

# GOD'S GIFTS



# **GOD'S GIFTS**

*A Get Activated! Book*

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## There's More to Life

**G**od has given you the wonderful gift of life. He made this beautiful world for you to live in and enjoy, and gave you the capacity to love and feel loved. The priceless gift of living and all the joys and challenges that accompany it, He freely gives to all. But believe it or not, there is *more* that He wants to give you. In fact, there is a whole slew of other gifts that He would like to give you. Two of these gifts are most important because they are the keys to all the others. These are eternal salvation and the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

If you haven't yet received God's gifts of salvation or the Holy Spirit, this booklet tells you how. And if you have, the explanations you're about to read will strengthen your faith and help you understand and appreciate the marvelous changes that are taking place in your life. In either case, it will also help you know how to answer others' questions about God and all He has to offer, so they too can partake of these wonderful gifts from His hand.

## God's Greatest Gift

God's greatest gift to man is eternal life—also known as *salvation*, being *saved*, or being *born again*. You receive this gift the instant you believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and accept Him into your life.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”<sup>1</sup>

None of us are perfect. We're all sinners by nature, and our sins separate us from God.<sup>2</sup> The only way we can be reconciled with God is if our sins are atoned for; and only Jesus, who was Himself perfect, could do that. Jesus left Heaven to come to earth and live as we do, to experience the things we experience, to feel joy and pain as we do, and to show us the ultimate proof of God's love by dying in our place, that we might live. He gave His own life “a ransom for many.”<sup>3</sup> He died so everyone could obtain forgiveness and be reconciled with God.

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 59:2.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 20:28.

Jesus died so *all* could have eternal life, but He would have done it for you alone! God loves you so much that He gave His only Son to die in your place. And Jesus loves you so much that He did that, willingly.

That's the truth, plain and simple. God meant for salvation to be simple—so simple, in fact, that even a child could understand and receive it. All you have to do is admit that you've made mistakes and need God's forgiveness, accept in childlike faith His explanation that He sent Jesus to pay for your mistakes, ask for forgiveness, and receive His gift of salvation.

If someone gave you a check for a million dollars, would you scrutinize the check to make sure it was genuine before you accepted it? Of course not! You would take it and find out later! By the same token, you can accept salvation by simply saying yes to God's offer. Then, through further study of what God has to say about it in His Word and the marvelous changes it brings to your life, you will find out for yourself just how real and valuable this gift is.

Would you like to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ really is the Son of God and the way to salvation? Just try Him! If you haven't yet received Jesus as your Savior, you can do it right now by praying a simple prayer like the following:

*Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so that all my mistakes and wrongs can be forgiven. I now open the door of my heart and I ask You, Jesus, to please come into my life and give me Your free gift of eternal life. Amen.*



If you prayed to receive Jesus, you can be assured that He heard and answered. “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”<sup>1</sup> You *have* the gift of salvation. “Whoever believes in the Son [of God] *has* eternal life.”<sup>2</sup> Congratulations! You’ve taken your first step into a wonderful new life of love that will never end—ever!

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:12.

<sup>2</sup> John 3:36 NIV.

## **God alone can satisfy your deepest yearning for total love and complete understanding.**

Do you sometimes feel lonely, empty, dissatisfied? Are you longing for love you have never known before—true love, sincere love, genuine love, the truly great love of your life, love that will never leave? The answer is waiting for you if you're willing to receive it.

There is something more than the physical you. There is the spirit—the *real* you that lives inside—and it will never be satisfied with the things of earth. It must have the things of the spirit; it must have God. Within each heart, God has created a vacuum that can only be filled spiritually. Only God and His true love can ever fill that aching spiritual void of your heart, which He created for Himself alone.

He can give you everything you've always longed for, including forgiveness of sins, faith in God, love in Christ, peace of mind, health of body, and joy and happiness and love and laughter forever after. He'll meet all your needs and solve all your problems. He's just that wonderful and it's all just that simple! —D.B.B.



## **Jesus suffered so we wouldn't have to.**

Christ suffered far more than physical agony when He was crucified. He also suffered the spiritual agony of the lost sinner, dying without salvation, without God—only in His case He wasn't dying for His *own* sins, He was dying for the sins of the world—for all the sins of everyone who has ever lived.<sup>1</sup> He did that so that you and I won't have to go through that horror of dying a sinner's lonely death.

Those who reject Christ's atonement have to suffer for their own sins, but those who receive Jesus now are completely forgiven and completely relieved from the punishment of sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin."<sup>2</sup>

—D.B.B.

<sup>1</sup> John 1:29.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 1:7.

## The New You

Once you're saved, you can start enjoying many of the benefits immediately. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you!"<sup>1</sup> If you have Jesus, the kingdom of God has already entered you. You can begin living in the continual heaven of His love, peace and joy right here and now!

You can also expect some pretty big changes in *yourself!* You'll be a "new creation" in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Don't be surprised if you actually feel different, think differently, view the world differently, and are happier than you have ever been before. "I have come that you may have life," Jesus said, "and that you may have it more abundantly."<sup>3</sup>

You may not be totally different, at least not right away, but you'll soon notice a change in your spirit, in your thoughts, and in the direction your life is going. As you begin to get your answers and spiritual strength from the Lord and His Word,

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 17:21.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17.

<sup>3</sup> John 10:10.

things you never even dreamed of will become possible, and with His help, you will now be able to overcome bad habits and personal weaknesses that you never seemed to be able to before.

Of course, how much you change and how quickly you grow as a Christian depends largely on how much you *desire* to change, how much you apply yourself to learning more about the Lord and His plan for your life, and how far you are willing to go with Him. It depends on whether you realize you need Him and His help, and ask Him for it. He says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for *they* shall be filled,”<sup>1</sup> but those who are self-satisfied and don’t want His help go away empty-handed.<sup>2</sup>

What you do with God’s gift is up to you. A computer makes a good analogy. Suppose two people are given new computers with all the same hardware and startup programs. You would expect their computers to benefit them equally, right? Not necessarily! One person may only bother to learn the very basics and use the computer occasionally for a few simple tasks, while the other may really study the program manuals, keep adding new software, use the computer to its full capacity, and reap its full benefits. Which will it be for you?

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5:6.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:53.

## **No matter how good you are, God can make you better!**

It's not possible for you to change your own heart, but it *is* possible for God to change you by the miracle-working power of His Spirit. He'll do things you can't do!

This is what it means to be “born again” in the Spirit and to become a “new creation” in Christ Jesus, with old things having passed away and all things having become new.<sup>1</sup> His coming into your life not only renews and purifies and regenerates your spirit, but it also renews your mind, breaking old connections and reflexes, and gradually rebuilding and rewiring it into a whole new computer system with a wonderful new way of looking at the world and new reactions to nearly everything around you.<sup>2</sup>

It's impossible for you to make such a change as this yourself. “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”<sup>3</sup>

Some changes are instantaneous, others take awhile. But if you're truly saved, you'll be changed, because God changes people!

—D.B.B.

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:23; Romans 12:2.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 19:26.

# Salvation FAQ

Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about salvation

## Who needs it?

Most people seem to think God grades on a curve. If you try to be a good person and don't make too many serious mistakes, you'll probably be given an average or above average grade when you die, pass the course of life, and go to Heaven; if you're below average, you fail, and, well...

That might sound like a fair enough arrangement—especially if you consider yourself a better than average person—but according to the Bible, it doesn't work that way.

*None* of us deserve to go to Heaven. The Bible says, “*All* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”<sup>1</sup> “There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.”<sup>2</sup> “There is *none* righteous, no, not one.”<sup>3</sup> Anyone who thinks they're good

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:23.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:20.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 3:10.

enough to make it to Heaven on their own is only kidding themselves—and they will miss out on God's greatest gift. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."<sup>1</sup>

You can't be good enough. You can't earn salvation or *work* your way to Heaven. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."<sup>2</sup> "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."<sup>3</sup>

So who needs it? Everyone!

## What's it going to cost me?

"Surely there's a catch," you're probably thinking. "Surely I have to give up something, work hard, or do *something* to deserve salvation." No, you don't—and that's the beautiful thing about salvation! "It is the *gift* of God."<sup>4</sup> When have you ever had to earn or pay for a gift someone gave you? A gift is a gift. If you had to earn or pay for it, it wouldn't be a gift.

Salvation is not a reward for good works. Your good works can't get you into Heaven any more than your bad deeds can damn you to Hell once you've asked for and received God's forgiveness through Jesus' sacrifice. You're saved purely by faith in Jesus. You just have to accept the fact that you couldn't possibly pay enough to buy your way into Heaven, and then humbly accept God's gift. It's as simple as that.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John 1:8.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:8–9.

<sup>3</sup> Titus 3:5.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 2:8.

