and the Son. In fact, the Holy Spirit makes possible your growth as a believer and enables you to experience a deepening fellowship with Jesus and the Father. You need Him at work in you if you are to fulfill your earthly destiny in Christ and become the person the Father created you to be.

Think of this in terms of driving your car. When you get into your automobile, what is the first thing you should do? You may say “pray”—and I would not disagree with that response. But I have in mind something physical that you should do before you release the parking brake, put the car in gear, and hit the gas pedal to accelerate down the road. The first thing you should do when you get into your car is fasten your seatbelt.

Now, *why* do you fasten your seatbelt? Do you do this because you are expecting to get into an accident? No, the reason you choose to put on your seatbelt—besides the fact that it is the law in most places—is so you will be safe just *in case* you get into an accident. In the same way, when you and I get up in the morning to start our day, one of the first things we should be doing is seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to direct us in every situation we face. Before we make a decision about anything, or when we meet with someone, or when we formulate a response when someone asks us a question, we want the Holy Spirit to speak into our hearts. We *need* the Holy Spirit’s continual involvement.

3. The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity—Father, Son, *and* Holy Spirit. Given this, why do you think He is often the most misunderstood member of the Trinity? What are some questions you have had in the past concerning His role in your life?

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4. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26–27). What does this passage say about the role of the Holy Spirit in your life?

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THE HOLY SPIRIT’S PRESENCE FROM THE BEGINNING

As we think about the Holy Spirit, we need to remember He has been a part of the Trinity from the beginning. In Genesis 1:1–2 we read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” Later, when

we read of the creation of Adam, we find the Lord stating, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). The Holy Spirit, as part of the Trinity, was present and active in Creation.

As we progress through the Old Testament, we find repeated mentions of the Holy Spirit and His empowerment of people to perform certain tasks. In each Old Testament instance, the Spirit of the Lord came upon certain people to help them fulfill leadership roles—to help them carry out God’s plan and purpose among His people. The Holy Spirit helped them in a wide variety of ways, enabling and equipping them to do what God had called them to do in their roles as artisans, judges, warriors, prophets, and kings.

In some cases, the Holy Spirit came a person so he or she could prophesy or speak in the name of the Lord. One individual was Isaiah, who wrote, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor” (Isaiah 61:1). Likewise, Ezekiel speaks about an indwelling of the Spirit that allows him to prophesy and speak God’s word to the people: “And He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you.’ Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me” (Ezekiel 2:1-2).

In each case, we find the Holy Spirit came to individuals in the Old Testament to help them with specific works or ministries—and then He departed from them. At that time, the Holy Spirit did not come to stay in the lives of men and women. That was simply not the pattern we find in the stories told in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, as we will discuss further in a later lesson, we find Jesus promising His disciples the Holy Spirit would indwell them and become a continual source of divine assistance in their lives.

Now, this is not to say the Holy Spirit works in the Old Testament in a manner that is *contradictory* to the manner in which He works in the New Testament. Certainly, the Holy Spirit works in the New Testament by providing leadership assistance and also by giving clear words of direction and truth. The difference is that the Spirit did not

abide continually with the people in the Old Testament. This is particularly evident in the life of Saul, whom Samuel anointed to be the first king of Israel. Early in his rule, we read of Saul encountering a group of prophets, and “the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them” (1 Samuel 10:10). But later, after Saul disobeyed God and David was anointed king, we read that the “the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul” (1 Samuel 16:14).

So it was that when Jesus came into the world, the masses of people who lived in Israel at the time had no experience with the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit. And we have no mention in the Old Testament of the Holy Spirit coming to all the children of Israel at any time. But that would all change in the New Testament with Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit . . . and His arrival in the lives of the disciples who gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost.

5. “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship” (Exodus 31:2–5). The Lord sent His Spirit to Bezalel when the Israelites were commanded to construct the tabernacle. Why did Bezalel need the Holy Spirit?

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6. What does this reveal to us about the Holy Spirit's role in the Old Testament?

