

THE GARDEN STATE CHURCH AND ITS TEACHING
MINISTRY INVITE YOU TO A MONTH OF FOCUS ON THE
HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR HEARTS, MINDS, AND LIVES.

the SPIRIT

ALL CLASSES AT 7:30PM

JUNE 1 - DAY OF PRAYER & FASTING + START OF
30 DAYS OF GUIDED PERSONAL QUIET TIMES

JUNE 1 - CLASS: THE TRINITY

JUNE 8 - CLASS: HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

JUNE 15 - CLASS: INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

JUNE 22 - CLASS: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

JUNE 29 - CLASS: GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

JUNE 30 - DAY OF PRAYER & FASTING

JULY 6 - CLASS: DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

JULY 12 - TUESDAY Q&A/DISCUSSION SESSION

GARDENSTATECHURCH.COM

Holy Spirit Quiet Times

Garden State Church – Set 2 (June 16-30)

Overall Quiet Time Series prepared by Ted Gill, Shari Simpson-Cabelin, Rebecca Goros, Neil Farley, Leslie Garrison, Allison Jones, Tom Hughes, Bobby Ritter, Hannah Ritter, Page Pennell and Jeff Michel

Work of the Spirit (June 16-20)

Work of the Spirit – the Comforter (June 16)

Today's Scripture: John 14:15-18

John 14:15-18: If you do a quick review of different translations, you will see there is a large range of words used to translate what we understand as the promise of the Holy Spirit sent to us, including advocate, comforter, helper, and counselor. Any of these words by themselves would paint an incomplete picture of the Greek word used here, παράκλητον (you can pronounce it as: para-clay-ton). Some translators attempted to get around this by instead using "Paraclete" or simply "Holy Spirit" in place of making that choice.

So, why does this matter?

As we have learned so far this month, the Holy Spirit can be many things, so in a case like this, it can be helpful to consider each word used to describe God's Spirit separately then combine that together for fuller understanding. For the next few days, we will be looking at specific works performed by the Spirit by looking at different title/roles bestowed upon him. Today we will focus on the concept of the Holy Spirit as a comforter.

So, what does "comforter" mean?

Our modern definition of the term may throw us off track a bit: we may imagine plush blankets or merely a shoulder to cry on. Instead, the Biblical use more accurately means: "to strengthen, give succor to, to encourage, to aid" (Carson, the Gospel of John PNTC)

The Spirit, who is with us and in us, always works in our lives to encourage, strengthen, and aid us. We are unaware of the full impact of God's Spirit, sometimes propelling us, and sometimes helping to carry us along while we try to follow God's will. Woah!

Also, please take note of the word "another" right before comforter in **John 14:16**, this is huge, because it helps us link the Spirit's activity to what Jesus himself served as for His disciples. We may lament that we didn't get to physically walk with Christ, but we get to walk with God's Spirit, *another* comforter/advocate/counselor, while Jesus continues to serve in that role for us in heaven!

Personal Reflection

How has the Spirit comforted me?

Do I pay attention to the tiny flashes of faith being given to me?

Do I notice when my soul is in anguish and the Spirit is right there with me, strengthening and aiding me?

Additional Scripture

John 16:7-15

Work of the Spirit – the Champion of the Downtrodden (June 17)

Today's scripture: Zechariah 7

Please read the whole chapter then reflect on what the Lord said, “Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.”

Administer true justice - show mercy and compassion.

- This chapter shows God used His Spirit to send this message
- What areas of your heart need God's mercy and compassion this morning?
- Who can you show mercy and compassion today?

“Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.” **Proverbs 14:31 NIV**

Personal Reflection

How does our response to the poor impact our relationship with God?

Has there ever been a time in your life where administering justice/caring for the poor felt like something that was unrelated to following God?

What would your weeks look like if you allowed the Spirit to prompt you to be a champion of the downtrodden?

Additional Scriptures

Matthew 10:5-8, Mark 4:24, Mark 12:41-44

Work of the Spirit – the Galvanizer (June 18)

Today's scriptures: Acts 1:1-8, Ephesians 1:17-23, Isaiah 11:2-4

The Holy Spirit gives us power and leads us into greater knowledge of God and Jesus, which in turn galvanizes us. The definition of galvanize is: to cause someone to suddenly take action, especially by shocking or exciting them in some way.

