

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

A certain amount of knowledge about God the Father and Jesus the Son is claimed by some people... But there is a great deal of ignorance about the Holy Spirit. Who is this third Person of the Trinity?

Some translations speak of the 'Holy Ghost' and this can sound a little frightening! The Holy Spirit is a Person. He has all the characteristics of Personhood. He thinks (Acts 15:28), speaks (Acts 1:16), leads (Romans 8:14), and can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). He is sometimes described as the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9) or the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7).

WHAT IS HE LIKE?

In John chapters 14 to 16 Jesus is preparing the disciples for an event they are struggling to comprehend. Jesus is explaining His imminent death and how His return to the Father would mean they would not be alone. Rather the Holy Spirit would come to be with them in exactly the same way as if Jesus Himself was with them (although not in His physical presence). Jesus said the Father will give you 'another' Counsellor. The word for 'another' means 'of the same kind'. The original Greek word *parakletos* (John 14:16) means one called alongside, a comforter, an encourager. He is an eternal member of the Godhead and we see evidence of the Holy Spirit's activity right from the book of Genesis.

HE WAS INVOLVED IN CREATION

The opening verses of the Bible declare: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1: 1-2). We see in the account of the creation how the Spirit of God caused new things to come into being and brought order out of chaos. He is the same Spirit today. He often brings new things into people's lives and into churches. He brings order and peace into chaotic lives, freeing people from self destructive behaviour, confusion and the mess of broken relationships.

When God created man he formed man *"from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being"* (Genesis 2:7).

(It is interesting our bodies contain all the major trace elements and minerals etc. that are found in the ground).

We are not just a physical body, but being made in the 'image of God' we have three aspects to our personality. As well as our bodies we have a soul - this part is our emotions, our will and our intellect. The third part is our spirit - the part of us that 'tells us things' by conscience or intuition. Our spirit is also the part of us that has the capacity for fellowship with God (who is Spirit) and longs for communion with him.

The Hebrew word for 'breath' in Genesis 2:7 is *'ruach'* which is also the word for 'Spirit'. The *ruach* of God brings life to man formed from the dust. Likewise He brings spiritual life to people and churches, both of which can be dry and dusty!

When an individual or a church experiences the filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit it is very exciting as life begins to flow and His impact is experienced.

HE CAME ON PARTICULAR PEOPLE AT PARTICULAR TIMES FOR PARTICULAR TASKS

When the Spirit of God comes upon people he does not just bring nice warm feelings but something purposeful happens!

In the Old Testament, there are examples of the Holy Spirit coming upon people for a purpose. He filled people for artistic work. A man called Bezaleel, was endowed with remarkable skill and ability in all kinds of craftsmanship - working in gold, silver, bronze and precious stones. (Exodus 31 : 3-5)

It is possible to be a talented musician, writer, or artist without being filled with the Holy Spirit. But often when He does fill these people for their tasks they find a new dimension which carries greater spiritual impact on others. The Holy Spirit often takes someone's ability even if it is not particularly outstanding and lifts it into a new realm.

He also filled individuals for the task of leadership. During the time of the Judges the nation of Israel was being threatened and often overrun by various foreign nations. At one time it was the Midianites. God called Gideon to lead Israel. Gideon was very conscious of his own weakness and asked God, *'How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest and I am the least in my family'* (Judges 6:15). Yet we see how when the Spirit of God came upon Gideon how he became a remarkable leader.

God often takes people who feel weak, ill-prepared and inadequate. When they are filled with the Holy Spirit they become outstanding leaders.

Elsewhere we see the Holy Spirit filling people with strength and power. Samson was such a person. Some of his exploits are well known! He performed exceptional feats such as when he was tied with new ropes. When the Holy Spirit came upon him in power the ropes became *'as charred flax and the bindings dropped from his hands'* (Judges 15:14)

What is true in the Old Testament physically, is often true in the New Testament spiritually. It is not that we are physically bound by ropes, but that we are tied down with fears, habits or addictions that take a grip on our lives. We may be controlled by bad temper or by patterns of thought such as envy, jealousy or lust. We know that we are bound when we cannot stop something, even when we want to. When the Spirit of God came upon Samson the ropes became like charred flax and he was free! Today the Spirit of God is still setting people free from things that bind them. Later on we see that the Spirit of God came upon Isaiah to enable him to *'preach good news to the poor and to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty for the captives and release for the prisoners...'* (Isaiah 61:1-3).