## Are there any sins too bad for God to forgive?

God wants to freely forgive everyone for every wrong they have ever committed. He says, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon,”<sup>1</sup> and, “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”<sup>2</sup>

“For God did not send His Son into the world to *condemn* the world, but that the world through Him might be *saved*.”<sup>3</sup> He wants to forgive everyone, and the way to experience His forgiveness is to believe in Jesus.<sup>4</sup> “He who believes in [Jesus] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”<sup>5</sup>

When people hear the truth—God’s plan of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus’ sacrifice, in a way that they can understand—the Holy Spirit speaks directly to their hearts and brings them to the point of decision. If they believe and accept Jesus as their Savior, their sins are forgiven; but if they willfully refuse His forgiveness, God’s hands are tied. “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”<sup>6</sup> This deliberate rejection is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which God cannot forgive.<sup>7</sup> God has given every person the majesty of free choice, and He will not override their decision to reject His offer.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 55:7.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 1:18.

<sup>3</sup> John 3:17.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 16:31.

<sup>5</sup> John 3:18.

<sup>6</sup> John 3:19.

<sup>7</sup> Mark 3:28–29.



Of course, just because someone rejects the truth the first time they hear it, doesn't mean they'll never be given another opportunity to make the *right* choice. Many people get more than one chance. Still, the Bible tells us, "*Now* is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."<sup>1</sup> "For you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."<sup>2</sup>

### **How *much* faith does it take?**

You'd be surprised how little faith it takes to receive God's gift of salvation! God doesn't expect you to have great faith in something you know so little about and understand even less, and it's impossible to understand or appreciate salvation, really, until you've *experienced* it. All it takes is enough faith to concede that Jesus could possibly be the way to salvation, and a sincere desire to let Him prove Himself to you. If you only have enough faith to pray, "Jesus, if You really *are* real, and if You really are the way to salvation, *show* me," He will! If you're convinced enough by what you've heard about salvation to give it a try, He's given you all the faith you need to be saved.

### **What does it mean to be "born again"?**

"Born again" is another term for being saved. It comes from this passage, found in the Gospel of John:

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:2. <sup>2</sup> James 4:14.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water [physical birth] and the Spirit [spiritual rebirth], he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

You are born again spiritually the instant you receive Jesus as your Savior. “As many as received Him ... were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”<sup>2</sup>

## What is “eternal life”?

Our earthly bodies will eventually die and return to the dust from which they came. Salvation won’t change that—it’s not the fountain of youth for your mortal flesh and bones. But your spirit, the *real* you, will live on forever. And where your spirit spends eternity is much more important than

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:1–8.

<sup>2</sup> John 1:12–13.

where you spend your comparatively short life on earth. When you receive Jesus into your heart, He promises that you will spend eternity with Him in Heaven—that beautiful world of the spirit where there is no more sorrow or pain, only joy and love and life ever after! Salvation is your free ticket to Heaven. That is what the term “eternal life,” which is often used in the Scriptures, refers to.

If you choose to reject God's gift of salvation, your spirit will still live on when your body dies. There are various different states or levels in the spirit world, including Hell and some sort of purgatory, and the Bible isn't specific about each of the different states and exactly who goes where. But it is very clear on one thing, and that is that only those who receive salvation through Jesus will be able to enter and enjoy the beauties, pleasures, challenges and bliss of God's heavenly kingdom, and truly live life eternally.

## Why Jesus?

“Why must I ask Jesus into my heart?” you may ask. “Why do I have to use that name? Why can't I just pray to God and find salvation that way, through His name?”

Because Jesus is the only One who came to earth and gave His life for you. Jesus said, “I am the door”—into His Father's house, the kingdom of God. “If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.”<sup>1</sup> So if you want to get to Heaven, you have to walk through Jesus, the open Door.

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<sup>1</sup> John 10:9.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 4:12.

Jesus is also the only door. “There is no other name”—no name but Jesus—“under Heaven ... by which we must be saved.”<sup>2</sup> “There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> And Jesus Himself said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”<sup>2</sup> That’s just the way it is!

Then what about the adherents of all the other religions in the world? Can’t they be saved? Yes, they can all get saved, regardless of their religion. Even if they don’t have any religion, they can still be saved—but only through Jesus.

## Can I lose my salvation?

No! One of the most marvelous things about the gift of salvation is that once you have received Jesus into your heart, He is there to stay. He has come into your life, and He will be with you forever. Jesus has said that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and that He will be with you always, even to the end of the world.<sup>3</sup> There is nothing you could ever say or do that would nullify these wonderful promises.

Jesus knows you’re not perfect and never will be—and He loves you just the same! When He forgave you for your sins, He not only forgave your past sins but your present sins and those you will yet commit as well.

True, you can keep yourself in line for more of God’s *blessings* by trying your best to please Him

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5.      <sup>2</sup> John 14:6.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20.

and do what's right, but you can't keep yourself *saved!* Jesus did that once and forever. Eternal life is not a sometimes thing—saved and lost and saved again, every time you make a mistake and say you're sorry. There's no such thing! Once you're saved, you're saved *forever!*

Of course, if you willfully do wrong once you're saved and don't repent and make things right, you'll suffer for those sins in some way. The Lord will have to let you reap the bad results so you'll learn a lesson. "For whom the Lord loves He chastens."<sup>1</sup> But even then, you won't lose your salvation.

## What's the difference?

What's the difference between this "accept Jesus and be born again" form of Christianity and other religions—or even the other forms of Christianity that various churches teach, for that matter?

David Brandt Berg once explained it this way:

The most raging religious controversy the world has ever known has been between the do-it-yourself religions and the God-alone-can-save-you kind. Man has always been trying to save himself, to work his way to Heaven, with just a little help from God thrown in. That way he can give himself most of the credit and go his own way.

Those who follow false religions are all dependent upon *self*-righteousness and their own way. Because they work so hard at trying to earn salvation, they figure they deserve it—with or without His help—and are quite

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 12:6.

offended if He doesn't seem to appreciate their goodness. They say, "Why, look at all I've done for You, God! You ought to give me a medal! I really *deserve* to be saved! If You're ever going to save anybody, You should save *me!* If anybody's going to make it to Heaven, *I* should certainly make it!"

This conflict has resulted in some of the greatest misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the Scriptures that have ever existed. Most people have been trying to save themselves ever since, with as little thanks to God as possible, and they have twisted the Scriptures to try to prove they could do it! But God can't help them to save themselves. He does not help those who think they can help themselves, but only those who know they can't. They can't save themselves, no matter how much they try to get His help to do it their way.

As a young Christian, I, too, was deceived for a time by the delusive doctrine of "on and off, now it's here, now it's gone" eternal *insecurity* taught by some churches and "works" religions. But then one day as a teenager, I was thrilled to discover the simple truth of John 3:36, where Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son *has* everlasting life"—right now! No ifs, ands or buts about it! After years of discouragement and defeat and lack of assurance of my own salvation, I found that all I had to do was *believe*. That was enough!

## **What if someone dies without ever having a chance to get saved? Do they go to Hell?**

God is all loving, just and merciful. He takes into consideration those who have never had a clear-cut chance to hear and receive His truth. The

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<sup>12</sup> Peter 3:9.

Bible says, “He is not willing that any should perish.”<sup>1</sup> The Bible also explains that during the three days between Jesus’ crucifixion and His resurrection, He Himself went to preach to the “spirits in prison.” He went to those who had died without having a chance to hear the Gospel, to give them a chance to receive His salvation.<sup>1</sup>

Those who have ample opportunity to receive God’s gift of salvation in this life, yet willfully choose to reject it, will be judged accordingly. But there is a second chance in the next life for those who pass on without sufficient opportunity to fully understand and make the choice to receive His salvation on earth.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 12:40; 1 Peter 3:19.

## Heaven is full of sinners

You cannot save yourself by your own works, your own goodness, your own attempts to keep God's laws and to love Him, or even your own endeavors to find and follow His truth. You cannot save yourself no matter how good you try to be. There's nothing you can do to get it except just receive it by faith—that's all! You have to humble yourself and acknowledge that you *don't* deserve it, that you're just a lost sinner, and that there's no way you can be saved except by the grace of God.

The worst sinner in the world can go to Heaven by faith, and the best person can go to Hell because of unbelief. Heaven is full of sinners, saved by grace through faith.

—D.B.B.



## God never stops loving you!

What is God like? Some people picture Him as an angry God, an all-seeing eye carrying around a big stick, ready to clobber them; or as a cruel tyrant, some kind of a monster who is trying to frighten them into Hell. But actually, He is *love!* He is a loving God who is trying to love everyone into Heaven. He's so close, so intimate, so personal, so loving, so kind, so tender, so gentle, so concerned—and He's waiting with open arms. The only reason He follows us around is that He's hoping we'll turn around and meet Him with open arms.

