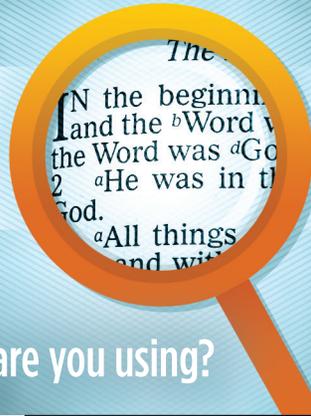


BIBLE OPTICS

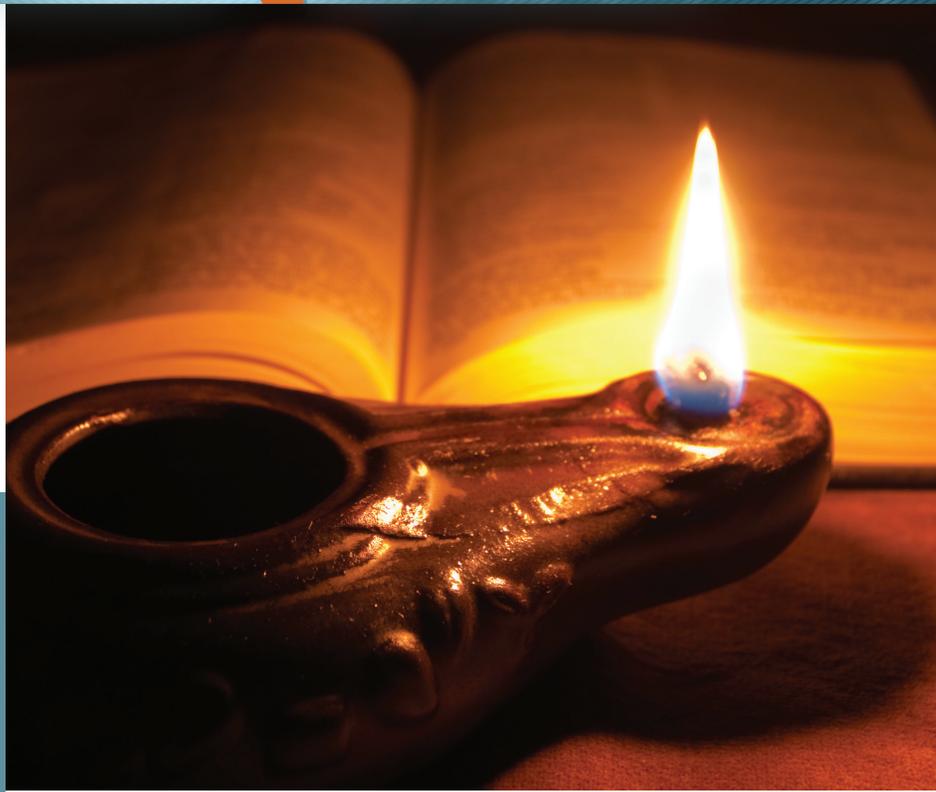


What lens are you using?

The WORD or the world?

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- 07. *Q&A - What is the gift of speaking in tongues?*
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From the Editor

One topic consumed Jesus' attention, especially as He neared His death on the cross. He claimed its power (Luke 4:18), said it was how He cast out demons (Matthew 12:28), taught through it (Acts 1:2), promised it to His disciples (Acts 1:8), and said they needed this more than they needed Him (John 16:7).

What was He referring to? The Holy Spirit! "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16).

"Christ... had an infinite variety of subjects from which to choose, but the one upon which He dwelt most largely was the endowment of the Holy Spirit. What great things He predicted for the church because of this endowment. Yet what subject is less dwelt upon now? What promise is less fulfilled?" (Ellen White, 1 Selected Messages, p. 156-157)

We think it's time to change that scenario. That's why we've dedicated this issue of Bible Optics to understanding the Holy Spirit's work. Let's make 2021 the year to seek God's greatest gift – the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Because He changes everything!



Marshall McKenzie | Editor
Church Growth Director, KTYN Conference

A Sustainable Light

"Church just isn't doing it for me."

"I'm not sure anymore that there is a God."

"There is too much hypocrisy and legalism in the church."