We sometimes feel a sense of helplessness when confronted with the problems of the world. But we can know that in the face of the need all around us that we have something to give in bringing the good news of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we are going to help people in a way which lasts eternally, we cannot do so without the Spirit of God.

HE WAS PROMISED BY THE FATHER

We have seen Old Testament examples of the Holy Spirit working through particular people at particular times for particular tasks.

The Old Testament is full of God's promises that he is going to do something new. The New Testament calls this 'The promise of the Father'. There is an increasing sense of anticipation. What was going to happen?

In the Old Testament God made a covenant with his people. He said that he would be their God and that they would be his people. He required that they should keep his laws. Sadly, the people found that they were unable to keep his commands. The Old Covenant was consistently broken.

God promised that one day he would make a New Covenant with his people. This covenant would be different from the first covenant: *'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts'* (Jeremiah 31:33). In other words, under the New Covenant the law would be internal rather than external. If you go on a long hike, you start off by carrying your provisions on your back. They weigh you down and slow you up. But when you have eaten them, not only has the weight gone but you also have a new energy coming from inside. What God promised through Jeremiah was a time when the law would no longer be a weight on the outside but would become a source of energy from inside. How was this going to happen?

Ezekiel gives us the answer. He was a prophet, and God spoke through him, elaborating on the earlier promise. *'I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you,'* he said. *'I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep My laws'* (Ezekiel 36:26-27). God was saying through the prophet Ezekiel that this is what will happen when God puts His Spirit within us. This is how He will change our hearts and make them soft ('hearts of flesh') rather than hard ('hearts of stone'). The Spirit of God will move us to follow His decrees and keep His laws.

There are many exciting stories of how ordinary people have been enabled to accomplish remarkable things because of the Holy Spirit empowering them. The 'promise of the Father' is for everyone.

The prophet Joel wrote, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit...

"I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29)

Joel is foretelling that the promise will no longer be reserved for particular people at particular times for particular purposes - but it will be for all. God will pour out His Spirit regardless of age, background, culture, social standing, or sex. There will be a new ability to hear God ('prophesy...dream ...see visions'). Joel prophesied that the Spirit would be poured out with great generosity on all God's people. Yet all these promises remained unfulfilled for at least 300 years. People waited and waited for 'the promise of the Father' to be fulfilled until at the coming of Jesus there was a burst of activity of the Spirit of God.

With the birth of Jesus a trumpet sounds! Almost everyone connected with the birth of Jesus was filled with the Spirit of God. John the Baptist, who was to prepare the way was filled with the Spirit even before his birth (Luke 1:15). Mary, His mother was promised: *'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you'* (Luke 1:35).

When Elizabeth, her cousin came into the presence of Jesus who was still in his mother's womb, she too was *'filled with the Holy Spirit'* (v. 41) and even John the Baptist's father,

Zachariah was *'filled with the Holy Spirit'* (v. 67). In almost every case there is an outburst of praise or prophecy!! (Halleluiah!!)

JOHN THE BAPTIST LINKS THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH JESUS

John was asked whether or not he was the Christ. He replied:

'I baptise you with water, but one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am unworthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire'. (Luke 3:16)

Baptism with water is very important but it is not enough. Jesus is the Spirit baptiser. The Greek word means to 'overwhelm', to 'immerse' or 'plunge'. This is what should happen when we are baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes this experience is like a hard, dry sponge being dropped into water. There can be a hardness to our lives which stops us absorbing the Spirit of God. It may take a little bit of time and soaking in our lives for the initial hardness to wear off and for the sponge to be filled. So it is one thing for the sponge to be in the water ('baptised'), but it is another for the water to be in the sponge ('filled'). When the sponge is filled with water, the water literally runs out of it. Jesus was completely filled with the Spirit of God. He showed in his humanity what it could be like for a person to be totally filled, empowered and lead by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:22). He returned from the Jordan 'full of the Holy Spirit' and was led by the Spirit into the desert. After this time of intense testing he returned to Galilee 'in the power of the Spirit' (Luke 4: 14).

In a synagogue in Nazareth, He read from Isaiah 61 :1, *'The Spirit of the Lord is on me...'* and said. *'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'* (v. 21).