He never stops loving us no matter what we do. He never rejects us or withdraws His love. He always has hope for us no matter how far we've strayed. So if you feel far from God, maybe it's because you haven't opened your heart to receive His love and forgiveness.



You need not continue to feel condemned for your mistakes and sins; only be sorry, ask for God's forgiveness, and be forgiven.<sup>1</sup>

If you'll even *start* going God's way, if you'll just turn toward Him and start trying to find your way Home, the Father will come running toward you and receive you with open arms of love!<sup>2</sup>

—D.B.B.



Nobody can fully understand salvation. That's why Jesus said that you must be like a little child and just accept it by faith. Does a baby understand the love of his mother? Does a little child understand the love of his father?—No, he just receives it, feels it, and accepts it. Even before he understands language, he understands love. He feels love from his parents and sees it in their actions, and he trusts them. Likewise, you don't have to understand all about God to know His wonderful love and salvation in Jesus. All you have to do is receive it!

—D.B.B.



A man can accept what Christ has done without knowing how it works; indeed, he certainly won't know how it works until he's accepted it.

—C. S. Lewis

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:9.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 15:18–24.

## The light breaks in

*(At the time of this experience, Virginia Brandt Berg was a helpless, hopeless invalid. Paralyzed from the waist down in an accident, she had been confined to bed for nearly all of the previous five years. She also had life-threatening heart and lung problems, and suffered various other side effects from numerous unsuccessful operations to try to restore the use of her legs. Her condition had steadily deteriorated until she weighed only 78 pounds [35 kg].)*

One evening as I [lay alone on my sickbed] there suddenly came into my heart an intense longing; I felt compelled to cry aloud to some unseen power for help. I could not raise my voice above a whisper, so in an earnest whisper I pled, "If it could be *possible* that there is a God out there somewhere, reveal Yourself to me. If You are there, *reveal* Yourself to me." I seemed driven by some power beyond myself to call and call, and so, over and over I repeated, "If You are there, please, oh please, for mercy's sake, reveal Yourself to me."

As though in response to my plea, a deep conviction of sin came over my heart. I felt as though I were the vilest of sinners. This was unusual for the simple reason that I had always been rather self-righteous. I had lived a very moral life and was quite proud of it—very self-satisfied. It was as though my eyes had suddenly been opened and I saw myself in my true condition for the first time in my life—my past [good] works appeared as nothing. The burden of sin and self increased until it seemed greater than I could bear, and at length I began to weep.

I wish I could tell you just what took place at that time in my heart, but it is absolutely impossible. The new birth is a mysterious, supernatural work which is

done by the Lord Himself, and I cannot tell you how He did it, but He completely changed my heart! That evening, lying there on that bed alone, I was born again. It sounds so simple, so trite, to just say, "I was changed ... I was born again," but I would belittle the wonders of God's working and the miraculous transformation that took place that evening if I were to attempt to describe them in detail. I can only say, as did the blind man whom Jesus healed, "One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."<sup>1</sup>

I was not alone any longer, for I felt His presence in that room as real as if some member of the family were standing by my sickbed, and I was talking to Him as naturally as a little child talks to a parent. I told Him all about it, and I knew He heard and understood, for a sweet, indescribable peace and a cool restfulness came over my troubled spirit. I had seen no vision, heard no voice, nor otherwise evidenced anything with the natural senses, but had heard the "still, small voice"<sup>2</sup> in my heart and had come into such a real, personal contact with Him that I could truly say, "I *know* whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him."<sup>3</sup> All my unbelief had fled. God was real, indeed, and I was a "new creature" in Christ Jesus.<sup>4</sup> The light had broken in!

—*From The Hem of His Garment,  
the life story of Virginia Brandt Berg*

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<sup>1</sup> John 9:25.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 19:12.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Timothy 1:12.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV.

## A no-lose situation

You don't need to worry about whether or not you are going to lose your salvation or how you are going to manage to *stay* saved, because eternal salvation by grace means once saved, always saved. Once you've received Jesus Christ as your Savior, there are no ifs, ands, or buts about it—you are a saved child of God! "He who believes in the Son *has* everlasting life."<sup>1</sup> That one verse should be enough to end all your worries. You *have* eternal life right now, and you can't lose it.

Besides, you can't *keep* yourself saved any more than you could save yourself in the first place. Even though you're not perfect and you're bound to make mistakes, God is going to save you anyway. Once you've received Jesus, you are completely purified and redeemed in the eyes of God by the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. You're saved right now because God has promised it, and God's Word is true. He cannot go back on His Word.

Salvation is forever. He's already given it to you, and He's not going to take it back. It's yours!

—D.B.B.



The Devil's message has always been: "Save yourself! You're your own god, your own savior; why depend on another?" But God's message is: "Only I can save you; you cannot save yourself! Worship Me!" God doesn't save those who think they can save themselves, but only those sinners who know they can't!

—D.B.B.

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:36.

## Power Up!

**Y**ou cannot be all that God wants you to be without His power, and the means of power that He has provided for you is His Holy Spirit.

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance,” John the Baptist told those who came to him in search of truth and reconciliation with God, “but [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> And Jesus later promised His followers that He would “send the Promise of the Father” upon them, so they would be “endued with power from on high.”<sup>2</sup> You can read the story of how they received the Holy Spirit shortly thereafter, in Acts chapter 2.

If you have received Jesus as your Savior, if you have been “born again of the Spirit,” then you have already received a little of that Holy Spirit power. But that doesn’t mean that you’ve received the *full measure*, or “baptism,” of the Holy Spirit. This is usually a separate experience that happens later.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 3:11.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 24:49.

The Greek word translated as “baptize” in the New Testament is *baptizo*, which means to be fully covered or completely immersed. Thus to be “baptized in the Holy Spirit” means to be completely filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God.

A glass of water makes a good illustration. If the glass has at least *some* water in it, you could say that it’s a glass of water, even though it’s not a *full* glass. Many Christians are like glasses with just a little water, a bit of God’s Spirit. But those who have been baptized with the Holy Spirit are like glasses that have been filled till they run over. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is such an infilling of power from on high that they cannot contain it all!

### **Just Ask**

Have you received the overflowing power of God's Spirit? If not, you can right now. Just ask for it! You can't earn it or be worthy of it any more than you could earn or be worthy of salvation. It's a gift. You just have to ask for and receive it by praying a simple prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, I know that I need more of Your love and power in my life, so please fill me with Your Holy Spirit right now. Give me the gifts of Your Spirit, and help me to use them to love others more and to be a greater witness of Your love. Help me to develop a closer relationship with You, to understand Your Word better and put it into practice in my life. Amen.

# Holy Spirit FAQ

## **Power for *what*?**

*Love power.* The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a baptism of *love*. God is the very Spirit of love,<sup>1</sup> so when He baptizes you with His Holy Spirit, He pours on His love till it fills you from top to bottom, and He keeps pouring it on until you can't contain it; your heart bursts with His love and overflows on others. You just *have* to share the love and happiness God's given you, so others can know Him and experience His love also.

*Prayer power.* You don't have to have the baptism of the Holy Spirit in order to pray and be heard, but the Spirit empowers and directs your prayers, amplifying them, if you will, so that they reach their destination loud and clear.

Your prayers will also have more effect, because even when you don't know what you should pray

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<sup>1</sup> John 4:24; 1 John 4:8.



for or how you should pray, the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit knows exactly what God would like to accomplish in any given situation—the ultimate good. When you pray, the Holy Spirit can actually pray *through* you, to achieve the best results. “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us. ... Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because [the Spirit] makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”<sup>1</sup>

*Power to get more closely connected.* Shortly before His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus promised His disciples that He would send them a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to strengthen, empower, lead and guide them in their spiritual lives and relationships with Him. “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.”<sup>2</sup> And in another passage Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth itself: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; ... and He will tell you things to come.”<sup>3</sup>

*Power to make positive changes in your life.* Self-help books, resolutions and will power aren't enough! What you really need to make positive changes in your life is *God's* help. You may be able to make some surface changes, but for real and last-

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:26–27.<sup>2</sup> John 14:26.<sup>3</sup> John 16:12–13.

ing deep changes, you need the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> Some changes are instantaneous; others take awhile. But sooner or later, with your cooperation and through His Spirit, God will do what you *can't* do—change you!

*Power to share the Good News with others.* Last and possibly most important, the Holy Spirit will empower you to be a *witness*—to share God’s love and to tell others about Jesus. For 40 days after His resurrection on earth, Jesus returned to teach His followers “things pertaining to the kingdom of God,”<sup>2</sup> and in His final commission to them He promised, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me ... to the end of the earth.”<sup>3</sup> He gives the same commission to His followers today, and promises the same Holy Spirit power to complete it.

