

COSTI W. HINN

KNOWING  
*THE*  
SPIRIT



WHO HE IS, WHAT HE DOES,  
AND HOW HE CAN TRANSFORM  
YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE

**A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK**

ZONDERVAN BOOKS

*Knowing the Spirit*

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WHO IS THE  
HOLY SPIRIT?

# LEARNING TO LIVE

## 1. Worship the Holy Spirit as God

If the Holy Spirit is everything we've covered so far, then he is God and we are to worship him. Include him in your worship, acknowledge him in your worship, and remember that he is essential to your worship. This could be as simple as praising the Holy Spirit for his work in your life during a time of worship in your church or including him in your conversations about God with your family. The Holy Spirit typically gets neglected because of ignorance, but also sometimes out of fear. Finally, be reverent in your worship. The word *worship* in the original language of the New Testament is the Greek word *proskuneo*, and it means to "kiss the hand in reverence" or "to bow down." When we worship God, we are to have a heart (and even a body) posture of bowing down out of respect and honor for God Almighty.

## 2. Seek a Relationship with the Holy Spirit as a Person

One way to apply what we've learned is by living with a resolve to see the Holy Spirit as a person. Remove "it" from your spiritual vocabulary for the Spirit. Like any person you have an important relationship with, talk about him, think about him, consider his thoughts and feelings, consider what pleases him, and consider what he would want for you and from you. In the chapters ahead, I've made sure to explain what grieves him, what blasphemes him, and what pleases him so that you will have clarity on what the Bible says about those things. For now, relish this truth: the Holy Spirit is a person and personal.

### 3. Pray to the Holy Spirit as God

When is the last time you addressed the Holy Spirit in your prayers? Chances are, you have addressed the Father and Jesus the Son, but how should you address the Holy Spirit? Based on what we've covered so far, I hope you are already experiencing an impulse to pray to him as God. Ask him to fill you; he will (Eph. 5:18). Ask him to bear fruit through your life; he will (Gal. 5:22–23). Ask him to use your spiritual gifts to bless others; he will (1 Peter 4:7–11). Ask him to help you glorify Jesus today; he will (John 16:14). One of the most incredible truths that we'll cover later in this book is that the Holy Spirit actually prays for you, and he also helps you when you don't know what to pray for or how to pray. John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, wisely wrote, "Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, for such things as God has promised." Here's a great idea: Take a few minutes right after finishing this chapter to pray to the Holy Spirit. If you don't know what to pray, ask him for help. He'll be there for you.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. Why do you think so many people either do not believe in the Holy Spirit or seem ignorant of his work and ministry?
2. List three ways the Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament and three ways he was active in the New Testament.
3. If someone were to say they believe in the Holy Spirit but do not believe he is God, what would you say to them to prove his deity?
4. Have you ever seen antics in church that a leader claimed to be the Holy Spirit's work but instead confused you or even angered you? What are some constructive responses you could have to these situations, rather than only remaining frustrated?

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5. As we covered in this chapter, worship of the Holy Spirit is biblical, and we should maintain a heart of reverence even in our personal and authentic relationship with him. What does reverence look like to you?

2

HOW DO YOU  
ENCOUNTER THE  
HOLY SPIRIT?

# LEARNING TO LIVE

## 1. Identify the Sources of the Spirit's Conviction in Your Life

The Holy Spirit works in our hearts primarily through the declaration of God's Word to us.

We hear it, read it, think about it, remember it, and respond to it. Make a list of the sources he uses in your life to bring conviction upon your heart. Here are several to consider to get you started:

- A friend who consistently speaks the truth to you and dares to make you uncomfortable because they challenge you spiritually (Prov. 27:17)
- A pastor who doesn't shrink from preaching the whole counsel of God to you (Acts 20:27)
- A small group that presses in on your comfort zone, speaking the truth and asking you hard questions about faith, obedience, worship, and personal holiness
- A podcast that hits your heart with convicting realities about living for Jesus
- A conference that sends you home feeling it's time to change for the better
- Social media pages and friends who post clear, unapologetic truths from God's Word and inspire you to live unashamed
- Exemplary people who are more spiritually mature than you in their daily disciplines, marriages, relationships, words, work ethic, godliness, parenting, spending habits, and more

Why identify these sources of conviction? Because they are gifts to you from the Holy Spirit. He puts people in your path who

will be faithful ambassadors for Jesus. If you'll learn to identify these sources, you will be in the perfect position to grow stronger in your faith and apply the next step.

## **2. Commit to Loving Correction, Not Rejecting It**

If you've made a list of what the Spirit uses to convict you, the next step is deciding how you're going to view those sources—and the discomfort they cause you—who speak truth, correction, and encouragement into your life. To put it plainly, you need to commit to loving correction. Billionaire entrepreneurs and top-level athletes will tell you that to accomplish something great or to grow in a skill, you must commit to facing hard truths and addressing your weaknesses. This means that you need to embrace correction. I had a college coach who used to say, "Do not feel bad or get down on yourself if we [the coaching staff] are picking on your swing, pushing you harder in the gym, and pointing out your weaknesses. It may seem like we're always on you, because we are! We want to help you, so we highlight these things. It may feel better never to be critiqued, but you should be very concerned if we ignore you because it likely means you don't listen to correction and we're not able to develop you as much." These approaches are really just expressions of a biblical concept called conviction. Think of it in spiritual terms: the worst form of judgment on this side of heaven is to be left to your own devices, lost in sin—for God not to even bother to intervene. That is the scene in Romans 1:24, where the Bible says that "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity" (NASB 1995). People who ignore the conviction of the Spirit are left stuck in the muck of their love for sin. In contrast, people who live with conviction go farther, grow faster, and get results more than those who live without conviction, because they are living for something bigger than themselves. People with principles know who they