As a millennial in the church, I have heard disgruntled statements like this from nominal and ex-Adventist youth and even some adults. Many of them grew up in church with me. Those who attended Adventist schools seem no stronger in their faith. Friends who had been active in ministry suddenly lack confidence in their religion. I became genuinely concerned with this problem while I was in college. Why do a vast majority of young people have an unsustainable faith? For that matter, why did older people leave? And new converts?



I studied these questions for my senior capstone project and discovered that the trends I see among my friends are widespread. According to an international survey on Adventist millennials, 37% stopped attending church between the ages of 18-29. I wondered, how could a church so saturated with Biblical knowledge not be preparing its youth for the world?

As always, Jesus gives us the answers. In the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) Jesus reveals the great dilemma that we live in. He tells of ten virgins waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom. The five wise virgins have lamps and oil, while the five foolish lack oil for their lamps. At midnight, a cry is heard, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming, go out to meet him!" The virgins with the oil meet the bridegroom with joy; the ones with none are left out in the cold.

The foolish virgins' light was not sustained by the oil. They are unprepared for the most important event of history.

Many today are unprepared. Secularism and rationalism in higher education bombard young Christians, making it hard to maintain faith. Those who leave complain that the church is: 1) intolerant, 2) elitist, 3) anti-science, 4) overprotective, 5) shallow, and 6) repressive.

“They are unprepared for the most important event of history.”

We have taught the ABC's of our doctrine, drilled the truths of prophecy, and thrown Ellen White quotes at young people. Yet these important building blocks of our faith have not developed our youth's spiritual stamina. What is lacking? Why do they walk away?

The interpretation of the parable reveals the answer. "The two classes of watchers [the wise and the foolish virgins] represent the two classes who profess to be waiting for their Lord" (Ellen White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 406).

Two sets of believers are seen in this parable: 1) those who are spiritually prepared to face the world and meet their Savior, and 2) those who are unprepared. The lamps represent the word of God (Psalm 119:105), showing that all have some regard for the Word of God. All are virgins signifying that they profess pure faith (2 Corinthians 11:2). Yet the five foolish virgins' great deficiency is that they are unprepared for the coming of Christ, the heavenly bridegroom. They lack something extremely important.

They lack the oil of the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). Without it, they will find themselves missing "The greatest of all gifts" (MB 132). It is the work of the Spirit of God that, "softens the heart . . . enlightens the mind . . . [and enables] it to discern its own wants..." (Ellen White, *Manuscript Release 19*, p. 228). This lack is seen in the devotional life of our most vulnerable generation.



Research done on the devotional life of young adults showed that in a best-case scenario 53% pray several times a day, 25% read their Bible several times a week and 37% read Spirit of Prophecy once a week. Most young adults have skimpy or non-existent personal devotions. Even if they pray, they are not spending much time personally reading the Bible.

Our young adults' spiritual life is weak because they have not developed a personal, balanced, and sustainable devotional life. "But 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 that I have said to you" (John 14:26)

The wise virgins are prepared to meet the bridegroom because they have oil in their lamps. Their light is sustained by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The foolish virgins also have the light of God's Word, but without the Holy Spirit they exclaim in verse 8, "our lamps are going out". A Biblical understanding alone will not provide us with the means to reach our Savior. We each must receive the Holy Spirit.

We are all like these virgins. We have created a church culture that overemphasizes Biblical understanding and underemphasizes spiritual development through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The foolish virgins' lamps provided a weak flame, one that would not guide them very long without causing them to stumble and fall. An ample supply of oil sustained the wise virgins' lamps, giving a bright light and preparing them to meet their Savior. They were more prepared to travel in darkness than those who had an unsustainable light.

"The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working . . . It is in crisis that character is revealed... It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace" (ibid., p. 411).

“

A Biblical understanding alone will not provide us with the means to reach our Savior.