If you feel shy when it comes to sharing your faith with others, you’ll be happy to know that one of the main purposes of the Holy Spirit is to give you the boldness and the courage to tell others about the Lord and His love. You may not become a flaming evangelist—few Christians do—but He can help you accomplish just as much or more for Him by talking with others one-on-one. The transforming power of the Spirit of God will help you overcome shyness and worries about what others might

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<sup>1</sup> Titus 3:5.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 1:3; 13:29–32; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 1:8.

## Breathe deeply!

Like the flame of a candle, your body must continually be burning oxygen in order to stay alive. That is a fact of this natural life which also illustrates an important spiritual truth: If you want to keep burning brightly for the Lord,<sup>1</sup> you need to have a constant supply of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is like your spiritual oxygen supply, the very air that you breathe that keeps you alive spiritually.

The Hebrew word used throughout the Old Testament for “spirit” is *ruwach*, which also means “air” or “breath”; and the Greek word *pneuma*, translated as “spirit” in the New Testament, means the same thing. You need to be breathing that breath of the Spirit constantly or you’ll die spiritually, you’ll go out spiritually, you’ll suffocate spiritually.

Just eating is not enough to keep you alive; you have to have air to burn that food, to give you energy. Just so, the spiritual food of God’s Word is not enough by itself; you have to have air, the oxygen of the Spirit to make it burn to give you power and energy spiritually. One or the other is not enough. You have to have both!

—D.B.B.



## Transformed!

The Apostle Peter had been so afraid when Jesus was under arrest that he denied Him three times. But right after being filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter was suddenly a very courageous and bold man who preached fearlessly to the multitudes.<sup>2</sup> Peter’s transformation showed that whatever got accomplished wasn’t due to any greatness of his own, but because the power of Christ was in him. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”<sup>3</sup>

—D.B.B.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5:16.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:7.

think, so you can more freely reach out to others and share the message of God's love and salvation with them.

*Power to do a better job.* Whatever job the Lord gives you to do for Him—whatever your calling or ministry may be—the Holy Spirit will help you do it better! Even if you never had a natural aptitude for that sort of work or you lack experience in that field, if the Lord wants you to do a certain thing, the Holy Spirit will empower and work through you to get it done. This power is sometimes referred to as God's anointing, after the Old Testament references to God's prophets anointing kings, priests and others with oil to signify that they had been divinely chosen.

The Holy Spirit will even help you do a better job of your secular work, your interactions with your co-workers and friends, and all that goes into everyday living, as you learn to “walk in the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

## Who qualifies?

If you have received Jesus as your Savior, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is yours for the asking!

Before the time of Christ, God gave His Spirit only to certain prophets, kings, and other leaders of His who needed it to help them fulfill their special callings, but now His Holy Spirit is for *all* believers. “And it shall come to pass [after Jesus comes] that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. ... On My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 5:25.

<sup>2</sup> Joel 2:28–29.

Ever since the Day of Pentecost, when His first followers were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Lord has opened the doors for every Christian to have an individual link and personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. Now all Christians can receive an extra measure of God's help and care simultaneously through the communication and power of the Holy Spirit.

### How do I know I have it?

How will you know when you've been filled with the Holy Spirit? Simple! You have it if you've *asked* for it. Jesus said, "Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If you ... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes when people pray to receive the Spirit, they don't experience anything different with their natural senses or get any evidence by way of some supernatural manifestation right then and there, and they're disappointed. But it doesn't matter whether you *feel* the presence and power of the Holy Spirit or not. You *have* it because Jesus *promised* it to you.

It's just like salvation. How do you know that you are saved? It's not because of the way you *feel* at the time that you pray the prayer; it's not because of faith in feelings or experiences, it's because of faith in God's *Word*, His promise to you!

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 11:10,13.

## Is it “once filled, always filled”?

The baptism, or infilling, of the Holy Spirit is a one-time experience, like salvation. Once you’ve been baptized with the Spirit, you’ve been baptized; you’ve had that particular experience. But after that, how full of the Holy Spirit you are at any given time depends largely on your yieldedness and obedience. Are you sincerely trying to find and follow the Lord’s will, to be and do all that He wants you to do and be? If so, you’ll have plenty of the Holy Spirit and its power. But if you’re determined to go your own way, or if you’re simply content to try to get by without God’s help, you’ll find that the Spirit will be in short supply indeed! The Lord can’t fill you up if you haven’t left any space for the Spirit because you’re too full of yourself. He also can’t fill you up if you don’t hold still at least long enough for Him to pour it into you. You need to spend time with Him in prayer or reading His Word.

You can and *should* be refilled with the Holy Spirit every day. You can fill up on His Spirit anytime. Simply tap into it by obeying what you believe the Lord wants you to do, by drawing close to Him in prayer, by praising Him, by reading His Word, or by asking Him for another dose of the Holy Ghost. If you’ve done all you can to stay close to Him, then He’ll keep you filled with His Spirit.

## **Better than being there**

As long as Jesus was with His disciples bodily, they knew that He loved them and they loved Him. They enjoyed being in His presence and hearing the comforting sound of His voice, yet they didn't really know Him as they were to later know Him in the Spirit. But when the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples found out that though His body was gone from them, His Spirit was with them in greater power than ever before—and not just *with* them, but *in* them!

Like those first disciples, if you've been filled with His Spirit, you can be closer to Jesus and understand His truth even better than they did when they were with Him physically and watched Him perform miracles, because you have His power and His Spirit *within* you!

—D.B.B.



## **Holy Spirit oil**

Hardly anything mechanical in this whole world can function well without some kind of oil or lubrication. Where moving parts rub together, they create friction. Friction creates heat and heat creates fire and fire causes parts of the machine to burn up. But oil that's poured on parts of a mechanism that are squeaking and groaning makes those parts run quietly and smoothly, without complaint!

Our spirits, like machinery, need cleaning and oiling. If we didn't have the oil of the Holy Spirit, we would get rusty and break down, or we would overheat from the friction. Without proper maintenance and lubrication, there would soon be no useful motion and we'd be fit only for God's junk pile.

But thank God, the oil of His Holy Spirit oils everything: our heads, our hearts, our spirits, our tongues and even our feet, so we'll go and preach the Gospel. He just pours in the Holy Spirit, fills us from top to bottom, and covers every part!

—D.B.B.



### **The Holy Spirit is a comforter!**

God's Spirit of love comforts us. Like a mother, tender and gentle with a little baby, the Holy Spirit hovers over each child of God, waiting, comforting, nursing and nurturing. The Spirit loves us and soothes our distresses, calms our fears, wipes away our tears, caresses our worried brows, and loves us to rest!

—D.B.B.



## The Gifts of the Spirit

Besides the power to witness, more love for others, and a greater understanding of God's Word, through the Holy Spirit we can also receive what the Bible calls "gifts of the Spirit." Of these, the Apostle Paul wrote, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same [Holy] Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of *wisdom* through the Spirit, to another the word of *knowledge* through the same Spirit, to another *faith* by the same Spirit, to another gifts of *healings* by the same Spirit, to another the working of *miracles*, to another *prophecy*, to another *discerning of spirits*, to another different kinds of *tongues*, to another the *interpretation of tongues*. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4–11.

## **The unseen gifts—wisdom, knowledge, and discernment**

What is this special gift of wisdom that the Apostle Paul is referring to here? It's knowing how to correctly judge matters by applying the Word of God, the *source* of true wisdom. It's knowing how to *use* the knowledge of God.

The spiritual gift of knowledge goes far beyond mental knowledge; it's getting a glimpse of the heart and mind of God. You know things you wouldn't otherwise know, because God shows them to you through His Spirit. Discernment is "keenness of insight or judgment"—in this case, specifically the ability to perceive the spirit and intent behind what others say or do.

These three gifts of the Spirit are largely unseen—they can't be detected by the five senses—but what a difference they can make in your relations with others and how you deal with problems! "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."<sup>1</sup>

## **The unstoppable gift—faith**

"If you have faith as a mustard seed," Jesus told His followers, "you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."<sup>2</sup>

Every born-again child of God is given a measure of faith, and every Christian's faith grows a little

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<sup>1</sup> James 3:17.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 17:20.

every time he or she reads, absorbs and acts upon the Word of God. But to have especially great faith for certain things is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Take George Mueller (1805–1895), for example: He had great faith for God to provide financially for the work he set out to do for Him. Mueller founded five orphans' homes in Bristol, England, and in his lifetime cared for almost 10,000 orphans at a cost of many millions of dollars at today's value—all money donated in answer to his prayers. That's the gift of faith at work!

Many more otherwise ordinary people who received the gift of faith have also gone on to do great things for God, either by becoming missionaries or by changing their part of the world, right where they were.

## **The renewing gift—healings**

“Great multitudes followed [Jesus], and He healed them all”—including many who were beyond the medical help of His day or ours.<sup>1</sup> At His touch, the lame could walk, the deaf could hear, the blind could see, and lepers and madmen were healed instantly.