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7. Why did the Holy Spirit come upon certain people in Old Testament times? Why was it necessary for Christ to pay the price of sin on the cross before the Holy Spirit could indwell *all* of God's people?

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BEYOND ADEQUATE

The truth of the matter is that today, many Christians do not understand the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives, do not consider Him as an active member of the Trinity, and do not feel compelled to lead more than just an *adequate* Christian life. They believe that if they go to church, read their Bible occasionally, and say their prayers once in a while, they are going to be all right with God. Occasionally, they may volunteer to serve others in a particular way—perhaps as an usher, or as a member of a church committee, or as a host for a small group, or as a member of an evangelism team—and they consider that ministry as above the norm.

But let me challenge you today. God doesn't call you (or anyone) to just an adequate Christian life. He wants to have a daily walking-and-talking relationship with you in which you experience His presence, trust Him for wisdom, drawn on His strength, and rely on Him for results—at every step you take, every decision you make, every conversation you have, and every thought you think. The Lord desires to live within you. He desires to communicate to you and through you. He desires to live out His life through your expression of it—a perfect blending of His perfection and your unique talents, traits, and personality.

There is no such thing as an average Christian life. Either you are living a vibrant Spirit-filled life . . . or you aren't. You are either in forward motion or in a pause position. You are either living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit or you aren't. So make a decision today to choose the Spirit-filled life. God will not force Himself on you or force Himself to operate within you. He works by invitation only. He won't overstep the boundaries of your will.

As you begin this study, you probably have some preconceptions about the Holy Spirit and how He works within a person's life. I encourage you to lay them aside and approach these lessons with a wide-open heart and mind. You can learn and experience something here—but only if you are willing to be changed in your inner person.

- 8.** “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13). How does the Holy Spirit enable you to lead a vibrant hope-filled life?

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9. “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26). When you hear the phrase “Spirit-filled life,” what comes to your mind?

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10. Are you open to experiencing more of the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you want more out of your relationship with Christ Jesus than you are currently experiencing? Explain.

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TODAY AND TOMORROW

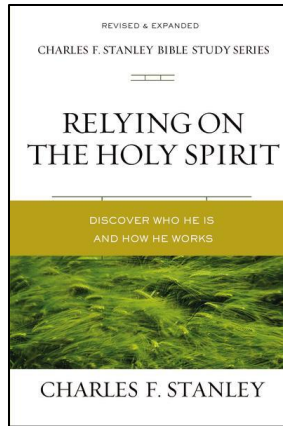
Today: I recognize that the Holy Spirit dwells within the life of every Christian.

Tomorrow: I will study the Scriptures this week to learn more about the Holy Spirit.

CLOSING PRAYER

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Lord Jesus, what a wonder You are—and what a wonder it is that You gave us in the Holy Spirit, who seals us as Your purchased possession. Today, we pray that You would help us to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Let the truths of Your Word echo in our minds and our hearts and our spirits for days to come. We desire to live the Spirit-filled life and receive all the fullness of joy that You intend for us to receive. Be alive and real to us today as we receive Your truths. In Your name we pray. Amen.



RELYING ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

by Charles F. Stanley

Does God speak to us today?

It's not a bad thing for Christians to respond to the Holy Spirit with wide-eyed wonder. Certainly, the Holy Spirit should inspire our awe and admiration. Unfortunately, for many believers these feelings of wonder come about as a result of puzzlement instead of adoration. But the truth of the matter is that the role of the Holy Spirit does not have to be a mystery in our lives and we will miss out greatly on God's power if we choose to ignore Him. In *Relying on the Holy Spirit*, Charles F. Stanley cuts through the confusion and introduces us to a living Person as real and active as God the Father and Christ the Son. We can know what God's Word says about who the Spirit is—and how to develop a relationship with Him.

The **Charles F. Stanley Bible Study Series** is a unique approach to Bible study, incorporating biblical truth, personal insights, emotional responses, and a call to action. Each study draws on Dr. Stanley's many years of teaching the guiding principles found in God's Word, showing how we can apply them in practical ways to every situation we face. This edition of the series has been completely revised and updated, and includes two brand-new lessons from Dr. Stanley.

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