JESUS FORETOLD THE HOLY SPIRIT'S COMING

On one occasion Jesus went to a Jewish feast called the Feast of Tabernacles. Thousands of Jews would come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast, looking back to the time when Moses brought water from a rock. They thanked God for providing water in the past year and prayed that he would do the same in the coming year. They looked forward to a time when water would pour out of the temple (as prophesied by Ezekiel), becoming deeper and deeper and bringing life, healing and refreshing wherever it went (Ezekiel 47).

This passage was read at the Feast of Tabernacles and acted out visually. The High Priest would fill a pitcher with water and pour it out through a funnel in the west side of the altar. With the crowds watching the water would flow out in anticipation of the great 'river' that would flow from the temple.

On the last day of the feast, Jesus stood up having more than likely just witnessed this ceremony. He proclaimed to all there, *'If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, "Out of his belly (innermost being) shall flow rivers of living water"'* (John 7:38).

He was saying that the promises of Ezekiel and others would not be fulfilled in a place, but in a Person. It is out of the innermost being of Jesus that the river of life will flow... and because we can derive our life from him, streams of living water can flow from every Christian! ('Whoever believes in me', v. 38). From us, Jesus says, this river will flow bringing life, fruitfulness and healing to others. John went on to explain that Jesus was speaking about the Holy Spirit 'whom those who believed in Him were later to receive' (v. 38). He further explains that 'up to that time the Spirit had not been given' (v. 39). The

promise of the Father had not been fulfilled. Even after the crucifixion of Jesus, the Spirit was not poured out. Later, Jesus told his disciples, *'I am going to send you what my Father has promised: but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high'* (Luke 24:49).

Just before He ascended to heaven, Jesus again promised, *'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you'* (Acts 1:8). But they still had to pray and wait another forty days. Then at last on the Day of Pentecost: *'Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them'* (Acts 2: 24). It had happened.

The promise of the Father had been fulfilled. The crowd was amazed and mystified. Peter stood up and explained what had happened. He looked back to the promises of God in the Old Testament and explained how what had been long awaited was now being fulfilled before their eyes. He explained that Jesus *'had received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit'*, and had *'poured out what you now see and hear'* (Acts 2:33).

When the crowd asked what they needed to do, Peter told them to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus so they could receive forgiveness. Then he promised that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For, he said: *'The promise is for you and your children and for all who are afar off - for all whom the Lord our God will call'* (v. 39).

We now live in the age of the Holy Spirit. The promise of the Father has been fulfilled and it is for every Christian to receive.

WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

Jesus answered, *"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit"*.

The expression 'born again' has become a cliché. It became an over-used and misunderstood expression particularly in the United States where all kinds of people claimed to be 'born again' but who clearly had missed the mark. The term was even used to advertise cars!

Actually, Jesus was the first person to use the expression of people who were born of the spirit (John 3:8).

A baby is born as the result of a man and a woman coming together in sexual union. In the spiritual realm, when the Spirit of God and the spirit of a man or woman come together, a new spiritual being is created. There is a new birth, spiritually. This is what Jesus is speaking about when he says; *'You must be born again'*.

Jesus was saying that physical birth is not enough. We need to be born again by the Spirit. This is what happens when we become Christians. Every single Christian is born again. Some may not be able to put their finger on the exact moment it occurred, but just as we know whether or not we are alive physically, so we should know we are alive spiritually. When we are born physically, we are born into a family. When we are born again spiritually, we are born into a Christian family. Much of the work of the Holy Spirit can be seen in

terms of a family. He assures us of our relationship with the Father and helps us to develop this relationship. He produces in us a family likeness. He unites us with our 'brothers and sisters' and gives each member of the family different gifts and abilities. And He enables the family to grow in size.

In this section we will look at each of these aspects of his work in the life of a Christian. Until we become Christians, the Spirit's work is primarily to convict us of our sin and our need for Jesus Christ, to convince us of the truth and to enable us to put our faith in him (John 16:7-15). The Holy Spirit 'draws' us to the Father causing us to come back to him with all our confusion and emptiness.

THE WAITING FATHER

They say that the first time Sawat went to the top floor of the hotel, he was shocked. He had never dreamed it would be like this. Every room had a window facing into the hallway and in every room sat a girl. Some looked older and they were smiling and laughing, but many of them were just twelve or thirteen years old - some even younger. They looked nervous, even frightened.

It was Sawat's first venture into Bangkok's world of prostitution. It all began innocently enough, but soon he was caught up in it like a small piece of wood in a raging river. It was too powerful for him, too swift, and the current too strong.

