



Part 3

People Empowering

Introduction:

We explored something of what it means to live a *God Centred* life in **part 1** of this course. He is now your reason for living! He saved you from your old life and has given you new life, new hope and an eternal future. Awesome! So you are now working on deepening your relationship with God by reading the Bible and praying, as well as getting involved in a great church.

Part 2 explained that everything we now do is *purpose driven* because we do life in a new context, and that context is the purpose of God for the world. He wants people to be reconciled to him and to choose to love him for who he is. His purpose affects everything we now do, both as individuals and as a church family. It shapes our mission and our fellowship; it shapes our personal lifestyle and relationships. We are truly becoming a purpose driven people.

The good news is that God has not done all this for us, and set his purpose out for us, without giving us the power to accomplish it. He has given us everything we need to be the men and women of God he created us to be! That's an exciting prospect and the theme of the final part of this Discovery course. So let's explore what we mean when we say God is *people empowering*...

Session 9 – Know Your Power Supply

Session 10 – Know Yourself

Session 11 – Playing Your Part

Session 12 – Taking Responsibility



Session 9

Know Your Power Supply

After Jesus had risen from the dead he prepared his disciples for the fact that he was going to be returning to heaven and leaving them. They were understandably worried! But he told them not to be because he was going to send the Holy Spirit to be with them in his physical absence. He actually said that this was a better arrangement because the Holy Spirit would dwell in every single Christian but, as a human being, Jesus could only ever actually meet a limited number of people (*see: John 13:25-29*).

Jesus confirmed this just before he ascended to heaven saying:

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (Acts 1:8)

That power came upon them at Pentecost (Acts 2) and they were each filled with the Holy Spirit. That encounter, which came some time after they had put their faith in Jesus, gave them the power to live the Christian life effectively.

God the Holy Spirit is therefore our 'power supply'. He dwells in each of us; leading guiding and empowering us to do his will and make a difference in our lifetime. He is the presence of God with us. This makes us 'naturally supernatural' because we have a resource in us that unsaved people do not have!

So, let's explore what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit a little more:

Who is The Holy Spirit?

Christians believe in the *Trinity*, which states that God exists as three distinct persons yet remains one! The three persons are God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity is quite complicated to explain, as it is truth for the heart not the head! It is an expression of God's awesome majesty that there are things about him that we cannot understand with our human logic; we just have to believe them because the Bible reveals them to us.

The doctrine of the Trinity comprises three basic truths:

- *There is one God.*
- *God exists eternally in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*
- *These three are equal in every way. All possess the fullness of the divine essence.*

Examples of the Trinity can be found in: *Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:32-33*

The point to establish here is that the Holy Spirit is ‘God with us’. He comes to dwell in us when we are saved:

‘Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God’
(1 Corinthians 6:19 NLT)

(see also: *Ephesians 1:13; 2 Timothy 1:14*).

The ‘power supply’ we have is therefore the Holy Spirit; God in us – what a mind-blowing concept!

What does the Holy Spirit do?

The Holy Spirit leads us from the inside out! His role is described in various ways. He:

- Guides us into God’s truth (*John 16:13-15*)
- Teaches us (*John 14:26*)
- Empowers us to do what Jesus did (*John 14:11-14*)
- Helps us to outwork the Christian life (*Philippians 2:12-13*)

When does this start?

All Christians have the Holy Spirit in one sense, because no one can become a Christian in the first place without the work of the Spirit within them. We are *‘born of the Spirit’* (*John 3:5*), and Paul tells us that *‘if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ’* (*Romans 8:9*).

However the Holy Spirit in you needs releasing to fully do his work. This moment is described by the Bible as being ***baptised in the Holy Spirit***. You will remember from session 2 that ‘baptism’ means to ‘immerse’. And just as you were consciously immersed in water, you also need to consciously ask God to immerse you fully in the Holy Spirit.

This is part of the ‘package deal’ of salvation, along with repentance and faith, and baptism in water:

‘Repent and be baptised, 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.’
(Acts 2:38)

It is God’s way of placing us in the realm of spiritual power so that we can not only enjoy the new life he has given us but also be effective messengers of the gospel.