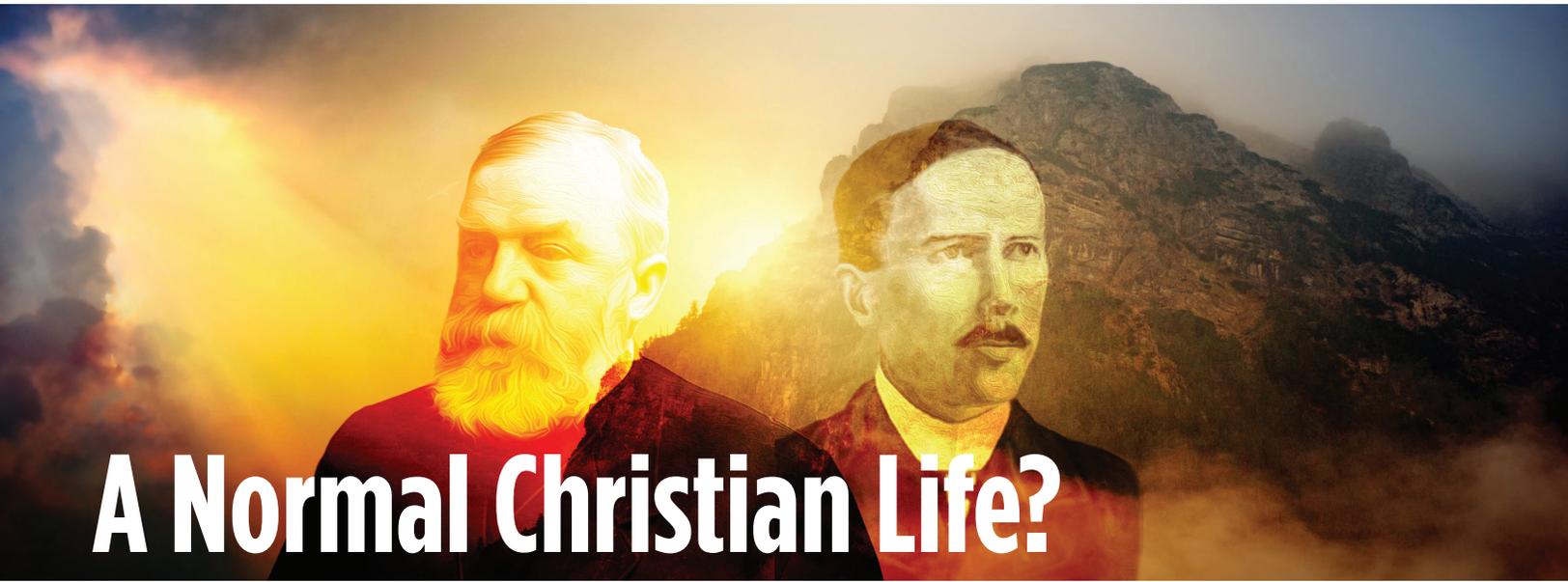
As a church, we cannot continue to create, or be, ill-prepared disciples of Christ. Our knowledge of doctrine will not save us. Only the renewing power of Christ through the Holy Spirit will strength us to walk the path towards Him. I know this from experience. My spiritual lifespan would have been cut short if I had not personally begun to seek the power of the Holy Spirit. Having biblical knowledge prepared me to fall in love with Jesus, but seeking His Spirit has kept me in love with Him.

While we study the Word and go about our daily lives, we must continue to ask for the blessing of the Holy Spirit. For without this gift that Christ has made readily available, we will fail to have productive devotions and fruitful Bible study. We must each receive the gift of the Spirit. Jesus made this process very simple, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). Have you asked for the Spirit today?

By: Elijah Ramjattan

DIG DEEPER

Matthew 25; Ellen White, Christ Object Lessons, ch. 29



A Normal Christian Life?

John Hyde, missionary to India, helped start a movement of prayer in Punjab that brought revival across the region. Inspired by a love for the lost, he pled with God for the salvation of one soul a day for a year, then two a day in the next year, then four a day for the third year. His prayers were answered, and thousands were converted.

American evangelist Dwight L. Moody founded three schools without having an education himself, reached 100 million for Christ without the use of radio or television, and reshaped Victorian Christianity (according to Christian History).

Is that Normal?

Hyde and Moody stand out in Christian history as men of deep faith and lasting influence. We admire them, but their stories seem far removed from our daily lives. “That’s not normal Christianity!” we want to protest. Yet we wonder, could our mundane existence ever have such a profound impact?

Yes! God is calling each of us to live a life that helps to populate heaven. You and I can be used by God to do things, to be someone, who matters for eternity. Spiritual significance is God’s idea of normal for every Christian.