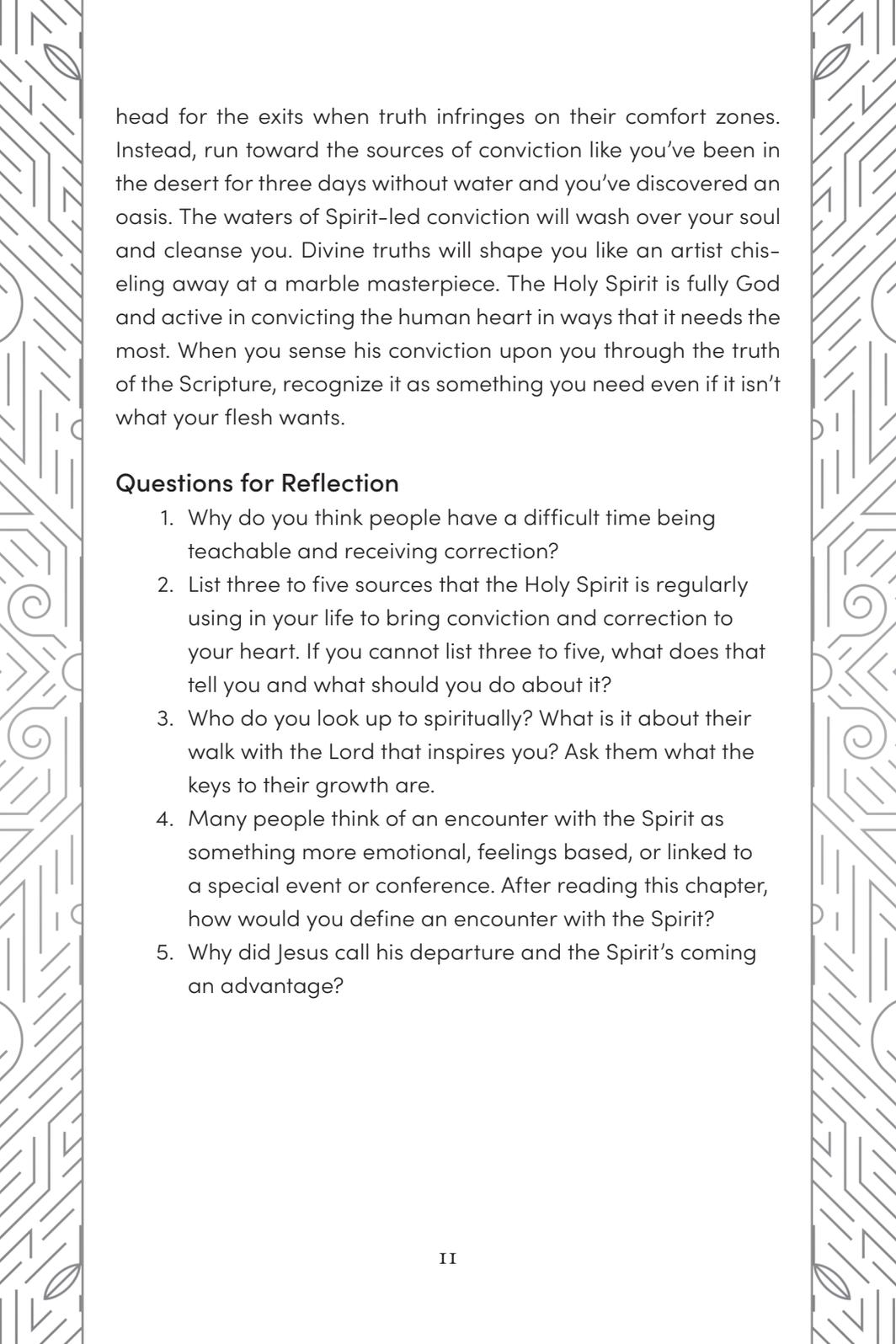
are and why they are here on earth. If you're going to grow as a believer in Jesus and take full advantage of the Spirit's powerful work, commit to loving his conviction, loving the discomfort of hard truth, loving the disruption of correction, and loving the pain that comes with spiritual progress.

If you wanted to get into good shape physically, you'd fire a gym trainer who didn't make you a little bit sore and push you to your limits. If you were a sports fan and your favorite team's coach let players just go through the motions, you'd call for him or her to be fired. We love strong and clear correction when we want results. So why not commit to loving the avenues through which the correction and conviction of the Spirit come into your life?

I always love to tell folks in our church, "God does love you the way you are, but he also loves you too much to leave you the way you are." He lovingly saves us while we are still dead sinners (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:1-3), then makes us alive in Christ and transforms us to do good works and live for his glory (Eph. 2:4-10). God will use your determination in powerful ways. Commit to loving the Spirit's conviction and watch as truth penetrates your heart and transforms every area of your life. Like getting your teeth cleaned even though it can be uncomfortable, learn to say, "It hurts so good!"