Even more amazingly, Jesus promised His followers power to do the same: “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will ... lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”<sup>2</sup> “The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.” So “pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 12:15.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 16:17,18.

<sup>3</sup> James 5:15–16.

## **The Word of God is the foundation of faith!**

Just as no good building is without a good foundation, there is no faith without the Word, because faith in God is built on His Word! So if you feel like you're weak in faith, there's a simple cure: God's Word will increase your faith.

Faith comes, it grows, by hearing the Word of God.<sup>1</sup> As you faithfully read and study the Word, as you meditate on it and even memorize it, every word will inspire, strengthen and increase your faith. Fill your mind and heart with positive, encouraging, strengthening, faith-building thoughts from His Word, and you'll soon be amazed at the faith you'll have—true faith, the kind that can stand any test, the kind that works miracles and the kind that lasts, built on the solid-rock foundation of His truth!

—D.B.B.



Faith is not an achievement; it is a gift. Yet it comes only through the hearing and study of the Word.

—Martin Luther

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 10:17.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”<sup>1</sup>—and so is that promise! Jesus is just as capable of healing sick bodies today as He was during His earthly ministry. If you have Jesus, this marvelous gift is at your disposal.

## The showstopper gift—miracles

The English word “miracle” comes from the Latin *mirari*, to wonder at. Miracles grab people’s attention. During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He performed many miracles, which nearly always drew a crowd to whom He then imparted some important spiritual truth. The miracles weren’t really the main event; it was the words He spoke. The miracles benefited a few, but the “sermons” benefited all that heard—and many millions since.

Jesus also did the same through His first followers. Take, for example, the miracle healing that Jesus performed through Peter and John, which is recorded in the third chapter of the book of Acts: “Silver and gold I have none,” Peter told a lame beggar at the temple gate, “but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” With that, Peter pulled the lame man to his feet and the man was instantly healed and began “walking, leaping, and praising God.” And because this beggar had sat every day in front of the temple, practically everyone in the city knew him and knew that he had been lame from birth. After this miracle, a huge crowd gathered, and Peter “preached Jesus to them.” As a result, over 5,000 people became Christians that day.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:8.      <sup>2</sup> Acts 3:all; 4:1–4.

Another example of how the Lord used a miracle to convince someone of the power of God and lead him to believe in Him is when the Roman proconsul (governor) of Cyprus called for the Apostle Paul in order to hear what he had to say about Christianity. When one of the governor's aides, a sorcerer named Elymas, tried to turn the governor against Paul, the Bible says that "Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on [Elymas], and said, 'O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the Devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.' And immediately a dark mist fell on [Elymas], and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus still performs miracles for and through His followers today. In fact He promises, "He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and *greater* works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."<sup>2</sup>

## The guiding gift—prophecy

Through the gift of prophecy, Christians are able to receive direct messages from the Lord in which He gives love, encouragement, comfort, and up-to-the-minute instruction and counsel, tailored to the specific individual, situation, or need. Most prophecies come in the form of a "verbal" message

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 13:9–12.

<sup>2</sup> John 14:12.

which the individual “hears” in his or her mind, and delivers orally or records. Sometimes prophetic messages come by other forms or direct revelation, however, such as revelatory dreams and visions, which the Holy Spirit helps the person interpret.

The gift of prophecy is possibly the most important of all the gifts of the Spirit because it has so many practical uses that can accomplish such great and long-lasting good. “Desire spiritual gifts,” the Apostle Paul advises, “but especially the gift of prophecy.”<sup>1</sup> Not only does it enable Christians to get the Lord’s perspective on any given situation and tap into His divine wisdom when seeking solutions to their problems, but it augments other gifts of the Spirit, especially the gift of faith. “Faith comes through hearing the Word of God”<sup>2</sup>—and that applies not only to His written Word, the Bible, but also to the words He gives today. You can use the gift of prophecy in private, or in the company of others.

There’s even a special promise for this gift: “And it shall come to pass afterward [after the coming of the Messiah, Jesus] that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.”<sup>3</sup> Under the Old Testament plan, God only spoke directly to a few of His chosen leaders and spokespeople, but since Jesus’ time this marvelous gift is for every one of His children—including you!

(For a detailed explanation of the gift of prophecy—how you can receive it, how to use it, and what it can do for you—read *Hearing from Heaven* in the *Get Activated!* series.)

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:1, NIV.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 10:17.

<sup>3</sup> Joel 2:28.

Jesus speaks anytime, anywhere, if you believe!



Hearing from the Lord is our spiritual nourishment.



The power is always on, the message is always there. God's Spirit is like a broadcasting station, broadcasting all the time. All you have to do is throw the switch and tune in. You just have to have the vacuum and sincerely open your mouth and He'll fill it!

—D.B.B.



## The uplifting gift—tongues

The gift of tongues is the ability to speak one or more unlearned languages—what the Apostle Paul refers to as “the tongues of men and of angels.”<sup>1</sup> Sometimes these are earthly languages—tongues of men—as was the case on the Day of Pentecost, when the apostles and others of Jesus’ closest followers were all filled with the Holy Spirit and preached to the crowds of foreigners in various languages which they had never learned.<sup>2</sup> More often, however, these tongues are heavenly languages, words of angels, which are unintelligible to the speaker or anyone else except through the gift of interpretation.

Tongues are mainly for your own encouragement, inspiration and edification. Even when you don’t understand the words coming out of your own mouth, speaking in tongues thrills and uplifts your spirit.<sup>3</sup>

Speaking in tongues is also a wonderful way to pray and praise the Lord. Have you ever wanted to pray, but felt at a loss for words? Well, the Holy Spirit knows exactly what you need and what you should pray for, and the Spirit will pray on your behalf. “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us.”<sup>4</sup> It’s as if the Holy Spirit takes control of your tongue and speaks through you!

The ability to speak a language you have never learned is obviously a miracle, and yet it is one of

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2:1–11.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:4.

<sup>4</sup> Romans 8:26.

the most common gifts of the Spirit. If you haven't yet received this amazing gift of the Spirit, it's there for you!

### **The revelatory gift—interpretation of tongues**

Sometimes tongues are meant to be understood by the Lord alone, but other times they convey messages that the Lord wants you and possibly others to understand and benefit from. In order to get that benefit, you or someone else present must be able to interpret the message. The Lord knows exactly what is being said in tongues, and He will give you the interpretation if you ask Him and if it's something you are meant to understand.

The gift of interpretation of tongues is virtually the same as the gift of prophecy. The only difference, really, is that the message first comes from the Lord in an unknown tongue. Sometimes the interpretation comes like running translation, a phrase at a time; other times it comes all at once, after the message in tongues. Tongues and interpretation is a wonderfully uplifting way to hear from the Lord.

## Gifts of the Spirit FAQ

**A**re the gifts of the Holy Spirit simply there for the asking, or does the Lord decide who gets which gifts, and when?

Believe it or not, the answer is *both*. Sometimes the Lord will give someone a certain gift without them having specifically requested it. Most often, however, He'll give it in response to our request. The Apostle Paul explains that "the same Spirit works all these things [spiritual gifts], distributing to each one individually as He wills."<sup>1</sup> But Paul also admonishes us to "earnestly desire the best gifts."<sup>2</sup> Why would he tell us to desire them if they weren't for us?

The Lord knows which gifts of the Spirit are going to do you and those around you the most good, but He also promises that if you delight yourself in Him, He will give you the desires of your heart,<sup>3</sup> and that if you ask, He will give to you ac-

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:11.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:31.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 37:4.

ording to your faith.<sup>1</sup> When your heart's desires are to please the Lord and use His gifts for His glory, He's the One who has put those desires there. Your will and His will are in agreement, and when that happens "you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."<sup>2</sup> "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."<sup>3</sup>

## **If that's the case, then why don't more Christians have gifts of the Spirit?**

It does seem that not many Christians today have gifts of the Spirit—at least not many have the more overt and undeniably supernatural gifts like healings and miracles. There are several reasons for this.

First of all, some Christians have been led to believe that the gifts of the Spirit were only for the Christians of the Early Church, and are not for us today. This is simply not true! Just as Jesus often worked His wonders through frail, imperfect humans in the past, He still works today. He says, "I am the Lord, I change not," and "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."<sup>4</sup>

Others hesitate to pray for the outwardly manifested gifts of the Spirit for fear that miracles won't happen at their hand, or that the people they pray for won't receive total, instantaneous healing like they read about in the Gospels. They don't want to be disappointed and they don't want to look foolish before others, so they don't even pray for those gifts. It's really a lack of faith; they don't have enough

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:7; 9:29.

<sup>2</sup> John 15:7.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 84:11.