How can we live like that? By plugging into the same power source as Hyde and Moody—the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

The Power Source

Onboard ship to India, young Hyde received a letter speaking of his need for the Holy Spirit. He was offended and tossed the letter aside. Conviction set in however, and he began to plead for the Holy Spirit. His prayers were clearly answered before he arrived in India.

In 1871, two women felt burdened to pray that Moody be baptized by the “Holy Ghost and fire.” His ministry was struggling at the time. The ladies’ prayers had their desired effect. Moody soon joined the ladies in praying for the Holy Spirit. Then one day Moody said, “God revealed himself to me, and I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world.” - Dwight L. Moody (W. R. Moody, *The Life of D. L. Moody*, New York: 1900, p. 149)

Our source of power and spiritual significance is the same as it was for Hyde and Moody. We too can be, no, must be, filled with the Holy Spirit and with power. “The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church is looked forward to as in the future; but it is the privilege of the church to have it now. Seek for it, pray for it... We must have it...” (Ellen White, *Evangelism*, p. 701).

We have every right to pray for, to believe in, the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit. “Our Heavenly Father...desires His people to...pray for power, expect power, and receive power” (Ellen White, *Heavenly Places*, p. 338).

God longs for you to “Arise [and] shine; for your light has come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1). A life of spiritual significance is the ‘normal’ you were designed to experience. Will you seek it earnestly in 2021?

By: Shenalyn Page

Read the story of John Hyde’s life [HERE](#).

More about Dwight L. Moody [HERE](#).



A Heavenly Inauguration

A Pentecostal Outpouring

Have you ever wondered why the Holy Spirit was given at the Feast of Pentecost ten days after Jesus returned to heaven and what it means for our lives today?

There is an Old Testament story that will help us understand. It is told through the ceremonies and rituals of the sanctuary that God asked the Israelites to build following their exodus from Egypt. The book of Hebrews tells us this sanctuary was a “figure” of the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:9 KJV). The Greek word used here for “figure” is “parabole.” It is where we get the English word “parable.” That means that the sanctuary ceremonies were a “ritual parable” or an acted-out story.

The sanctuary parable foretold the coming of our Savior, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. It foretold His death, burial, and resurrection. It also gives us insight into what happened when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. Join me as we follow the Lamb’s story.

You Shall Receive Power

Moments before His ascension, Jesus promised his disciples, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Ten days later, at the Feast of Pentecost, this promise was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit descended upon the waiting disciples as flames of fire (Acts 2:3). On that very day two loaves “baked with leaven” (Leviticus 23:17) were presented at the temple. The leaven represented the power of the Holy Spirit which was given to grow the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:33).

As the Spirit was poured out, the disciples began to miraculously speak the many languages of the people who had gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover. Peter attributed this display of power to Jesus, when he said “being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

What was the result of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit? “That day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41).

Something special happened in heaven that day that made the pentacostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit possible.

Our High Priest

Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection were symbolized by the altar of sacrifice and the laver in the court of the earthly sanctuary. This was a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5). To understand what happened next, we simply follow the “ritual parable.”

When a lamb was offered as a sacrifice for sin, the priest would take the blood into the tabernacle. The blood was the vital component. “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22 NIV).

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things having come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made by hands, that is, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all time, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:11-12 NASB).

NEXT ISSUE: Discover what Christ has been doing for you in the heavenly sanctuary since His return to heaven. Understanding this will give you a whole new perspective on your relationship with God. Plus, a thought-provoking look at the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, and a story of church leader James White that you’ve probably never heard before.

Christ was “exalted to the right hand of God” when He entered the holy place in the heavenly sanctuary. Imagine Christ’s exaltation in heaven with me.

Up to Heaven, Down with the Spirit

Christ, his angels and resurrected saints, all journey to heaven amidst songs of praise. They sweep through the city gates and Christ heads straight for the Father’s throne. He will not allow the inhabitants of heaven to worship Him or celebrate His victory. He must speak to His Father first.

In the Father’s presence, Jesus displays the marks of His mission. He points to His wounded head, pierced side, and marred feet. He raises His nail-scarred hands. Is His sacrifice accepted?

Yes! Father embraces Son, and the command is given, “Let all the angels of God worship Him” (Hebrews 1:6).