Look at these Scriptures:

1. **Acts 1:1-8** “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
 - a. According to Strong’s Concordance, the word power here comes from the Greek, δύναμις *dunamis* meaning (miraculous) power, might, strength.
 - b. From this verse we see that the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the power, ability, and motivation to tell many people about God’s wondrous redemptive plan and love.
2. **Ephesians 1:17-23**
 - a. Through the Holy Spirit we are informed that we’ve been called to a great hope, the riches of his glorious inheritance, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. The very same power that raised Jesus Christ from death to life is also at work within us!
3. **Isaiah 11:2-4**
 - a. In this passage we see some of the amazing attributes of the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel (advice) and might, of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Personal Reflection

What did the Holy Spirit empower the apostles to do?

In what ways are you inspired by the knowledge that this very same Holy Spirit power is also able to work within you?

What changes are you inspired to make?

Additional Scriptures

Job 32:18, Judges 3:10, Acts 2:1-4, Galatians 5:25

Work of the Spirit – the Searcher (June 19)

Work of the Spirit – the Searcher (June 19)

Today's Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

As you read this scripture, pay special attention to the verbs associated with the Spirit:

- Searches (2:10)
- Knows (2:11b)
- Taught (2:13)

Today, we will be focusing on the first aspect of the Spirit's action in this passage, him acting as a searcher, specifically as it relates to the depths of God, then next our own thoughts.

Concerning the depths of God, which is reference to His purposes, plan, and offer of salvation, Ciampa & Rosner's Commentary on 1 Corinthians (PNTC) states *"The Spirit has free and full access to this knowledge, and thereby is able to reveal it to the apostolic preachers, who then declare God's wisdom to the mature. This wisdom is not attainable by human beings without the aid of God's Spirit, a point Paul emphasizes throughout the paragraph and explains further in v. 11. Several terms make this point: it is 'hidden' and cannot be found, and it is a 'mystery' which cannot be solved (2:6–7), reaching to the very 'depths of God' (2:10). Once again, the implication of what Paul is saying deals a blow to human pride and underscores 'awe and wonder at God's free choice to bestow such favor.'"*

This is incredible. The Holy Spirit knew God's thoughts and wanted to share them with the world. The Spirit helped pass them on to us through the apostles and then the Bible. The Spirit also knows your thoughts – any pain, hope, anguish, humor, or confusion you have experienced.

When God allowed His Spirit to reside in you, He also allowed you to understand the spiritual things you previously could not. Then, as you continue to mature in wisdom from God, you continue to understand His thoughts more clearly.

The Holy Spirit, living in you helps the process of maturity along, both in helping you evaluate your own thoughts to take captive that which is NOT from God, and to help you clearly recognize the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy things God desires you understand and think about.

Personal Reflection

Do I believe the Holy Spirit knows the depths of me?

Do I evaluate and search my thoughts?

Am I in awe of how God used the Holy Spirit to communicate His plans to the world?

Am I still desperate for maturity through God's wisdom, regardless of how long I have been a disciple?

Additional Scripture

Isaiah 40:12-17

Work of the Spirit – the Intercessor (June 20)

Today's scripture: Romans 8

The Word tells us that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, in this way the Holy Spirit acts as an Intercessor on our behalf. An Intercessor is one who intervenes or intercedes on behalf of another, especially by prayer.

Definitions of Intercede

- to try to help settle differences between unfriendly individuals or groups (Merriam-Webster)
- to act or interpose in behalf of someone in difficulty or trouble, as by pleading or petition (Dictionary.com)
- to use your influence to persuade someone in authority to forgive another person or save this person from punishment (Cambridge English Dictionary)

Read Romans Chapter 8:1-39

1. **Romans 8:26** “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.
 - a. This verse tells us that in prayer it's okay when we don't know what to pray. The Spirit helps us. The Spirit is right there with us when we pray, appealing to God on our behalf!
2. **Romans 8:27** “And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.”
 - a. The Holy Spirit acts in a manner conforming with God's will on our behalf

Personal Reflection

What connections do you see between the Holy Spirit and prayer?