<sup>4</sup> Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8.

faith to put God and themselves on the spot, so they don't receive.<sup>1</sup>

And there are probably yet others who don't receive the gifts they pray for because their motives are wrong. Perhaps they're looking for selfish gain or self-glory. They "ask and receive not, because they ask amiss."<sup>2</sup>

But if any Spirit-filled Christian will just pray in faith and claim God's promises, and if their motive is right, if they can say with the Apostle Paul that the love of Christ compels them to use God's gifts for God's glory, to preach the Gospel and help others,<sup>3</sup> then God will give them those gifts and "confirm their witness with signs following"—signs and wonders and miracles!<sup>4</sup>

## **How do I know that I've received whatever gift I've prayed for?**

If you're a born again, Spirit-filled Christian and have prayed for a certain gift of the Spirit, it's yours by faith, even if you don't see any immediate evidence. Like salvation or the baptism of the Holy Spirit or any other gift from God, you know that you have received what you've prayed for because of God's Word, because God *said* you would, and He doesn't lie.<sup>5</sup>

Sometimes the timing is important to the Lord. He knows when it is the best time for you to start exercising a new gift, so He may wait till then for it to manifest itself. But you still have the answer to your request by faith—it's in the mail, even if you haven't received the package yet.

<sup>1</sup> James 1:6–7.

<sup>2</sup> James 4:3.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:14.

<sup>4</sup> Mark 16:20, KJV. <sup>5</sup> Numbers 23:19.

## How and when can I expect my new gift to first manifest itself?

You *have* the gift if you've prayed for it, but there are several reasons why your gift may not manifest itself immediately, or the way you expect or would like it to. When and how much a particular gift of the Spirit is manifested in the life of someone who has asked for it is something that can't be predicted or fully understood. It's part of the mystery of God's plan for our lives, and we just have to have faith that if we've asked and are doing our part to believe and put into practice what the Lord has shown us, He will see to it that the gifts we need are manifested in His good time.

First of all, there may not yet be a need for you to have that particular gift. Some gifts we all need, at least in some measure, like faith, wisdom and discernment. The gift of tongues is also important for your own edification, and the gift of prophecy is invaluable in finding the Lord's will and receiving personal counsel and encouragement from Him. Some of the other gifts like healings and miracles may not be evidenced until a situation arises when it is the Lord's will for you to manifest them and He knows they can serve His purpose and glorify Him.

Second, He may want you to use *other* gifts that He's given you. For example, He may not give you the gift of prophecy if He wants you to refer to His written Word more. Then once you've learned to get His guidance and draw strength from the written Word, and base your decisions on that, He may begin to speak to you directly through prophecy, His living Word.

Third, your gift won't manifest itself until you try to *exercise* it. You have to take a step of faith. Like Peter, you have to step out on the water!<sup>1</sup> You have to put your faith into action. You show that you believe that the Lord will give you a message in prophecy, or perform the miracle, or whatever the case may be, by doing *your* part. Claim God's promises of healing for yourself or someone else who needs healing. Ask the Lord for divine wisdom to solve that problem you face, and then take action on what He shows you. Dare to do that thing you believe God wants you to do, and see if you don't have more faith than you had before you prayed for the gift of faith. At first you may feel like you only received a "baby gift," but as you exercise it, it will grow and mature.

And if you don't seem to get any immediate results, if instead of walking on the water you begin to sink, don't give up and don't doubt. Just go back to the Word, the source of faith. Read and absorb the Word, and your faith will be increased.<sup>2</sup> The Lord doesn't always answer your prayers immediately or the way you expect Him to, but that doesn't mean you should stop praying. Similarly, He may not always work through your gifts of the Spirit just the way you would like Him to or expect Him to, but that doesn't mean you don't have those gifts or should quit trying to use them. Keep praying, trusting the Lord, and doing your part, and the Lord won't fail! In His time and in His way, He will bring about the results that He knows are best.

Like a muscle, all of the gifts of the Spirit are strengthened by exercise. Give God and His Word time to work, and keep trying. Fill up on God's

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 14:28–29.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 10:17.

promises, and claim them in faith. *Expect* miracles—or faith, or wisdom, or any of the other gifts of the Spirit—and in Jesus’ name you’ll get them!

### **What can I do if I need the help of a certain gift that I don’t have, or don’t have the faith to exercise?**

Just as all the parts of our bodies work together for the good of the whole, so should Christians, who are the “body of Christ,” help each other by sharing the spiritual gifts God has given us.<sup>1</sup> So if you need the help of a certain gift, but don’t have it (or you have it, but haven’t yet learned to exercise it), simply ask someone who does have that gift and knows how to use it to exercise it on your behalf. Not only will you get the immediate help you need, but seeing that person exercise his or her gift will give you more faith to pray to receive that gift of the Spirit, or to exercise your gift, if you already have it.

For example, if you don’t yet have the gift of prophecy, but would like to get the Lord’s direct Word on a question or problem that you have, ask someone else who does have the gift to hear from the Lord for you.

### **How does the gift of prophecy work?**

When you ask the Lord to give you a message in prophecy, you need to believe that He *will* speak to you, and then you need to *accept* that the first words He puts in your mouth or mind are from Him.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 12.



From then on, it's often like giving a running translation: The Lord gives you one phrase or one sentence at a time, then you speak that little bit, and then He gives you another phrase or sentence, until you've received all that He has to say to you at that time. At other times, you may not know what He's going to say next until you hear the words coming out of your own mouth. Or you may just hear the message in your mind and write it down, without actually verbalizing it. In any case, you show that you believe the Lord is speaking through you by speaking or writing down the message as He gives it.

To get the most lasting benefit from what the Lord tells you, you need to record it somehow—either by recording it with a dictaphone or tape recorder, or writing it down—so you can review it later. Try to get in the habit of not letting one word that the Lord speaks to you fall to the ground.<sup>1</sup>

All of the gifts of the Spirit are strengthened through use, but this seems especially true of the gift of prophecy. Practice makes perfect. The more time you spend in quiet, listening to the Lord and receiving and recording His messages, the more your faith in prophecy will increase and the easier it will become. Try to get in the habit of hearing from the Lord in prophecy at least once a day, asking Him for messages of direction or encouragement, or His solutions to specific problems you or others face.

In fact, you can be hearing from the Lord frequently, throughout the day, about everything you do and every decision that you are faced with. You don't even have to repeat the words you hear out

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 3:19.

loud or record them. Many times you'll be in a situation where that would not be appropriate or practical, but you can still silently ask the Lord your question, or ask for a confirmation of your plans. His answer, which He'll put in your mind, might just be a few words or a sentence, but in this way you will be availing yourself of the wisdom of the Master Counselor in all that you do. You will also be strengthening your relationship with Him, and thereby partake more of His love, peace and joy.

### **How does the gift of tongues work?**

Like any of the other gifts of the Spirit, once you've asked for the gift of tongues, you need to exercise it. Just ask the Lord to make your mind blank and start praising Him out loud and nonstop. Let go of your thoughts and your tongue, and let the Holy Spirit take over and speak through you. It may sound like gibberish or baby talk to you, especially at first, but the Lord understands and appreciates what the Spirit is saying through your mouth, and it will thrill and inspire your own spirit as well.

## The Fruits of the Spirit

If, as Jesus said, trees and people are both known by the type of fruit they bear,<sup>1</sup> what “fruits”—what evidence of the Holy Spirit at work—should others see in the life of a born-again, Spirit-filled Christian?

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”<sup>2</sup>

Christians aren’t perfect; we’re all works in progress. “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”<sup>3</sup> Only God, through the miracle-working power of His Holy Spirit, can bring out these virtues in you. In each case, however, there are some things you can do to help speed the process along.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:17–20; 12:33; Luke 6:43–45.

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5:22–23.

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 2:13.

## The all-encompassing fruit—love

How important is love? When Jesus was asked which was the most important commandment, He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, if you can do those two things—love God and love your neighbor—everything else will fall into place. All of the other commandments were given to this end: to teach us to do the right and loving thing.

How does love rank among the fruits of having the Holy Spirit? The Apostle Paul concluded his explanation of the gifts of the Spirit<sup>2</sup> with an exhortation to put *love* first.<sup>3</sup> “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”<sup>4</sup>

Love is also supposed to be the trademark of a Christian. Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”<sup>5</sup> He intends for every true Christian to be a reflection of His love, so that others can find and experience that love too.

It sounds simple enough, but of course it’s not always easy. Where do you find the kind of love that reaches out, that gives, that sacrifices? Where do you find love that helps you be as concerned about your neighbor’s happiness as you are about your own, or to be loving even to your enemies, or to sacrifice of yourself for others?<sup>6</sup> Certainly not within your-

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:37–40.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:13.

<sup>5</sup> John 13:35.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 22:39; 5:44; John 15:13; 1 John 3:16.

## **May you always be known by your love!**

What was Jesus' last message to His disciples at the Last Supper, before He was arrested, taken to jail, beaten and killed? "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."<sup>1</sup> He talked about love, that love was the most important thing.