Christ is then inaugurated King of Kings and anointed as High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary. The hosts of heaven bow before their King. Praising Him, they sing:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12).

Like fire from heaven, the Holy Spirit descends to the waiting disciples. It is the visible manifestation on earth of Christ’s heavenly inauguration.

“He ascended on high... and gave gifts to men” (Ephesians 4:8).

When the priestly ministry began on earth, God sent fire to ignite the altar (Leviticus 9:24). Likewise, when Christ was inaugurated as High Priest in heaven, He sent “fire” igniting His newborn church. “Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them” (Acts 2:3).

This “fire” was to burn continually, bringing unity and power to the church. We don’t all have the gift of tongues, but the Holy Spirit is promised to all believers.

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you” (1 Corinthians 3:16)?

Unity and Power

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Running down on the beard,
The beard of Aaron,
Running down on the edge of his garments” (Psalm 133:1-2).

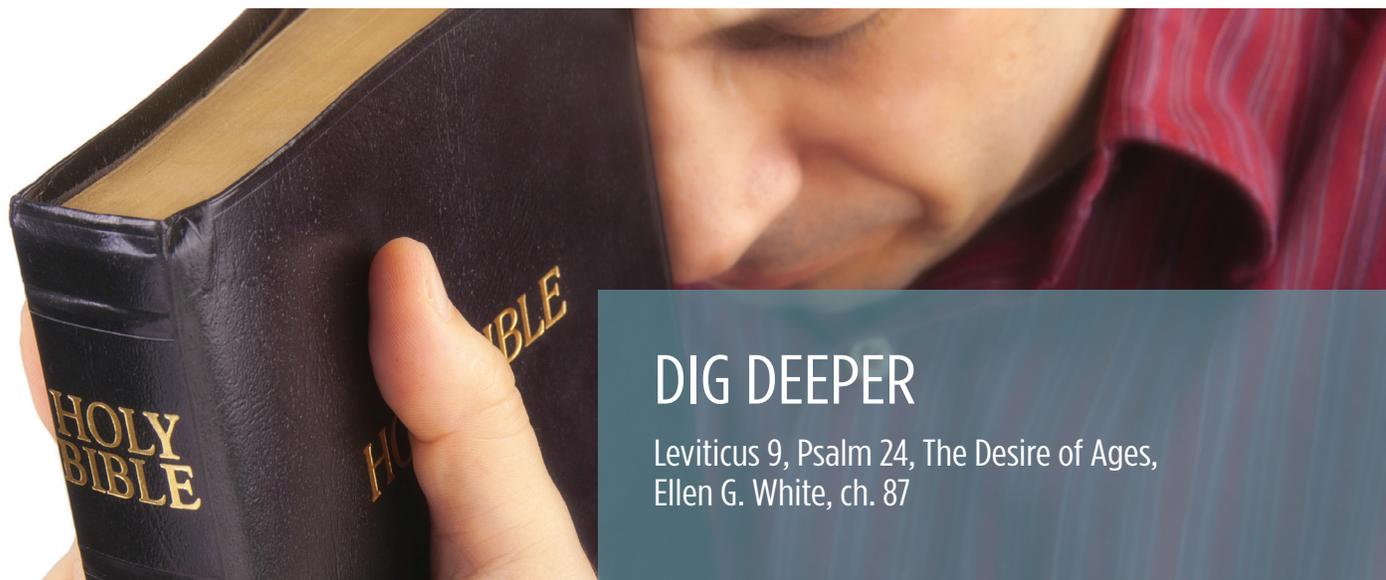
As the disciples gathered together in one accord and prayed for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus officially began His role as High Priest. Like the anointing oil that fell from the beard of Aaron to his garment and then the earth, so also the oil of the Holy Spirit fell from Christ to His New Testament church.

“Pentecost brought them the presence of the Comforter, of whom Christ had said, He ‘shall be in you.’ And He had further said, ‘It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.’ John 14:17; 16:7. Henceforth through the Spirit, Christ was to abide continually in the hearts of His children. Their union with Him was closer than when He was personally with them. The light, and love, and power of the indwelling Christ shone out through them, so that men, beholding, ‘marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus’ Acts 4:13.” (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 75).