### **3. Run toward the Spirit's Conviction, Not from It**

This one is easier said than done, but if you identify the sources that bring conviction on your life, then commit to loving the correction and conviction, you're ready to run, and not away. The temptation to run from conviction is an ever-present threat to your spiritual growth, and no one is immune. It may even be that the older and more mature we get in the faith, the stronger the temptation to give in to pride and resist wise counsel. I remember talking to an older mentor who said that too many people



head for the exits when truth infringes on their comfort zones. Instead, run toward the sources of conviction like you've been in the desert for three days without water and you've discovered an oasis. The waters of Spirit-led conviction will wash over your soul and cleanse you. Divine truths will shape you like an artist chiseling away at a marble masterpiece. The Holy Spirit is fully God and active in convicting the human heart in ways that it needs the most. When you sense his conviction upon you through the truth of the Scripture, recognize it as something you need even if it isn't what your flesh wants.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Why do you think people have a difficult time being teachable and receiving correction?
2. List three to five sources that the Holy Spirit is regularly using in your life to bring conviction and correction to your heart. If you cannot list three to five, what does that tell you and what should you do about it?
3. Who do you look up to spiritually? What is it about their walk with the Lord that inspires you? Ask them what the keys to their growth are.
4. Many people think of an encounter with the Spirit as something more emotional, feelings based, or linked to a special event or conference. After reading this chapter, how would you define an encounter with the Spirit?
5. Why did Jesus call his departure and the Spirit's coming an advantage?

3

HOW DOES THE  
SPIRIT CHANGE  
YOUR LIFE?

# LEARNING TO LIVE

## 1. Ask the Spirit to Give You Confidence in Your Salvation

You may or may not struggle with assurance regarding your salvation, but no matter what, asking the Spirit to give you confidence in your salvation will do one of two things. You will either receive new and great confidence as he bears witness within your spirit that you are a child of God (Rom. 8:16), or, with your confidence strengthened, the Spirit will embolden you to not just be satisfied with your salvation but to proclaim the gospel to see others saved as well.

## 2. Ask the Spirit to Open Your Eyes through Illumination

Are you struggling with a hunger for the Word? Do you doubt whether the Bible is sufficient as God's Word to you? Do you have good discipline but feel your time with the Lord is mostly just a religious routine? Instead of checking the box on your daily reading plan and going through the motions, spend more time in prayer today or tomorrow, asking the Spirit to open your eyes, to ignite your heart with a never-ending hunger for the Word, and to give you greater understanding of and appreciation for who your God is and how you ought to live (Eph. 1:17-18).

## 3. Make a Bigger Deal about Your Sanctification

Yes, God is sovereign over your sanctification *and* he provides opportunities for spiritual growth that you can take advantage of. Do you want to be more mature? Do you want to deal with sin and get the help you need to fight your battles against it? Are you

tired of a marriage that goes through the motions? Is your parenting approach little more than a long fuse of passive tolerance followed by an angry outburst of, "That's it! I've had enough!?" Have you relegated church gatherings to the back burner, considering small groups or equipping classes to be mostly for other people? Are morning devotions or evening prayer getting in the way of your fitness routine or scrolling through social media?

It doesn't matter whether we're pastors or new Christians, you and I need to make a bigger deal about our sanctification. Let's admit our weakness, embrace the Spirit's strength, and prioritize the things that progressively grow us, not the things that prohibit our growth. This is not a fear tactic, it's just the honest to God truth: one day you will either look back with gratitude on the hard decisions you made to prioritize your sanctification, or you'll look back with excuses and regrets. Which is it going to be?

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. In what ways can progressive sanctification relieve the burden and shame of never being perfect enough for God and others?
2. The Father prepared our salvation, the Son paid for our salvation, and the Spirit preserves our salvation. How should this reality impact the way you pray and praise God?
3. Using Scripture and your own words, how would you respond to someone who told you that you could lose your salvation?
4. What are some practical ways that you are going to take holiness more seriously?

4

WHAT DOES IT  
MEAN TO WALK  
BY THE SPIRIT?

# LEARNING TO LIVE

## 1. Live like You Are at War

Sin is a big deal, and we should resist the temptation to downplay it. To walk by the Spirit consistently, we need to remember that the flesh will not go down without a fight. The flesh is not neutral. It sets its desire against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). Living like you are at war with sin will keep you on high alert. You don't need to fear sin, but you need to be ready to fight it. Your emotions, temptations, old vices, new vices, and even pride in thinking you've conquered all the toughest sins and can hit cruise control must be treated with the utmost seriousness. First Corinthians 10:12 says, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (NKJV). I know it can feel exhausting at times, but the Spirit will empower you to endure in the fight of your life against the flesh. Ask him for help.

## 2. Take Inventory of Your Spiritual Orchard

Florida oranges are so important to the juice economy that the harvest is closely watched every year. On average, some 11 million tons of oranges are produced in Florida, accounting for 70 percent of all orange production. Florida orange producers go to great lengths to prepare and protect their harvests because their livelihoods are dependent on their inventory. In the same way, your spiritual livelihood is linked to the fruit of the Spirit. If it is not being produced in your life in a healthy and regular way, your next step is the most crucial. If you've never taken inventory of your spiritual orchard, you ought to because it's a great opportunity to be assured of the Spirit's work in your life or to be convicted that you are walking according to the flesh. Are you seeing the fruit of the Spirit in your life? Be encouraged. The Spirit is working

in you. Are you not seeing the fruit of the Spirit in your life? Be repentant and ask the Holy Spirit to produce his fruit in you as you humble yourself. God always responds favorably to the broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17).

### **3. Reject the Extremes**

Do you lean more toward loose boundaries and overusing your Christian liberty, or do you tend to lean more toward legalism? Reject both extremes. Christian liberty is good, but we must take care how we use it. Walking by the Spirit means that even when we *can* do something, we are still sensitive to how it can impact others or how it could tempt us to go too far (Rom. 14:13; Gal. 5:13). Furthermore, walking by the Spirit also means we are reliant on the Spirit, and not on our man-made rules and regulations, as we live, practice morality, and seek to walk in righteousness. Reject extremes. Embrace biblical balance.

