

Life in the Spirit

Common Q + A from God's Word

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Q: What is the Spirit?

A: It's not "what", but "Who?" God's Spirit is not a thing to get, but a person to receive.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. 17 He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive Him because it doesn't see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you."

23 Jesus answered, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

Therefore, when a person puts his faith in Jesus, God comes to live inside that person forever. Jesus said the Spirit of God, the Father, and Jesus himself - the Trinity - will come to live in that person. If God in the Trinity has made His home in you, there is not any MORE of God that you could get at a later time!

Rather, we need to learn to let God live His life through us!

Q: How do I know if I have the Spirit of God residing in me?

A: Acts 2:38-29 "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Notice, Peter is saying God's Spirit will come into anyone who believes, not merely that they will receive the Gifts of the Spirit. God's Spirit indwelling a believer IS the gift!

Water baptism (immersion) is a public confession of a person's faith in Jesus.

Q: Someone told me that even though I have received Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, I still need to be baptized in the Spirit, that I haven't necessarily received the Spirit. Is this right?

A: Romans 8:9 You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Believers have the Spirit of Christ / the Spirit of God / the Holy Spirit / the Holy Ghost / Jesus / God - living in them!

To say that someone needs to receive God's Spirit is to say that they are not a born-again Christian.

Q: What does the Spirit do in the life of a Believer?

A: John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit – the Father will send Him in My name – will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.

John 16:8 When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment:

John 16:13-14 When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you.

Notice, God's Spirit is NOT at odds with Jesus, or His written Word. God is triUNITY.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses...

2 Corinthians 1:22 He has also sealed us and given us the Spirit as a down payment in our hearts.

Q: What are Spiritual Gifts and what are they for?

A: 1 Corinthians 12:7 A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial:

14:4 The person who speaks in [another] language builds himself up, but he who prophesies builds up the church.

14:5 ...so that the church may be built up.

14:12 So also you—since you are zealous in matters of the spirit, seek to excel in building up the church.

14:17 For you may very well be giving thanks, but the other person is not being built up.

14:26 All things must be done for edification.

Therefore, if someone is using what they call a Spiritual Gift for anything but building up the Church - either by helping unbelievers believe in Jesus, or by helping believers grow - then they are going against the Bible.

A Spiritual Gift is not so much an ability given to a Christian, as a way God's Spirit empowers a believer to build up the Church. A Spiritual Gift is not a thing, that the believer can use however he wants, such as a hammer which can be used for good or bad.

Therefore, God's Spirit will never empower someone to do something against His written Word. If someone is doing something contrary to the Word of God, it is the individual doing it, not a Gift of the Spirit. It is done by the individual, at best, and by some other spirit, at worst. (Which spirits work contrary to the Word of God?)

Q: Which is more important: the Gifts of the Spirit, or the Fruit of the Spirit?

A: Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12 + 14, and 1 Peter 4:10 talk about Spiritual Gifts. These are special ways God's Spirit enables believers to build up the Church. God gives different believers different Spiritual Gifts.

Galatians 5:22-23 describes the evidence that God's Spirit is in a believer. It is not fruits of the Spirit, but fruit of the Spirit. God's Spirit will always be developing these character qualities in every believer, everywhere, all the time. In that way the Fruit of the Spirit is more universal! If God's Spirit is truly empowering someone to act, this fruit will always be seen. And the last Fruit listed there is Self-Control (temperance in the KJV).

Speaking in Tongues

Q: Is it true that a person has to “speak in tongues”, otherwise they don’t have the Spirit?

A: 1 Corinthians 12:29-30 “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in languages? Do all interpret?”

Who was the One who was most filled with God’s Spirit? Jesus! Yet the Bible NEVER says Jesus spoke in tongues, or was slain in the Spirit, or drunk in the Spirit.

Q: What is speaking in tongues?

A: At Pentecost, in Acts 2, God gave the 120 believers the ability to speak in other known languages to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. (Acts 2, especially vs 4, 8-11)

Q: Someone offered to teach me how to speak in tongues. Is this right?

A: At Pentecost, in Acts 2, no one needed to teach the believers to speak in other languages. God empowered them.

Q: Should more than one person be speaking in tongues at the same time?

A: 1 Corinthians 14:27-28 is very clear - NO!
27 If any person speaks in [another] language, there should be only two, or at the most three, each in turn, and someone must interpret. 28 But if there is no interpreter, that person should keep silent in the church and speak to himself and to God.

Q: Should someone speak in tongues without someone to interpret?

A: No! 1 Corinthians 14:27 see above.

Q: Someone told me I should ask for the gift of speaking in tongues. Is this right?

A: 1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each one as He wills.

12:18 But now God has placed the parts, each one of them, in the body just as He wanted.

The Bible never tells us to ask for a Spiritual Gift. The “He” in these verses is God Himself. Can I know better than God?

Q: How important is “speaking in tongues”?

A: 1 Corinthians 14:5 I wish all of you spoke in other languages, but even more that you prophesied. The person who prophesies is greater than the person who speaks in languages, unless he interprets so that the church may be built up.

14:15 What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with my understanding.

14:19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, in order to teach others also, than 10,000 words in [another] language.

Paul discusses Spiritual Gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. Verses 28-30 lists some Gifts of the Spirit. Tongues is listed last, then Paul says,

12:31 But desire the greater gifts. And I will show you an even better way.

Paul then gives the great love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13. In chapter 14, he returns to give more instructions on Spiritual Gifts.

Q: Why do some people emphasize their idea of “speaking in tongues” so much, when the Bible implies it is the least of the gifts?

A: Good question. I guess it’s because it’s the tradition they’ve seen. But Christians should always follow the Bible more than tradition.

Q: I brought a nonbeliever to a church (or a prayer group), and people there claimed to be speaking in tongues. My friend was creeped out, and doesn’t want to come back.

A: 1 Corinthians 14:23 Therefore if the whole church assembles together, and all are speaking in [other] languages, and people who are uninformed or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? 24 But if all are

prophesying, and some unbeliever or uninformed person comes in, he is convicted by all and is judged by all. 25 The secrets of his heart will be revealed, and as a result he will fall down on his face and worship God, proclaiming, "God is really among you."

Q: I heard someone say that the Spirit just came over them, and they couldn’t keep from speaking in tongues, or falling over, or whatever. Is this how God’s Spirit works?

A: 1 Corinthians 14:32 And the prophets' spirits are under the control of the prophets, 33 since God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

Cautions:

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 Corinthians 11:4 For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly!

In Acts 8:4-24, Peter condemned Simon the Sorcerer for wanting the power to lay hands on people and “give them the Spirit”.