The Early Christians turned the world upside down with the love of God that they found in Jesus Christ. Even their Roman rulers marveled at the love of the Christians and said, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" The way the Christians lived convinced the Romans that their faith was real, and the Romans wondered, "Who is this Christ and why does He make you so happy? Even though you have nothing, you've got everything! How can I find this kind of happiness that I don't have?"—And within 200 years, when Christianity was still outlawed, one out of every five people in the Roman Empire was a professing Christian and the world had been saturated with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Just a little love can go a long way—much further than you could ever dream—if you will just be faithful in your love for the Lord and others, and your faithful witnessing to them of the love of Jesus Christ!

—*D.B.B.*

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<sup>1</sup> John 13:35.

self! Such love is a marvelous fruit of the Holy Spirit working in your life.

How do you get it? If you have received Jesus and the Holy Spirit, you already have a measure of that love, and you can always ask God for more. But the best way to get more is to *give* what you've got. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."<sup>1</sup> "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself."<sup>2</sup>

## The sunshine fruit—joy

We all know what it's like to have our lives overshadowed by serious problems—illness, the loss of a loved one, financial woes. Even trivial problems like inclement weather or rush hour traffic can cast a pall over our spirits. But it doesn't have to be that way. The Holy Spirit can help us rise above our problems, big or small, and cause us to be happy and cheerful in spite of circumstances.

The secret to having the joy of the Lord is taking the time to fill up on God's Word, so that you have a reservoir of His Spirit within to draw from in stress-filled times. "These things I have spoken to you," Jesus told His disciples, "that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."<sup>3</sup>

So if you feel down or discouraged, you probably just need to spend more time with Jesus, reading and studying His Word. You'll be amazed at the difference it will make!

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 6:38.

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 11:25.

<sup>3</sup> John 15:11.

If there's anything we Christians are supposed to be, it's a happy people, because we've got more to be happy about than anybody else in the world! We have the happy love of Jesus who takes all our burdens, carries all our cares, even lightens our sorrows; and even of our service for Him, He says that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.<sup>1</sup>

—D.B.B.



You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

—Psalm 16:11



Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance.

—Psalm 89:15



Happy are the people who are in such a state; happy are the people whose God is the Lord!

—Psalm 144:15



Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

—1 Peter 1:8

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7; Isaiah 61:1–3; Matthew 11:30.

It also helps greatly to count your blessings, to think about all the good things the Lord has given you and done for you. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”<sup>1</sup>

“The joy of the Lord is your strength.”<sup>2</sup>

## The unshakable fruit—peace

Jesus promises us peace—another working of the Holy Spirit. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”<sup>3</sup>

Just as Jesus calmed the stormy sea when His disciples thought their ship was sinking and they were about to drown,<sup>4</sup> He can calm the storms of life and give you inner peace that passes all understanding.<sup>5</sup>

He did it for Paul and Silas, when they were persecuted by being beaten and thrown into prison. Instead of despairing, they sang praises to God—and were suddenly and miraculously set free!<sup>6</sup>

He did it for the early Christian martyrs, who joyfully sang and praised God victoriously as they were burned at the stake and fed to the lions—and many onlookers so envied the supernatural peace that the Christians possessed that they, too, became believers.

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<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:8.

<sup>2</sup> Nehemiah 8:10.

<sup>3</sup> John 14:27.

<sup>4</sup> Mark 4:35–41.

<sup>5</sup> Philippians 4:7.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 16:22–26.



As you learn to trust in the Lord with all your heart,<sup>1</sup> you'll find that He can give you perfect peace—no matter what is going on around you!

## The conciliatory fruit—longsuffering

“If my brother offends me, how many times shall I forgive him?” someone once asked Jesus, and then offered a hopeful guess. “Seven times?”

“No, seventy times seven!” was Jesus' reply. In other words, we should never stop forgiving.

Now *that's* love!—And Jesus wasn't just talking about lovingly and patiently forgiving our siblings, spouses or close friends, but also overbearing bosses and co-workers, wayward subordinates, cantankerous neighbors—anyone and everyone, in fact.

Why would the Lord expect so much of His followers? How could it be in His best interest, or theirs? Again, this is so contrary to human nature that it sets Christians apart from the rest, and makes them a witness to others. Such loving patience could only come from God!

Hasn't God forgiven *you* “seventy times seven”? Doesn't that make you want to extend that same love and mercy and forgiveness to *others*, so they can also come to know Him and experience His forgiveness?

“Love suffers long, and is [still] kind.”<sup>2</sup> “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 3:5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:4.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Timothy 2:24–25 KJV.

## The irresistible fruit—kindness

Kindness is love in action, love translated into simple everyday terms. It's being considerate of others. It's living the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.<sup>1</sup> It's turning a blind eye to the flubs and foibles of others. It's being as tenderhearted and forgiving toward others as God is with you.<sup>2</sup>

Kindness generates goodwill. Your kind words and kind deeds tell others that their happiness and well-being are important to you, and that makes them want to respond in like manner. Kindness is one of the hardest things to give away, because it's nearly always returned. Kindness costs nothing, but can accomplish so much. A kind smile or a kind word can make all the difference in the world to someone who's having a hard day. A little bit of love goes such a long way!

Kindness is a language that everyone understands. As a Christian, you are an ambassador of God's love to others; the kindness you show them also conveys *God's* love and care, and helps draw and win them to Him.

## The exemplary fruit—goodness

Christians are expected to be *good* people. In fact, many non-Christians expect more from Christians than they do from themselves or anyone else. It's not always easy to live up to those expectations, but it *is* possible, with the Lord's help. Jesus told His first followers, "You are the light of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:12.      <sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:32.

## Peace in the midst of storm

Once there was an art contest to see who could best illustrate peace. Most of the artists painted tranquil scenes of lazy summer days in the countryside, where all was stillness and harmony. Well, that's a form of peace, but the picture that won the award illustrated the hardest kind of peace to have. On a branch overhanging a raging, roaring, storm-swollen waterfall was a little nest where a tiny bird sang peacefully away, in spite of the turmoil below.

That kind of peace comes only through the Prince of Peace—Jesus—and the knowledge that whatever happens, He'll take care of you!

—D.B.B.

## The sure winner

How persuasive is kindness? Consider this fable:

The sun and the wind once had a conversation, in which the boisterous and argumentative wind contended that he was the stronger of the two. The wise and kindly sun, sensing an argument in the making that could only result in ill will, tried to let it pass. The wind was unrelenting.

"I'll *prove* I am!" said the wind. "Do you see the old man down there? I bet I can get his coat off him quicker than you can!"

So the sun sighed and went behind a cloud, and the wind blew and blew until it was almost a tornado. But the harder it blew, the tighter the old man clutched his coat to him. Finally the wind gave up and calmed down.

Then the sun came out from behind the cloud and smiled kindly on the old man. After only a short while the man mopped his brow and pulled off his coat.

The sun had shown the wind that warmth and kindness was stronger than fury and force.

## Sinning saints

God's idea of goodness is often quite different from ours. King David plotted the death of another man so he could have his wife. But David knew he was a sinner whose only hope was the love and mercy and forgiveness of God, and because he repented greatly and loved God all the more for what he went through, God called David a man after His own heart.<sup>1</sup> God took a fanatical persecutor of the early Christians and made him one of the greatest Christians of all time, the apostle Paul.<sup>2</sup> Jesus took a demon-possessed harlot, Mary Magdalene, and made her one of His favorite followers.<sup>3</sup>

No, God's idea of goodness is not sinless perfection. It's a sinner who knows he has no righteousness of his own, but depends totally on the goodness of God. These are the only saints there are; there are no others!

—D.B.B.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Samuel 11; Psalm 51; 1 Samuel 13:14.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 9:1–16.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 7:36–50; 8:2–3.

A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

Sad to say, some Christians have the mistaken idea that means they're supposed to be *perfect*, which no one is, of course. In their attempts to be so good and righteous—or to *appear* to be—they end up being self-righteous and having a holier-than-thou air of hypocrisy. That sort of personal example usually alienates others, rather than winning them to Jesus. They'd be far better off just doing the best they can, honestly and humbly admitting their faults and mistakes, and then giving the Lord all the glory for anything good they do. That's *God's* idea of goodness.

If you will just do your best, by the grace of God, and trust Him for the rest, God's goodness will shine through.

## **The one-day-at-a-time fruit—faithfulness**

Faithful people are dependable and true. They're faithful to Jesus, faithful to the work He has called them to, whatever that may be, and faithful to keep their word and fulfill their obligations to others. All of these things are part of their Christian duty.