### **4. Get Biblically Busy**

We now understand that walking by the Spirit means to be pre-occupied with the Spirit and to go everywhere focused on what the Spirit would have us do. The best strategy against the flesh is not to be passive or reactive but to be aggressive and proactive. You don't have to do all of the following suggestions, but consider getting busy with some of these: Get involved in your church if you're not already, serve your community, give generously, put your hands to work in spiritual ways, get counseling, dig in with a small group, go on a short-term missions trip, be a long-term missionary, take an equipping class at your church, go on a marriage retreat, or invest in your kids' spiritual growth and not just their athletic or artistic growth. In all of your busyness to succeed in many facets of life, are you biblically busy? Walking by the Spirit

means that wherever life takes you, you look at every situation through the lens of what God wants for you, not just what you want.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Do some deeds of the flesh tempt you more than others? Name them and identify why they tempt you.
2. List four or five things that keep you busy every week. After that, list four or five spiritual things that keep you busy every week. Is there an area the Spirit has been convicting you in to bring balance? Is there something you believe you should focus on more or shouldn't be focusing on as much?
3. Do you struggle with legalism or overusing your liberty? What steps can you take this week to shift into more balance?
4. Why do you think people don't take sin as seriously as they should? Why should we live like we are at war with the flesh?

5

WHAT ARE THE  
BAPTISM AND FILLING  
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

**Table 5.1: Four Special Cases of Conversion**

<b>Location</b>	Jerusalem/Judea	Samaria	Caesarea	Ephesus
<b>Text</b>	Acts 2:1-21	Acts 8:14-24	Acts 10:1-11:18	Acts 19:1-7
<b>Time</b>	Day of Pentecost, ca. AD 30	ca. AD 31-32	ca. AD 36	ca. AD 52
<b>People</b>	Jews	Samaritans	Gentiles	Disciples of John the Baptist
<b>Holy Spirit</b>	Baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit	Received the Holy Spirit	Received the Holy Spirit	Received the Holy Spirit
<b>Sign</b>	Spoke in tongues as a sign to the Jews	None recorded	Spoke in tongues as a sign to the Jews	Spoke in tongues and prophesied as a sign to the Jews
<b>Circumstances</b>	Tarrying together	Laying on of hands	Peter preaching	Laying on of hands

*Source: John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, Biblical Doctrine (Wharton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 356.*

**Table 5.2: The Baptism of the Holy Spirit versus the Filling of the Holy Spirit**

<b>Baptism of the Spirit</b>	<b>Filling of the Spirit</b>
Occurs only once in each believer's life	Is a repeated experience
Never happened before the day of Pentecost	Occurred in the Old Testament
True of all believers	Not necessarily experienced by all
Cannot be undone	Can be lost
Results in a position	Results in power
Occurs when we believe in Christ	Occurs throughout the Christian life
No prerequisite (except faith in Christ)	Depends on yieldedness

*Source: Charles Ryrie, Basic Theology (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1986), 379.*

# LEARNING TO LIVE

How might we live in light of the truths we've walked through in this chapter? Let me offer you three simple steps you can take today.

## **1. Filter All Experiences through Scripture**

No matter where you are on the theological spectrum, a wise Christian will filter all experiences through the Scriptures and "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1). There are many healthy debates regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit that can take place across denominational lines, but there are also many outlandish claims and many dangerous teachers who put words into God's mouth and teach a twisted version of the passages we've unpacked here. Charismatics, Pentecostals, Reformed Baptists, Lutherans, and everyone in between will not agree on every aspect of this subject, but if we all submit to the Word, we can have more unity than we've often experienced.

## **2. Seek the Filling of the Holy Spirit through Prayer and Reading Scripture**

Since being filled with the Spirit is being yielded and submissive to him and being preoccupied with what he desires over our fleshly desires, ask him to fill you each and every day and to fill your mind with the Word (Col. 3:16). There is no need to look for fillings anywhere other than your prayer life and the Word. These are your power sources. When we are on our knees in total dependence on the Spirit and filling our minds with Scripture, we are in the perfect posture to be filled. A heart that is bowed low before God in humility is prepared to be used greatly by God. Do you make it a regular practice to ask him to fill you each day? Do you confess sin, ask for wisdom, and express your total dependence

on him to bear his fruit in your life? That may be the best step you've ever taken in your walk with the Lord. The Father sent the Spirit and Jesus said it would be to your advantage, so take full advantage of the Helper.

### **3. Reject Any Requirements for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit Except Grace Alone through Faith Alone in Christ Alone**

Now that you have studied and seen that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is centered on bringing believers into the body of Christ, there can be no requirement for it except the same requirements for salvation: faith. Do not accept any theological position that calls for you to speak in tongues as evidence of Spirit-baptism or to speak certain phrases or have someone lay hands on you at an altar. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was never sought, never coerced, and never a human transaction.

#### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What is the difference between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit?
2. Why should we hesitate to follow any teacher who says that speaking in tongues is the required evidence for the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
3. Should we treat those who hold different views on this subject as brothers and sisters in Christ even if we strongly disagree with them? What would this look like practically?
4. Have you ever prayed for the Holy Spirit to fill you? What was the evidence of his filling work in your life?
5. What are some steps you can take today to "be being filled" (Eph. 5:18) with the Holy Spirit?

6

WHAT DOES  
SPIRIT-FILLED WORSHIP  
LOOK LIKE?