In what ways will knowing that the Holy Spirit accompanies and aids you in prayer empower and change your prayer life?

Additional Scriptures

Isaiah 53:12, Romans 8:34, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:13,

Gifts of the Spirit (June 21-25)

Gifts of the Spirit – The Fall before the Fall (June 21)

He (Jesus) replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” Luke 10:18

Before the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, there was the fall of Lucifer, also known as Satan, from heaven. The following passages describes the events that transpired in the heavenly realms:

Isaiah 14:12-15

Most biblical scholars agree that this passage is Isaiah’s pronouncement of the King of Babylon’s pride, rebellion and fate while simultaneously giving us a glimpse of Satan’s own pride, rebellion and fate. The following is a similar pronouncement by Ezekiel about the king of Tyre which also retells the narrative about Satan’s fall:

Ezekiel 28:11-19

Personal Reflection

Based on the scriptures shared, what is my understanding of what happened in the heavenly realms?

What is/are the “root sins” of the king of Babylon, the king of Tyre and Satan?

Is/are these sins in my heart or character as well? In my speech? Deeds? Thoughts?

What do the scriptures we examined today have to do with spiritual gifts?

A helpful reminder: “SIN” and “PRIDE” both have “I” in the center of them.

Guided Prayer

Our God and Father,

Thank you for giving us a better understanding of what transpired in the heavenly realms as we looked into your word today. We know that Satan fell because of his pride and arrogance. We also know that Jesus exemplified humility in the way he lived, served and died. As we begin this journey on understanding the gifts of your Holy Spirit, help us to be humble and use our spiritual gifts to your glory!

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Additional Scriptures

Revelation 12:7-12, 1 Peter 5:8

Gifts of the Spirit – The Gift that Keeps on Giving (June 22)

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 1 John 3:8

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit is a gift that the early church received at baptism. Peter replied, "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. (**Acts 2:38**). The gift of the Holy Spirit also came with certain gifts. Consider this passage:

Ephesians 4:8-13

In ancient times, a conqueror would march through the fallen city in triumph. The conqueror would have the spoils of war, which were taken from his foes, and would distribute them as gifts to his people. In the same way, Jesus was triumphant when he defeated Satan and his fallen angels at the cross and resurrection. When he ascended into heaven, he gave spiritual gifts to his people for the edification of his church.

Personal Reflection

As stated in **1 John 3:8**, one of the reasons why Jesus came was to destroy the devil's work. What has he given me to help destroy the devil's work?

Practically speaking, how am I using my spiritual gift(s) to destroy the devil's work?

Are there any gifts in **Ephesians 4** that I possess? Why do I believe this is so?

Ask someone you know and trust to share with you what they believe is your spiritual gift.

Guided Prayer

Heavenly Father,

You are a great King! You have conquered everything that has ever set itself up against you. Thank you for sending Jesus to destroy the devil's work in our world. Thank you that your son Jesus is a conquering king that has distributed spiritual gifts to each one of us. Please reveal our spiritual gifts to us and to all those around us, so that we may continue to help destroy the devil's work in our world, just as Jesus did. And it is in His name that we ask this.

Amen.

Additional Scriptures

Luke 11:13, James 1:17, 1 Corinthians 12:4

Gifts of the Spirit – With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility (June 23)

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:6-8

I am a big fan of comic book movies. Whether it is The X-Men, The Justice League or The Avengers. I appreciate how these heroes and “she-ros” use their unique gifts for the greater good. Most of us have heard the famous line said by “Uncle Ben” to Peter Parker, also known as Spider-Man, “With great power comes great responsibility.” In the same way, we are to use our spiritual gifts for the greater good of helping others. We have the great power of the Holy Spirit and we have a great responsibility to use it for the glory of God and for the building of His church. (See additional scriptures at the bottom of this study for more on this topic.) See what the apostle Paul writes here:

Romans 12:3-8

Personal Reflection

Is one of the spiritual gifts described above a spiritual gift that I possess? If so, what is it and how do I see God using it to build others up?