Soon he was selling opium to customers and propositioning tourists in the hotels. He even went so low as to actually help buy and sell young girls, some of them only nine and ten years old. It was a nasty business, and he was one of the most important of the young business men.

Sawat became a central figure in one of the world's largest and most loathsome trades: Thailand's sex industry. It is estimated that over 10% of all girls in Thailand end up in prostitution. The top floors of most hotels are used by them, as are the back rooms of many bars. Though the practice is discouraged by the Royal Family, many poorer rural families sell their young daughters to pay off family debts. Who knows what happens to many of these frightened ten year olds when they have outlived their usefulness?

Sawat disgraced his family and dishonoured his father's name. He had come to Bangkok to escape the dullness of village life. He found excitement, and while he prospered in this sordid life, he was popular. But then the bottom dropped out of his world. He hit a string of bad luck: he was robbed and while trying to climb back to the top, he was arrested.

Everything went wrong. The word spread in the underworld that he was a police spy. He finally ended up living in a shanty by the city rubbish dump. Sitting in his little shack, he thought about his family, especially his father. He remembered the parting words of his father, a simple Christian man from a small village in the south, near the Malaysian border: I am waiting for you. Would his father still be waiting for him after all he had done to dishonour the family name? Would he receive him home after disregarding all he had been taught about God's love? Word had long ago filtered back to his village about his life of crime and sin.

Finally, he devised a plan.

"Dear Father," he wrote, "I want to come home, but I don't know if you will receive me after all that I have done. I have sinned greatly, Father. Please forgive me. On Saturday night I

will be on the train which goes through our village. If you are still waiting for me will you tie a piece of cloth on the po tree in front of our house!"

During the train ride he thought over his life of evil. He knew his father had every right to refuse to see him. As the train finally neared the village he was filled with anxiety. What would he do if there was no white piece of cloth on the po tree?

Sitting opposite Sawat was a kind stranger who noticed how nervous his fellow passenger had become. Finally, Sawat could stand the pressure no longer. The story burst out in a torrent of words. He told the man everything. As they entered the village, Sawat said, "Oh sir, I cannot bear to look. Can you watch for me? What if my father will not receive me back home?" Sawat buried his face between his knees. "Do you see it sir? It's the only house with a po tree."

"Young man, your father did not hang one piece of cloth ...Look!"

He could hardly believe his eyes. There was the tree, covered, and in the front yard his old father was dancing up and down, joyously waving a piece of white cloth! His father ran beside the train, and when it stopped at the little station he threw his arms around his son, embracing him with tears of joy. "I've been waiting for you", he exclaimed!

Written by Floyd McClung from the book 'The Father Heart of God'

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD

The moment we come to Jesus we receive complete forgiveness. The barrier between us and God has been removed. Paul says, *'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'* (Romans 8:1). Jesus took all our sins - past, present and future. God takes all our sins and buries them in the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19), and as the Dutch author Corrie Ten Boom used to say, "He puts up a sign saying 'No fishing'."

In Psalm 103 expresses a wonderful thought that God blots out our transgressions '*as far as the east is from the west*'... that's an infinite distance! Not only does he wipe the slate clean, but he also brings us into a relationship with God as sons and daughters. Not all men and women are children of God in this sense, although all of us were created by God. It is only to those who receive Jesus, to those who believe in his name, that he gives the '*right to become children of God*' (John 1:12). Sonship in the New Testament (which is used in the generic sense to include sons and daughters) is not a natural status, but a spiritual one. We become sons and daughters of God not by being born, but by being born again by the Spirit.

The Book of Romans has been described as the Himalayas of the New Testament. Chapter 8 is Mount Everest and verses 14-17 could well be described as the peak of Everest.

Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba Father'. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children; then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Romans 8: 14-17).

First of all, there is no higher privilege than to be a child of God. Under Roman law if an adult wanted an heir he could either choose one of his own sons or adopt a son. God has only one begotten Son - Jesus, but he has many adopted sons.

Once we know our status as adapted sons and daughters of God we realise that here is no status in the world that even compares with the privilege of being a child of the Creator of the universe.

Secondly as children we have the closest possible intimacy with God. Nowhere in the Old Testament is God addressed as Father. Paul says that by the Spirit we cry 'Abba Father!' Jesus used the Aramaic word 'Abba Father', or 'Daddy'.