# LEARNING TO LIVE

## 1. Recognize Worship as a Lifestyle, Not Merely Music at Your Church or on the Radio

I'll never forget when I was first taught that worship is a lifestyle. My relegation of worship to Sunday singing and car rides with my Spotify playlist pumping was only a small part of the whole picture. For the believer, all of life is worship. What are you compartmentalizing? Are there areas of your life that you think belong to you and God isn't privy to? Do you think some things are just yours to enjoy and that terms like *Spirit-filled* and *worship* are more of a church experience you'll try to make it to on Sunday? Commit to seeing worship as a lifestyle. It will change the way you worship and live.

## 2. Require a Biblically High Standard for Anyone Leading Ministry at Your Church

Church leaders who get away with spiritual abuse and misleading the body can do so for two reasons. First, they manipulate and deceive people. Second, people's standards are not biblical. Leaders in many circles today prefer terms such as *influencer*, *relevant*, *cool*, *appealing*, *talented*, *innovative*, *creative*, *visionary*, *builder*, and on and on. What if we put less stock in those terms and more in the terms in 1 Timothy 3:1–7? What if people rose up biblically to remove leaders from powerful positions who are not leading us in worship the right way? Don't cower in fear. Step out in faith.

## 3. Remember That the Glory of God Is the Highest Goal of Worship

If someone comes up to me and says, "Wow! I just love your sermons. You are so funny!" I am deeply disappointed. If someone

leaves church and says, “The music is so cool!” We have failed. What do you say about gatherings for worship in the church? How do you lead worship in your home? Where is your focus when you worship God through your life? If you are the star of your own show, it’s time to reroute the glory to where it belongs.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Worship is a sensitive topic for people and churches. Are there certain truths or examples in this chapter that convict, encourage, or challenge you?
2. In your own words, write a biblical definition of worship.
3. Read Isaiah 6:1–7. What should our response be to the holiness of God?
4. Do you think we need to be careful of extremes when it comes to expression in our worship? Some insist that raising your hands is little more than charismatic manipulation, while others insist that if you don’t manifest expressively in a church service, you haven’t experienced the Spirit. How might you live in biblical balance?
5. Are there specific things you should talk about with a church leader when it comes to worship conduct at your church, without being unbiblically opinionated or rude? If a church leader is abusive and domineering, how might your approach be different than if a church leader were to kindly disagree with you on some aspects of this chapter?

7

WHAT ARE THE GIFTS  
OF THE SPIRIT?

**Table 7.1: Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament**

<b>Romans 12:6–8</b>	<b>I Corinthians 12:7–10</b>	<b>I Corinthians 12:28</b>	<b>Ephesians 4:11</b>
<i>Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us</i>	<i>To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good</i>	<i>And God has appointed in the church</i>	<i>And he gave</i>
		Apostles	Apostles
Prophecy	Prophecy	Prophets	Prophets
			Evangelists
	Ability to distinguish between spirits		
Teaching	Word of wisdom and word of knowledge	Teachers	Pastors and teachers
Exhorting			
	Working of miracles	Miracles	
	Gifts of healing	Gifts of healing	
Service		Helping	
Leading		Administration	
	Various kinds of tongues	Various kinds of tongues	
	Interpretation of tongues		
Giving			
	Faith		
Mercy			

# LEARNING TO LIVE

## **1. Define the Gifts the Way the Bible Does**

The most important question is, What does God say about this? Christians may disagree on aspects of the gifts, but it's vital we define the gifts according to Scripture. If someone says they can teach, we would expect them to teach the Bible with clarity and accuracy. All who sit under their teaching would say, "The Scriptures make sense when you explain them." In like manner, if someone says they can heal, they must operate in that gift regularly, unequivocally, and normatively. They should be visiting hospitals and going room to room healing incurable diseases, then leading people in mass salvations as they are awestruck by the one true God.

## **2. Be Respectful of Those You Disagree With**

Refrain from pettiness in your passion for your position. We can have strong convictions or believe we are right without being ugly about it. Most of those you disagree with will be your neighbors in heaven for eternity, unless they are false teachers or believe in a false gospel. In-house debates are just that, in-house—meaning we are family. Let's keep that in mind. There is nothing wrong with choosing a new church to fellowship with and be a member of because you have unity on issues you find important, but be careful to speak well and tastefully even about those you disagree with.

## **3. Be Unashamed and Unafraid of Defending What the Bible Says**

When it comes to those who make truth relative and make a mockery of spiritual gifts, do not be ashamed or afraid to defend biblical truth. Even though Paul considered the Corinthians his

family in Christ, he rebuked them for their abuses of the gifts and unrepentant sin. That is what drives the entire letter of 1 Corinthians. You are not helping anyone by shoving truth under the rug to avoid uncomfortable conversations. Speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). God's Word is worth defending, and it is loving to challenge lies with his truth for the good of his people and his glory.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Does the number of spiritual gifts or the definition of certain gifts surprise you? Why or why not?
2. How would you summarize the purpose of spiritual gifts?
3. What would you say to someone who believes they have a spiritual gift but show no evidence of operating in that gift?
4. Have you ever had a disagreement with someone regarding spiritual gifts? How did you maintain respect and a charitable spirit in the midst of disagreement?
5. Name a situation in which you may speak more strongly to someone, even rebuking them, in a disagreement on spiritual gifts.

8

HOW DO YOU OPERATE  
IN THE GIFTS OF  
THE SPIRIT?