Faithful people are so because they are full of faith. Their faith gives them the strength to be responsible, to put their faith into action. They're

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 5:14–16.

full of God's Word, which is the source of faith,<sup>1</sup> so it comes naturally for them to *do* what it says. Theirs is a living faith, and it shows.<sup>2</sup> Faithful people keep going for the Lord through thick and thin because they *know* Him in whom they believe, and are persuaded that He will work everything out for their good in the end.<sup>3</sup>

How do you remain faithful? Just stay close to Jesus, and take life one day at a time! Fill up on His Word and do your best to be faithful *today*. Forget the past, and don't worry about tomorrow.<sup>4</sup> If you stay close to the Lord and read His Word, you'll stay faithful, and that will be a testimony to others.

### **The winsome fruit—gentleness<sup>5</sup>**

A meek and gentle spirit is one of the keys to success with people. It can make all the difference in how open others are to your wishes, opinions and ideas.

Jesus is pictured in the Bible as a lamb,<sup>6</sup> a mother hen,<sup>7</sup> and a gentle, loving shepherd.<sup>8</sup> He said of Himself, "I am gentle and lowly in heart."<sup>9</sup> He didn't force anyone to believe in or follow Him; He showed compassion, and gently wooed and won them into His heavenly kingdom by His loving example.

If you want to win friends and win others to the Lord, follow His example.<sup>10</sup> "A servant of the Lord

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 10:17.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy 1:12; Romans 8:28.

<sup>3</sup> Translated as "meekness" in the King James Version.

<sup>4</sup> John 1:29; Isaiah 53:7.7

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 40:11; John 10:14–15.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 2:21.

<sup>7</sup> James 2:18, 21–26.

<sup>8</sup> Philippians 3:13–14; Matthew 6:34.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 13:34.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 11:29.

must not quarrel, but be gentle to all.”<sup>1</sup> “Be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility.”<sup>2</sup> “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. ... The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”<sup>3</sup>

If this sounds easier said than done, don't worry. God can help you to be more like Jesus in this respect, too, if you will let His Holy Spirit work through you.

## The liberating fruit—self-control

Paradoxical as it may seem, the secret to self-control—or temperance, as it is translated in the King James Version—is *giving up* control. It's in yielding to God and letting His Holy Spirit take control of your thoughts, your actions and your life.

We need to do our part, of course. We need to put up some resistance when temptation comes knocking, and we need to work on strengthening our weak areas. But the fact of the matter is we all sometimes fall prey to temptation, give in to our personal weaknesses, and overindulge in some things that would be fine in moderation. The Apostle Paul could have been speaking for us all when he wrote:

I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn I can't make myself do right. I want to but I can't.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 2:24.

<sup>2</sup> Titus 3:2.

<sup>3</sup> James 3:13,17.

When I want to do good, I don't; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. Now if I am doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp. It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.

...So you see how it is: my new life tells me to do right, but the old nature that is still inside me loves to sin. Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature?

But then Paul hit upon the answer: "Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7:18–23 TLB.



## **“She has done what she could!”**

Remember what Jesus said about the dear woman who anointed Him before His death? He said, “She has done what she could.”<sup>1</sup>

Maybe you feel you can’t do very much, but at least you can do what you can! If you will be faithful to do your best at the job that God has given you to do for Him, however great or small that may be, He will greatly reward you one of these days when you stand before Jesus at the “judgment seat of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> You’ll reap eternal rewards and everlasting glory, and have a feeling of genuine permanent accomplishment from your investment in His work. “Well done, good and faithful servant,” you will hear Him say. “Because you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

—D.B.B.



“Am I my brother’s keeper?”<sup>4</sup> Well, the answer is obvious. Of course we are our brother’s keeper, and we need to remember that some people need to be “kept” even more lovingly and tenderly than others!

—D.B.B.



“You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your gentleness has made me great.

—2 Samuel 22:36

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 14:3–9.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 14:10.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 25:21.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 4:9.

Gentle words fall lightly, but they have a great weight.



Holy Spirit, give us  
Each a lowly mind;  
Make us more like Jesus,  
Gentle, pure, and kind.

—W. H. Parker



**We can't blame all our problems and troubles on the Devil. Our number one problem is often ourselves!**

No matter what the Lord would like people to do or what He would like them to be, He has to let them decide because He wants them to have the faith for it and He wants them to want it. He likes them to freely choose and yield to Him because they love Him. God leaves the choice up to us which way we want to go, but if we'll make the *right* choice to go *God's* way, then He can step in to help us overcome our weaknesses. We just need to yield to the Holy Spirit and stay close to the Lord, then He can rule our spirits.

You can have peace and power that you've never known before—with Jesus—if you'll just let Him control your life. Have faith in God's love and yield yourself to Him in submission and humility and let Him empower you!

—D.B.B.

In 1870, during one of his expeditions in the heart of Africa, the British doctor, missionary and explorer, David Livingstone (1813–1873), was not heard from for some time, and his welfare became a matter of international concern. He was eventually found by a search party led by the journalist Henry M. Stanley, who greeted the explorer with the famous remark, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” Later, Stanley wrote:

I went to Africa as prejudiced as the biggest atheist in London. But there came for me a long time for reflection. I saw this solitary old man there and asked myself, “How on earth does he stop here—is he cracked, or what? What is it that inspires him?”

For months after we met I found myself wondering at the old man carrying out all that was said in the Bible: “Leave all things and follow Me.” But little by little his sympathy for others became contagious; my sympathy was aroused; seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went about his business, I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it.

# Fruits of the Spirit FAQ

## **How do I receive these fruits of the Spirit?**

How do you receive *any* of God's gifts? "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."<sup>1</sup> Just ask and then receive them from your heavenly Father, who loves you and wants to make you happy.

However, unlike the gifts of salvation and the baptism of the Holy Spirit which you receive in full the moment you pray for them, the fruits of the Spirit need to be cultivated. You can do this by spending more time with the Lord in prayer, reading His Word, and receiving and following His direction in your daily life. Again, it's like a tree. When you first pray for a certain fruit of the Spirit, God plants the seed. But then it's up to you to tend to it and help it grow, first into a seedling, then a sapling, then a full-grown, fruit-bearing tree. What quality of fruit your tree bears depends largely on the care you give it. Only God can give it life, but

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<sup>1</sup> John 16:24.

then He expects you to do your part: You must set it in the sunshine of His love, water it with His Word, and keep the weeds and pests away.

### **Are these the *only* fruits of the Spirit?**

These are the only fruits of the Spirit listed in the Bible specifically as such, but there are, of course, many other virtues the Bible instructs us to strive for, not only for the sake of our own happiness, but also in order to be a greater blessing and better example to those around us. These virtues include humility, cheerfulness, friendliness, optimism, empathy, self-sacrifice, and tolerance, to name just a few. Each of these is also the antidote to one or more bad attitudes or habits, such as pride, impatience and anger, grumpiness and moodiness, self-centeredness, selfishness, and so on.

No matter how many personal weaknesses you have or how serious and longstanding they may be, the Lord can help you improve in these areas if you will pray and do your best to follow the counsel in His Word.

(For more Bible-based counsel to help cultivate these fruits of the Spirit, overcome personal weakness, and keep growing as a Christian, see *Bible Basics* and *Keys to Happier Living*, a two-volume set of topically arranged Scriptures. Available from Aurora Production.)

## Giving Back

If you were drowning and someone saved your life, you would be indebted to him or her forever, wouldn't you? Well, Jesus has done *more* than save your life! He has lifted your burden of sin, saved you from a lifetime of disappointment and emptiness without Him, brought you into His loving presence, and given you the promise of an eternal new and even better life after this one. How could you even begin to pay Him back?

You can't! Nothing you could give Him would ever come near the value of what He has given you. You should feel compelled, however, to show your gratitude at every turn. Jesus wants your love and devotion, and He wants you to do your best to live according to God's two great commandments: Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>1</sup>— And part of loving your neighbors as yourself is sharing the good news of salvation with them, so they also can partake of His free gift.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:37–40.

He also wants you to use all of the other gifts He's given you for His glory. They are for your benefit, but not for your benefit alone. Your gifts are also a responsibility. They make you a servant of others. Jesus wants you to use your gifts to help and edify others, and to reflect the wonderful things He's done for you.

The best advertisement for any product is a satisfied customer, and who could be more satisfied than the born-again Christian who has partaken of the best possible "product"—Jesus—and all the other gifts, all the "extras," that God gives freely through Him? When others see what the Lord has done for *you*, they will want Him too! "Taste and see that the Lord is good."<sup>1</sup>

So "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven."<sup>2</sup> Let people see Jesus in you.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 34:8.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:14.

# The *Get Activated!* series

If you'd like to learn more about how you can develop your personal relationship with God and receive His blessings, love, and happiness in your life, don't miss the rest of the *Get Activated!* series. These include:

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In fact, it’s all right there, just waiting for you—loving gifts from your loving heavenly Father! All you have to do to receive God’s gifts is reach out the hand of faith and receive them. *God’s Gifts* tells you what they are and how you can have them!



**Get ————  
Activated!**