We see this same pattern in *Jesus' life*. He was conceived by the Spirit and lived by the Spirit throughout his youth, but before he embarked on his public ministry he had a distinct experience when the Holy Spirit came upon him in a special way to empower him for the task (*Luke 3:21-22; 4:1*).

It was the same with *Jesus' disciples*. They were unquestionably God's children, made clean by the teaching of Jesus (*John 15:3*), and conscious of the Holy Spirit's working within them (*Matthew 16:17; John 20:22*). But they were told to wait in Jerusalem until the power of the Spirit came upon them as we described earlier in this session. If you read Acts 2 you will see the difference it made.

What was true for Jesus and his disciples is true also for us. Born again though we may be, we need to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. Ideally, ***being born again, being baptised in water and being baptised in the Holy Spirit belong together***, part and parcel of the single business of becoming a follower of Jesus Christ.

How does a person receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes the Lord baptises believers in the Spirit by a sovereign act, as on the Day of Pentecost in *Acts 2* and at the household of Cornelius in *Acts 10*. At other times it is received by the laying on of hands, as in Samaria (*Acts 8*).

From the seeker's point of view, we receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the same way as we receive all the blessings of God - ***by faith***.

Everyone has their own story to tell about how it happened for them. But somewhere there was a moment in which they released faith to God and consciously received this empowering from God. Their story will probably include steps such as the following:

- Ask the Lord to cleanse you from all outstanding sin so that you can approach him with confidence. In other words, clear your conscience (*Acts 24:16*).
- Ask him for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: *'If you . . . though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him'* (*Luke 11:13*).
- Praise God and worship him with thanksgiving. This is a powerful means of drawing near to his presence to receive the Holy Spirit – *'Come near to God and he will come near to you'* (*James 4:8*).
- Expect a positive touch from God and to speak in tongues. No one in the Bible was ever baptised in the Holy Spirit and didn't know it!
- Speak or sing your praise out loud. At this point someone may lay hands on you as a point of contact for your faith, just as *'when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied'* (*Acts 19:6*).

- Relax, enjoy God and let your new language flow. When the Lord baptises you in the Holy Spirit you can, and will, speak in tongues provided you don't let prejudice and fear hinder the Spirit.

People's actual experience will vary. The key thing is to accept that baptism in the Holy Spirit is normal for all Christians. You are not trying to replicate anyone else's particular experience, just seeking your own clear encounter with God that leaves you knowing deep in your heart that you are baptised and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

What is speaking in tongues?

Speaking in tongues is speaking in a language you do not understand. When the Holy Spirit baptises us, our lips form strange syllables or words as we yield to his prompting. Our own natural words seem inadequate to praise God as we want. The Holy Spirit then leads us and encourages us (but never forces us) to speak out in tongues.

Once we begin, we should expect the language to start flowing naturally. We will not understand the words we are saying, nor should we expect to, *'for anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit'* (1 Corinthians 14:2). This is you speaking to God 'spirit to spirit', in a new and deeper way.

In this way we experience for ourselves what happened at the beginning, when *'all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them'* (Acts 2:4).

Speaking in tongues is a powerful **personal devotional tool**. It builds you up in your faith (Jude 20) and helps you pray deeply when you cannot find appropriate words in English or your native/mother language. (Romans 8:26).

Living filled with the Holy Spirit

This initial encounter of being baptised in the Holy Spirit leads us into living a life filled with the Holy Spirit. Each day we are to *'live by the Spirit'* (Galatians 5:16).

The Bible teaches us to *'Be filled with the Spirit'* (Ephesians 5:18) which when literally translated means, 'Go on *being filled* with the Spirit.' We are to remain in a place of closeness to God and a conscious awareness that his power is ever-present within us. We are empowered to live an effective Christian life!

How does a drunkard stay drunk? He keeps drinking! And we stay filled with the Spirit by being constantly alert to his presence and letting him fill our lives. We yield to his influence by prayer, speaking in tongues, thanksgiving, worship, fellowship with other Christians and feeding on God's Word.

This is living life filled with the Holy Spirit, your personal power supply!