# LEARNING TO LIVE

## 1. Call Out False Teachers and Dangerous Movements Who Threaten the Church's Witness

This practical step might be the most uncomfortable one, but it's necessary. The Bible does command that false teachers be marked (Rom. 16:17–18) and that evil deeds be exposed (Eph. 5:11), but who should do that and how should it be done? When ministries and pastors have already blasted something or someone, how do you determine your own course of action? Should what others do factor into what you do?

Many questions arise, but these five from John Piper can be especially helpful when determining whether to name someone publicly:<sup>1</sup>

1. *The seriousness and deceitfulness of the error.* You might not want to go after everyone who teaches an eschatology different from yours or who holds a differing view unrelated to salvation. At the same time, you would be wise to deal strongly with those who malign Christ, the gospel, Scripture, the character of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, and other essentials of the Christian faith.
2. *The size of the audience.* Is it growing? When someone with a massive following says suspect things, it behooves the Christian to mention the troubling theology and the troubling person propagating it.
3. *The duration of their ministry.* Did they make one blunder or are they constantly doing it? Major teachers who have been consistently deceiving people for years, yet repeatedly making excuses, avoiding accountability, “repenting,”

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1. John Piper, “Should We Call Out False Teachers or Ignore Them?” *Desiring God*, October 4, 2019, [www.desiringgod.org/interviews/should-we-call-out-false-teachers-or-ignore-them](http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/should-we-call-out-false-teachers-or-ignore-them).

and reappearing in the news for ridiculous antics ought to be called out.

4. *The vulnerability of the people for whom you are responsible.* If you're an elder or a church leader, a small group leader, or God has given you broad influence, the sentiment of "I just stay in my lane" is unacceptable and disobedient. You don't have to blast every false teacher all over your social media every week, but when mainstream false teachers pound podcast platforms, YouTube, and social media and you say nothing, I would lovingly challenge you to consider what Christ would have you do. God has called you to be a protector, shepherd, caregiver, watchman or watchwoman, and a herald of truth.
5. *Your role in influencing shepherds who need to learn to discern false teachers.* Are you a leader of leaders? Do you train church planters, pastors, small group leaders, or seminarians? Do you have a large online platform or a greater reach than others? If so, you ought to think deeply about speaking up and naming dangers. Your platform, like your body and your life, is not yours. It belongs to God (Luke 14:25–35; 1 Cor. 6:19–20; 10:31).

In your calling out false teaching, do keep in mind that slinging mud all over the place is not a spiritual gift. The best protection against the darkness of error is the light of truth, so call out error in obedience to God, but major on edifying truth so that people learn about their God.

## **2. Be Accountable to a Faithful Church as a Way to Thrive in Your Christian Service**

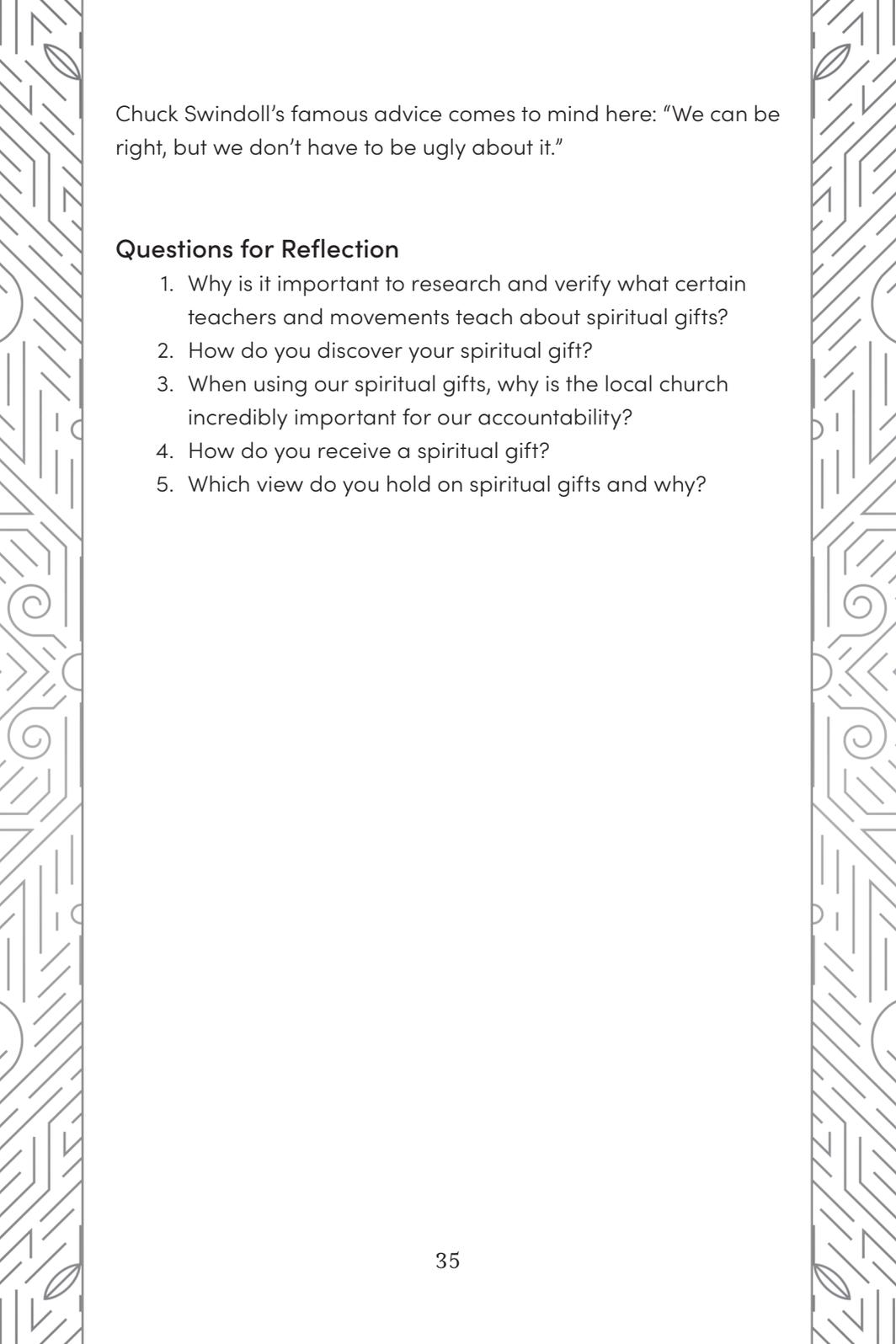
Your spiritual gift may have been given to *you*, but it's for the benefit of the *church*. If you're not plugged in to a church, you