Madame Bilquis Sheik was a very 'high' born woman in Pakistani society with its rigid Muslim religious code. In her book 'I Dare to call Him Father', she describes her slow but arresting sense of being drawn to God. She became aware of his presence, his love and the intimacy of relationship that is possible. She got hold of a Bible at great risk and from its pages discovered how it was possible to know, deep within, that we are the children of God. This dramatically changed her whole life.

This is the third thing for us to notice. The Spirit gives us the deepest possible experience of God. *'The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God'* (v.16).

A good father will want his children to be assured of his love for them and that is what the Holy Spirit will do in our relationship with God. *'God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us'*. (Romans 5:5)

Fourthly, Paul tells us that to be a son or daughter of God is the greatest security. For if we are children of God we are also *'heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ'* (Romans 8:17). Under Roman law, an adopted son would take his father's name and inherit his estate. As children of God we are heirs. The only difference is that we inherit, not on the death of our father, but on our own death. He has reserved everlasting glory and blessedness for us.

DEVELOPING THE RELATIONSHIP

Birth is not just the climax of gestation; it is the beginning of new life and new relationships. Our relationship with our parents can grow and deepen over a long period. This happens as we spend time with them - it does not happen automatically overnight. Our relationship with God, as we have discussed previously, grows and deepens as we spend time with him. The Spirit of God helps us to develop our relationship with God. He brings us into the presence of the Father. *'For through him (Jesus) we both (Jew and non Jew alike) have access to the Father by one Spirit'* (Ephesians 2:18). Through Jesus, by the Spirit, we have access to the presence of God. Jesus, through his death on the cross, removed the barrier between us and God. This has made the way for us to come into God's presence. This is something we don't always appreciate when we are praying.

In the old Testament God met with his people in a tent-like structure called the Tabernacle and later a 'temple'. The inner part, called the Most Holy Place was separated from the outer part by a curtain. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy Place once each year for the people. When Jesus was crucified this curtain or 'veil' was supernaturally torn top to bottom. This was significant as it depicted now open access was available to everyone into the 'Holy Place' or the presence of God.

"Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart

in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10: 19-22)

Not only does the Spirit bring us into the presence of God, he also helps us to pray and without his help prayer can easily become lifeless. All prayer should be led by the Spirit, who assists us when we just don't even know how to express with words the things we want to say deep down inside.

Another part of developing our relationship with God is understanding what he is saying to us. Again the Spirit of God enables us to do this. Paul says, *'I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father will give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened...'* (Ephesians 1: 7-18). The Spirit of God is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation. He enlightens our understanding and gives us the ability to 'see' spiritually so that, for example, we can understand what God is saying through the Bible. Many people express their inability to understand anything in the Bible even though they try to read it. The Spirit of God is the best interpreter of what God has said and we need his help. Ultimately without the Holy Spirit 'enlightening our eyes' we will never understand Christianity. We can understand and see enough to make a step of faith, which is not a blind leap of faith; but real understanding often follows faith. St. Augustine said, 'I believe in order that I may understand'. Only when we believe and receive the Holy Spirit can we really understand God's revelation.

The Spirit of God helps us to develop our relationship with God and enables us to grow and sustain that relationship. People are often worried that they will not be able to keep going in the Christian life. That worry is valid if we are trusting ourselves instead of the Spirit of God to 'keep us going'. It is his work in us which maintains our relationship with God. Our part is to be careful to live in total obedience and trust. We can rely on him to do the rest.

THE FAMILY LIKENESS

Isn't it a remarkable thing to observe how sometimes children can look like both parents at the same time when the parents themselves may look so different. Even husbands and wives sometimes grow to look like each other as they spend time together over the years!

As we spend time in the presence of God, the Spirit of God transforms us. As Paul writes, *'And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit'* (2 Corinthians 3:18). We are transformed into the moral likeness of Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit is developed in our lives. Paul describes these as *'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control'* (Galatians 5:22). These are characteristics that the Spirit of God develops in our lives. They are not merely the fruit of improved human behaviour although we must set our will to co-operate with the changes the Holy Spirit will produce in our lives. Over a period of time the changes should become apparent.

LOVE

This is the first and most important fruit of the Holy Spirit. We ought to see, as evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in increasing love for God and for the things God loves. (And that of course involves loving other people in word and practical expression).

JOY

This is not just happiness. Happiness depends on 'happenings' and if the happenings have not been very favourable, then happiness goes out the window. Joy, however is not dependent upon circumstances - it comes from the Spirit within.

