

THE LEADING OF HOLY SPIRIT

Welcome Holy Spirit Series • Week 6

SERIES OVERVIEW

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- Week 2 — The Power: Resurrection power that raised Christ and gives us new life
- Week 3 — The Passion: Making Jesus known. Pentecost; 120 frightened disciples transformed into the world-changing Church
- Week 4 — The Fruit: How Holy Spirit transforms us from the inside out into true image bearers
- Week 5 — The Gifts: Discovering and using the gifts the Spirit has given each believer for the common good
- Week 6 — The Leading: Being so in step with the Spirit that our decisions — big and small — are guided by God

KEY PASSAGE

Galatians 5:25 (NLT)

“25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.”

INTRODUCTION

This final message in the “Welcome Holy Spirit” series addresses one of the most sought-after topics in the Christian life: how God guides us and helps us make decisions.

Key question: Does Holy Spirit still lead people in specific, personal ways today — or are we simply to use biblical principles and wisdom to figure things out?

Thesis: It is possible to nurture a relationship with God so close that your big decisions — and even some of the smaller ones — are guided by the Spirit.

HOLY SPIRIT LEADING IN THE EARLY CHURCH

When we read the book of Acts, it is obvious that Holy Spirit was actively guiding the early church. Here are four examples.

Example 1: Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8)

Acts 8:29 (NLT)

“29 The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.”

Philip obeyed — and it became a God-ordained moment. The Ethiopian Eunuch heard the Gospel, was baptised, and is credited with carrying the Good News to the continent of Africa.

Example 2: Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10)

Acts 10:19–20 (NIV)

“19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.””

Peter went, and an entire Gentile household came to faith. Holy Spirit had set the stage for a pivotal moment: the recognition that the Gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles.

Example 3: The Commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13)

Acts 13:2–3 (NLT)

“2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

Holy Spirit sovereignly selected the first missionaries while the church was at worship. The result: the Gospel moved beyond the Middle East for the first time.

Example 4: The Macedonian Vision (Acts 16)

Acts 16:6–10 (NLT)

“6 Next Paul and Silas travelled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. 7 Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. 8 So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas. 9 That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” 10 So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.”

Twice blocked, then redirected by a vision. Through this journey, Lydia came to faith and the Gospel entered Europe for the first time.

Note: The exact mechanism of the Spirit’s leading isn’t always specified in these accounts. It may have been an audible voice, a strong inner conviction, or even circumstances. What is clear is that God had a plan and the Spirit guided them in living out the plan

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES ABOUT THE LEADING OF HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Leading of the Holy Spirit Requires Us to Give Up Control

Romans 12:1 (MSG)

“12 So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life — your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life — and place it before God as an offering.”

We don’t invite God into our plans; we offer ourselves to be part of God’s plans. This is the most important shift on the list.

- Surrendering control can feel scary — but the fruit of surrender is good, and it removes a great deal of noise from our lives.
- It is a daily decision: my will today, or God’s will?

“By letting go of our own desires and making intentional room, we invite the Spirit to dwell there and guide our actions. It is the ultimate act of surrender.”

— A.W. Tozer

A well-known saying: “The Holy Spirit can’t fill you if you are full of yourself.”

2. The Leading of the Holy Spirit Is Always Consistent with Scripture

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV)

“16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Ruach (Hebrew) = spirit / wind / breath. Pneuma (Greek) = spirit / wind / breath.

The God who breathes out the Holy Spirit is the same God who breathed out the Scriptures. The two will always be in sync. Holy Spirit will never lead you to do something that contradicts the Bible.

3. The Leading of the Holy Spirit Is Often Clearest When We Pray

Romans 8:26–27 (NLT)

“26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.”

The Spirit intercedes for us — sometimes in the background without our awareness; sometimes as a strong undercurrent that carries our prayers in a definite direction.

“[The Holy Spirit] dwells within us as our Counselor and points out to us what it is we should seek at the hands of God. We do not know why it is so, but we sometimes find our minds carried as by a strong undercurrent into a particular line of prayer for some definite purpose.”

— Charles Spurgeon

Practical encouragement: Push through the scattered first few minutes of prayer. A deeper place of intimacy and communication with God awaits on the other side.

4. The Leading of the Holy Spirit Is Compelling, Not Condemning

Romans 8:1–2 (NLT)

“1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.”

Matthew 11:28–30 (NLT)

“28 Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.””

Key distinction: Satan drives us — God draws us — and Holy Spirit leads us.

- The Spirit’s voice is strong and authoritative, but also loving, gracious, sweet, and inviting.
- If guilt is driving you, that is not the Spirit’s voice. Guilt belongs to the accuser.
- The Spirit’s leading often feels like a natural progression of relationship and trust — not pressure or compulsion.

Note: The Spirit’s leading is not always immediately obvious. In those times, trust that the Spirit is at work guiding your decisions even when it isn’t clear. Keep seeking, keep praying, keep surrendering.

5. The Leading of the Holy Spirit Isn't Just About Big Decisions — It's About Life

Ephesians 5:18 (NLT)

"18 Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Ephesians 5:18 (MSG)

"18 Don't drink too much wine. That cheapens your life. Drink the Spirit of God, huge draughts of him."

Just as alcohol affects the way you feel, perceive, and act in every situation, being filled with the Holy Spirit transforms how you engage with all of life — not just the big crossroad moments.

- Do you listen to the Spirit while waiting for your takeaway? Maybe God wants you to have a conversation — or pay for someone's meal.
- Do you submit to the Spirit when you're preparing your budget? When you're with that difficult family member?
- Any ordinary moment can become a holy moment when we are filled with the Spirit.

This is what it means to "keep in step with the Spirit" — to be alert and open to how Holy Spirit is working in the ordinary, everyday moments of life.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

"Keep in step with the Spirit" is a relationship to cultivate.

- Give up control
- Stay in the Word
- Pray deeply
- Listen for the gentle, compelling voice
- Obey in the everyday

As we each do this, something remarkable happens: in our very human, imperfect way, we become the body of Christ— for our families, friends, and community.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Take a moment to reflect and respond:

- Which of the five principles is the Spirit highlighting for me right now?
- Is there an area of my life I have not yet surrendered to God's leading?
- What would it look like to be "filled with the Spirit" in one ordinary routine this week?