ought to be. Your spiritual gift is not limited to Sunday use only, but connecting with the body every Sunday is going to stir up your heart (Heb. 10:24–25), help you bear burdens with others (Gal. 6:1), and discover new ways to serve. Are you more of a spectator these days? It's time to embrace this truth: God the Holy Spirit has gifted you to bring value to the body of Christ. When you aren't functioning in your gifting, you're missing out on the joy of purpose, and the body is missing out on what you bring to it.

### **3. Study Carefully before Coming to Dogmatic Conclusions**

One of the best ways you can bring glory to God and walk in the Spirit is to apply yourself to studying his Word before coming to dogmatic conclusions. I may seem sure of what I believe, but I have been studying these issues for more than ten years, and I must be ready to admit that I can be wrong. The best we can do is study the Word, submit to what is clear, ask the Spirit for help, and weigh every claim against the truth of God's Word. Whether you agree or disagree with my convictions on miraculous spiritual gifts, I hope you'll be diligent in your own study.

Though we needed to wade into the waters of debated doctrinal views in these last two chapters, I hope you come away seeing the bigger picture of spiritual gifts and the importance of unity, despite disagreement. When it comes to false teachers and fighting the good fight, study the issue before naming names and check your heart. Do you want to care for souls, or just crush opponents? I haven't always been perfect and sinless in my calling out of false teaching, and sometimes it's tempting to share things that aren't theological but would end the debate by exposing people's lifestyle choices. However, we must use wisdom so that when we look back one day on our lives and ministries, our regrets about what we've said and how we've said it are minimal.



Chuck Swindoll's famous advice comes to mind here: "We can be right, but we don't have to be ugly about it."

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Why is it important to research and verify what certain teachers and movements teach about spiritual gifts?
2. How do you discover your spiritual gift?
3. When using our spiritual gifts, why is the local church incredibly important for our accountability?
4. How do you receive a spiritual gift?
5. Which view do you hold on spiritual gifts and why?

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IS BEING SLAIN IN THE  
SPIRIT BIBLICAL?

# LEARNING TO LIVE

## **1. Keep the Goal of Winning People above the Goal of Winning Arguments**

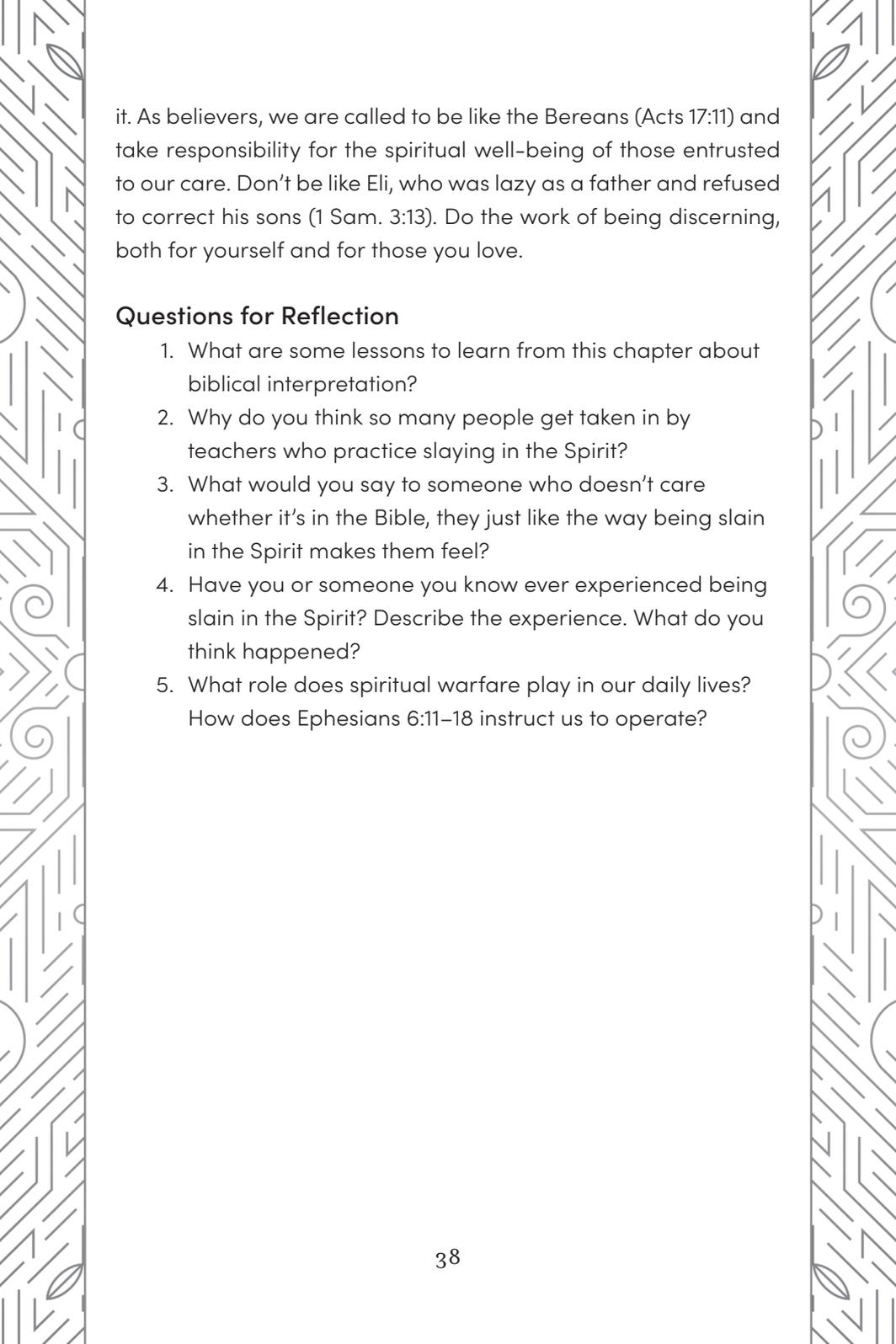
The topic of being slain in the Spirit can turn up the heat in a lot of theological circles because people are attached to their experiences or the leaders they have looked up to. Stick to the truth and be careful of getting sucked into character assaults and petty arguments. The Word of God stands on its own, and it doesn't change the truth when people do not submit to the truth. You do not need to get emotionally charged and crush opponents. Just keep speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