PEACE

There is longing within every human heart for peace - an inner rest. Insurance companies have 'peace of mind' policies which of course can never give real peace! The Hebrew word for peace is 'Shalom' which means 'wholeness', 'soundness', 'well-being,', and 'one-ness with God'. It is a word that conveys great substance. Detached from Christ, inner peace is not attainable. Remember he is described in one of his many titles as 'the prince of peace'.

UNITY IN THE FAMILY

When we come to Christ and become sons and daughters of God we become part of a huge family. God's desire, like that of even 'normal' parent is that there should be unity in his family. Jesus prayed for unity among his followers (John 17). Paul made his appeal to the Christians at Ephesus to *'make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the band of peace'* (Ephesians 4:3). The same Holy Spirit lives in every true Christian wherever they are; regardless of denomination, cultural background or whatever.

The same Spirit indwells Christians in Russia, China; America or wherever there are those who have acknowledged Jesus as their Saviour and received forgiveness of sins and seek for him to be Lord of their lives. There is a sense that the denomination (and there are many 'streams' of Christian churches) is not as important as having the Spirit of God within the people as individuals - Around the globe those who share this common faith are united in God's huge family and there ought to be no division and contention even though practices and traditions may vary.

'...there is one body and one Spirit ...one hope ...one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all' (Ephesians 4:4-6)

GIFTS FOR ALL THE CHILDREN

Even though family likenesses might be apparent there is also great variety. (Even identical twins can exhibit astonishing differences of taste, ability etc.). So it is in the body of Christ. Every Christian is different and each has a contribution to make - each has different gifts.

The New Testament lists in various places some of the gifts of the Spirit.

'Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each man, just as he determines' (1 Corinthians 12: 7-11).

Elsewhere he mentions other gifts: apostles, teachers, helpers, administrators (1 Corinthians 12: 28-30); evangelists and pastors (Ephesians 4), serving, encouraging, giving, leadership, showing mercy (Romans 12:7), hospitality and speaking (1 Peter 4). No doubt these lists were not intended to be exhaustive.

All good gifts are from God, even if some, such as miracles, more obviously demonstrate the unusual acts of God in this world. Spiritual gifts include natural talents which have been transformed by the Holy Spirit. As the German theologian Jurgen Moltmann points out, 'In principle every human potentiality and capacity can become charismatic (i.e., a gift of the Spirit) through a person's call, if only they are used in Christ.'

These gifts are given to all Christians. The expression 'to each one' runs like a thread through 1 Corinthians 12. Every Christian is part of the body of Christ. There are many different parts, but one body (v. 12). We are baptised by (or in) one Spirit (v.13), We are all given the one Spirit to drink (v. 13). There are no first and second class Christians. All Christians receive the Spirit. All Christians have spiritual gifts. There is an urgent need for the gifts to be exercised. One of the major problems in the church at large is that so few are exercising their gifts.

The church has been likened to a rugby match, in which thousands of people desperately in need of exercise watch thirty people desperately in need of a rest! The church cannot operate to its maximum effectiveness until every individual member is contributing and playing his or her role and using their God-given gifts. The Spirit of God gives us each gifts. God does not require us to have many gifts, but he does require us to use what we have and to desire more (1 Corinthians 12: 31, 14:1).

THE GROWING FAMILY

It is natural for families to grow. If something is alive it will demonstrate some growth! It should be natural for the family of God to grow. Again this is the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, *'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth'* (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit gives us the desire and the ability to tell others about Jesus. As we tell others the Holy Spirit will help us and take what sometimes we think are pretty feeble efforts and use it to bring others to the Lord. This is how the family grows. The Christian family should never be static. It should be continually growing and drawing in new people, who themselves receive the power of the Holy Spirit and go out and tell others about Jesus.

Throughout this section we have been seeing that every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit: Paul says, *'If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ'* (Romans 8:9). Yet not every Christian is filled with the Spirit. Paul writes to the Christians at Ephesus and says, *'Be filled with the Spirit'* (Ephesians 5:18). In our next session we will look at how we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. God wants to fill everyone of us with His Spirit. Some people are longing for this. Some are not so sure that they want it - in which case they do not have a really deep thirst. If you do not have a thirst for more of the Spirit's fullness why not pray for such a thirst? God takes us as we are. When we thirst and ask, God will give us the 'free gift of the water of life'. *'Whoever is thirsty let him come, and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life'* (Revelation 22:17)