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter” (John 14:16 KJV). Our High Priest could not have asked for a more precious gift. As Christians, the Holy Spirit is essential to our success. It enables us to preach the gospel with power and stirs the hearts of men that they may take notice of the story of Jesus.

Let us live by the Spirit’s power today!

By: John Cloud



DIG DEEPER

Leviticus 9, Psalm 24, The Desire of Ages,
Ellen G. White, ch. 87

Bible Q&A



What is the biblical gift of speaking in tongues?

The gift of tongues is often misunderstood among Christians. Some even teach that if you don't speak in tongues you don't have the Holy Spirit. Nothing could be further from the truth. Let's take a look at what the Bible says about this incredible gift.

The first demonstration of this gift was at Pentecost when the disciples "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues" (Acts 2:4). The Scriptures leave no doubt as to what happened. "Everyone heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6).

The gift of tongues is simply the miraculous ability to speak a previously unlearned language. This gift is given in special circumstances to convey the Gospel across language barriers. It is not given to all believers. The Spirit gives gifts "to each one individually as he wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11).

Many of us have witnessed Satan's counterfeit gift of tongues on TV or in internet videos. This is when a person, claiming to receive a message from the Spirit, speaks gibberish that no one understands. This behavior does not glorify God, neither does it benefit His church. "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

God blesses His church with spiritual gifts so that we may be His witnesses to the world. Jesus said, "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." (Acts 1:8). The gift of tongues is not about muttering nonsense in order to prove we have the Holy Spirit. Rather, the gift of tongues is for breaking down language barriers to reach the world with the wonderful news of Jesus.



GOT A QUESTION?

Is there a Bible verse you've been puzzling over? Or a concept that someone shared and you're wondering if it's Bible truth or not? Or maybe its a world event that you're trying to make sense of from a Biblical perspective.

We'd love to be of assistance. Send your questions to: godled@kytn.net.

DIG DEEPER

Mark 16:14-20; Acts 2; Acts 10:44-48;
1 Corinthians 14

A God-Led Conversation, Part 3



Biblical Thinking: The Next Step in the Conversation

God taught me how to study the Bible years ago when I was a student missionary in India. I carried a small copy of the Gospels with me and read them over and over. Slowly, but surely, God expanded my understanding as I pondered the things I read. I began to see what the gospel writers were really saying, rather than just what I thought they were saying. Jesus' words took on new meaning as I saw them in context. Connections I'd never seen before became clear. God was teaching me how to think biblically. I believe Biblical thinking is a skill that each of us needs to learn. If we stop after simply reading the Bible (learn about how to read Biblically [HERE](#)), we leave the conversation before we've ever really listened to God. So, what does it mean to think biblically?

Biblical Thinking

The next step in the process of Bible study is to read the chapter again with your highlighted verses as points of focus. Ask yourself these questions: What is the most obvious meaning of these verses within their immediate context (the chapter)? How do these verses reveal God's thoughts, considering the context?

Pay attention to the questions that arise in your mind as you read. God is framing the conversation so that you can ask the right questions, from the right mindset. You are now praying your way through Scripture with the Lord of the Universe as your guide! We often never get to this questioning part of our Bible study. We too often ask other people what they think the scriptures are saying. We hope they will have the answers. There is nothing wrong with talking to people, but it is important to go to God first with these questions. As the originator of the Bible, He has the answers you need! If you have been studying the Bible for some time, you may find that God brings Bible passages to your mind that are outside the immediate context of your focused reading. God is broadening your context so you can have greater understanding.

Remember that every verse in the Bible has both an immediate context (chapter) and a broader context (book). These are found within the context of the entire Bible. The key is to understand how these contexts connect to create the framework for one complete divine thought. Take time to consider the verses God has pointed out to you within their immediate and broader contexts. Also, consider the whole Bible's teaching on that topic. Is the biblical thought you've discovered supported in all these contexts? If so, you will discover that they enlarge and confirm the biblical idea you are studying.

Give Biblical thinking a try this month! I know your understanding will expand as you take time to think deeply about God's Word.

Next month: What it really means to apply God's Word to your life.



Pastor Marshall McKenzie

*Church Growth Director
KYTN Conference*

Our goal is to help you grow in your understanding of key Bible teachings, gain a Biblical perspective on what is happening in our world today, and find tools to share your faith more effectively.

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