## **2. Face the Uncomfortable Reality of Spiritual Warfare**

The demonic realm is real. Spiritual warfare is real. Satan and his kingdom of darkness attack people, use false teachers (2 Peter 2), and seek to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:9-10). Satan's goal is to possess and dominate as many people as he can. He hates God, he hates the true work of the Spirit, and he hates you. Facing this reality lessens the shock of false teaching to the point where you are able to handle it and not be caught off guard. Think of Peter's goal as he wrote 2 Peter 2, or Jude in writing his letter. They wanted the church to face the dark reality of false teachers so that they could stand firm in the faith. No need to run in fear. Stand in faith!

## **3. Be Discerning about What Conferences or Events to Go To**

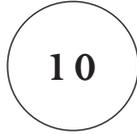
Wouldn't it be easier if everyone who claimed to be a Christian or every conference that our teens went to were truly gospel focused? Discernment is a spiritual gift for a reason. We desperately need



it. As believers, we are called to be like the Bereans (Acts 17:11) and take responsibility for the spiritual well-being of those entrusted to our care. Don't be like Eli, who was lazy as a father and refused to correct his sons (1 Sam. 3:13). Do the work of being discerning, both for yourself and for those you love.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What are some lessons to learn from this chapter about biblical interpretation?
2. Why do you think so many people get taken in by teachers who practice slaying in the Spirit?
3. What would you say to someone who doesn't care whether it's in the Bible, they just like the way being slain in the Spirit makes them feel?
4. Have you or someone you know ever experienced being slain in the Spirit? Describe the experience. What do you think happened?
5. What role does spiritual warfare play in our daily lives? How does Ephesians 6:11–18 instruct us to operate?



DOES THE SPIRIT  
SPEAK?

# LEARNING TO LIVE

## 1. Trust God's Word as the Source of the Spirit's Voice

My prayer for you is that after reading this chapter you are even more eager and confident to approach God's Word, knowing that the Spirit will give you clarity through it. Remember what we've learned in earlier chapters. Illumination is the opening of our eyes to his truth. He can and will give you eyes to see and ears to hear. Look to his Word and embrace Psalm 119:15–16. Meditate on his precepts and do not neglect his Word.

## 2. Look to the Spirit in Times of Weakness

We all go through times of despair and seasons when we don't feel close to God. Instead of looking for mystical signs of his presence, look to the Spirit through prayer. Cry out to him as in the examples we have from Scripture. Ask him to fill you, to bear fruit in you, to pour out his wisdom upon you. Instead of being lured by the temptation of mystical signs and superstitions, thank the Spirit for interceding for you in your weakness. Embrace your limitations and relish his role to help you when you cannot help yourself. We love to try to make it on our own to build up our human ego. Lay ego aside and look to his strength. You will find perfect peace.

## 3. Use Wisdom with Christian Liberty

When you can't find a verse that gives the Spirit's clear guidance for a decision, remember that he has given clarity on Christian liberty. You *can* be confident in decisions even when there is no definitive answer in Scripture because the one answer that

outweighs all the rest is that you and I ought to bring glory to God in every area of our lives.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Have you ever claimed that God told you something, or have you ever felt you received an impression from the Spirit? How would you express or clarify that in light of this chapter?
2. Many rationalists get uncomfortable with the idea of the Spirit leading, while many emotionalists believe every thought could be the Spirit speaking. How do you stay balanced in biblical truth when discerning what the Spirit is leading you to do?
3. What danger is there in believers' seeking out a special word from the Lord outside of Scripture?
4. How should we reason with someone who frequently tells us they feel like God is telling them things?
5. Do you agree with my conclusions in this chapter? Why or why not? Is there anything you would express differently? (Use Scripture to explain.)

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HOW TO PRESERVE THE  
UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

**Figure II.I: Concentric Circles of Doctrinal Distinction**

