

Empowered
June 9, 2024
Allen Power

Acts 2

What does it mean when we say people get in the “Christmas spirit?” How are people different because of this? For most people, “the Christmas spirit” is a sentimental, nostalgic, emotional lift. Some go beyond the sentimental to show more generosity, compassion, humility, and love for others. When people are in the “Christmas spirit” (at least for a couple of days) they tend to set aside their cares, anger, and anxiety instead embracing the kind of values Jesus taught. The problem is that feeling doesn’t last.

What does this have to do with Acts chapter two? I’m glad you asked! ☺

Like getting emotionally into the Christmas spirit, some mistakenly think living by the Holy Spirit of God means whipping up our emotions. Living by the Spirit isn’t a pep rally, it’s a power infusion! Living the Christian life isn’t about getting in the spirit; it is about getting God’s Spirit into us! What would life be like if people really lived with power and guidance directly from God and His word? How much better would we treat each other if His love for others bubbled up from inside us? What would the church be like if the individual members lived that way?

Last week in Acts 1 we read that Jesus told His small band of followers to wait for power from His Holy Spirit. Only days later that power came to them in a dramatic way. Today, as Jesus promised, His followers receive that same power because of His Spirit living in us. This text begs some practical questions:

- Do I fully understand Who the Holy Spirit is and what He does?
- When does the Holy Spirit come to indwell the heart of a Christ-follower?
- How can I access His guidance, peace, and power?
- How can I know when I’m following His Spirit instead of my own tendencies?

Fifty days after the Passover celebration there was the harvest celebration of Pentecost.

(ESV) — 1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. **3** And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. **4** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. **5** Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. **6** And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. **7** And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? **11b** ...we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” **12** And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” **13** But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

- Peter stood up to explain the meaning of this amazing display of God's power.
- *"These people are not drunk --- it's 9 a.m.! The Prophet Joel said, 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people...and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"*(Joel 2:28-32)
- Then Peter explained that Jesus, Who was crucified and rose from the dead was the promised Messiah.

Acts 2:36–38 (ESV) — 36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." **37** Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" **38** And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- There is a lot we could unpack but in this short session let's cut to the chase.
- **Who is the Holy Spirit?** Not an "it" but a "He." The Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Trinity. He has a mind, emotions, and will. He can be grieved.ⁱ
- **What does the Holy Spirit do for followers of Christ?** First, He convicts us of sin and prompts us to repent and be saved. Then, He is our direct connection to God's power, God's gifting/talents, God's guidance, and God's peace. (For more information: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Spirit-today.html>)
- **When does the Spirit come to live in a heart?** When we are saved (2:38-39).
- **Do some have more of the Spirit?** No, but some are more surrendered to Him.
- If I've sincerely trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, **what practical things can I do** to access the power, gifting, guidance, and peace of the Holy Spirit?
- Let's sum it up with these words: **Faith, Focus, Follow, Fruit, and Fellowship.**
- **Faith** – Believe (don't doubt) that the Holy Spirit is living in you as Jesus promised. Believe He will do all that scripture says He will. Don't seek a FEELING just practice FAITH by claiming Jesus' promise of the Spirit. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/what-does-the-Holy-Spirit-do.html>)
- **Focus** - Seek the Holy Spirit by asking for His guidance and power. Jesus said, *"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* Lk 11:13
- **Follow** - Meditate on scripture asking the Spirit to interpret it for you. Then obey what scripture says to do or not do. Follow His prompting which is always consistent with what Jesus would do. (Gal. 5:16)
- **Fruit** - How can I know when the Holy Spirit is at work in my life? A simple test: When I think and act like my natural self, that's NOT the Spirit that's me (listening to Satan.) The more I think and act like Jesus according to God's word, THAT's the Spirit! Galatians 5:22-23 list nine qualities that come from Him: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.ⁱⁱ When I am displaying those qualities (despite my natural tendencies) THAT's the Spirit! Singling out the fruit of "peace," when I have "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding"ⁱⁱⁱ during problems, THAT's the Spirit. When I am able to resist the temptation to sin, THAT'S Him! (See these verses below^{iv})
- **Fellowship** – When individual followers of Christ are led by His Spirit the church will be a wonderful place because it is made up of people who glorify and obey

Him. Not perfect people --- there was only One perfect human and He's in Heaven – just sinners who have been saved by God's grace and are focused on His Spirit. When church leaders and members display that fruit we talked about, we will experience a Spirit-led congregation. Even when there are debates and tough decisions, if they are conducted in a Christ-like manner based on scripture, that's a Spirit-led church. If the church displays "natural" behavior instead of Galatians five behavior, repentance and a new focus on the Spirit is needed.

- We have moved quickly to summarize a very deep topic. For further study here are two helpful books:
 - *"The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life"* By Charles Stanley (Very practical)
 - *"Keeping In Step With The Spirit"* By J.I. Packer (a more scholarly book)

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Like getting emotionally into the "Christmas spirit," some mistakenly think living by the Holy Spirit of God means whipping up our emotions.
- Living by the Spirit isn't a pep rally, it's a power infusion!
- Living the Christian life isn't about getting in the spirit; it is about getting God's Spirit into us! If we've trusted Christ, the Spirit is already living in our hearts.
- To access His wonderful power, guidance, and peace we need to pursue Him daily with FAITH in the Spirit, FOCUS on the Spirit, and FOLLOWING the Spirit.
- If we do that, we will experience FRUIT: Living more like Jesus and less like me.
- If the church is made up of individuals who live like that, we will have the FELLOWSHIP God intended His people to have.
- That all begins every day as each follower of Christ surrenders to His Spirit.

ⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/who-Holy-Spirit.html>

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ga 5:22–23). Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Php 4:7). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

^{iv} Here are some key Bible verses that speak about how the Holy Spirit helps believers resist and overcome temptation:

1 Corinthians 10:13 - "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." This verse assures us that with the Holy Spirit's help, we will not face temptations too great for us, and He will provide a way to resist.

Galatians 5:16 - "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Walking in obedience to the Spirit, allowing Him to guide our thoughts and actions, enables us to overcome fleshly temptations.

Romans 8:13 - "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." The Holy Spirit empowers us to overcome sinful temptations of the body.

Matthew 26:41 - "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Jesus instructs us to pray for the Spirit's help in resisting temptation, recognizing our human weakness.

Ephesians 6:17-18 - "...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit..." The Spirit uses God's Word and prayer to strengthen us against the enemy's temptations.