What is the Holy Spirit telling me?

Is there something in the passage above that I enjoy doing? Am I fulfilled when I do it?

What do other people tell me that I am good at?

What have I done that has made a huge difference in someone’s life?

Guided Prayer

Our God and King,

We thank you for speaking to us, your children, through your word. We are honored to be your fellow workers in your quest to make your church a beacon of light to our world. Thank you for giving us such great power by giving us your Holy Spirit. Please help us to use our gifts because it is a tremendous responsibility to help save a lost world. Help us to be your superheroes for the betterment of others. Please help us not to be timid, but to know that the spirit that dwells in us is one of power, love and self-discipline. We love you and pray this in your son’s name, Jesus.

Amen!

Additional Scriptures

Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 12:47-48

Gifts of the Spirit – Using Gifts without Compulsion (June 24)

“The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 4:7-11

After admonishing the church to love each other deeply, Peter says each one should use whatever gift you have received to serve others. What is Peter trying to say by mentioning these two topics in succession? When we use the gifts God has given us, we are displaying our love for each other. The love of God and the love of others should motivate us to use our gifts to serve each other.

The scripture above indicates we are able to serve when we are faithful stewards of God’s grace. Therefore, we need to keep God’s grace in perspective. We need to keep God’s grace before us, meditate on it, and reflect on it. When we focus on God’s grace, we have the ability to serve each other with our gifts.

Verse eleven states we should serve with the strength God provides. This indicates we should not serve by using our own strength. God will provide the strength to use our gifts.

2 Peter 1:3 says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

Therefore, God has given us everything we need to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Personal Reflection

Ask God for the strength to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to serve “on our own strength”?

What does it mean to serve “with the strength God provides?”

Do you see how the Holy Spirit provides strength?

Ask God to reveal your gifts to you.

Gifts of the Spirit – Don't Neglect your Gifts (June 25)

Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Timothy 4:11-16

Paul mentored Timothy. Timothy became a young evangelist. As Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, he was imparting some profound wisdom. Paul tells Timothy not to neglect his gift. He goes on to give Timothy several specific instructions. This passage highlights how someone can be used to edify the church. However, it is important to not neglect the gifts God has given us. All disciples of Christ have spiritual gifts. It does not matter how old you are or how long you have been a Christian, as evidenced by Paul's letter to Timothy. If you are tempted to think you do not have a gift, reflect on the scripture listed above.

This passage indicates we are to practice our gifts. This means using them and growing in them. As you use your gifts, you will get better at them. This passage also indicates we are to immerse ourselves in our gifts. This first means immersing ourselves in the Holy Spirit, who enables us to have the gifts.

Personal Reflection

What does it mean to be immersed in our gifts? What would this look like for you?

Why is it so important to not neglect your gifts?

How can we neglect our gifts? How can you specifically neglect your gifts?

As we learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, reflect on how to not neglect your gifts.

Difficult Questions (June 26-30)

Difficult Questions – What’s the difference between soul and spirit? (June 26)

Now that we better understand the scriptural definitions and contexts of common Holy Spirit-related terms, let’s tackle the first difficult biblical question:

What’s the difference between soul and spirit?

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

If you’re like me, you’ve probably wondered about this question from time to time. I mean, isn’t your soul the same as your spirit and your spirit the same as your soul? Is this biblical poetry or was the writer aware of an actual distinction?

When trying to understand biblical matters, it’s easy, dare I say, even natural, to impose our own thoughts and perspectives on biblical concepts and terminology - and miss out on interesting and often important distinctions. Or worse, apply scriptures out of context.

In mainstream biblical thought, a “soul” is not a part of a person, it is the person. Think of the phrase, “All souls lost” in reference to people perishing at sea.

The “spirit”, on the other hand, is not the person but rather something interior and immaterial. You may recall that “spirit” in biblical languages can also mean “breath”. Spirit was not conceived as something imaginary or intangible, but rather something very real, even if hidden from sight. So, your “spirit” is nothing more than God’s gift to every human that inclines us toward doing what is right. The “spirit” contrasts with the “flesh”, which inclines us toward doing wrong.

In other words, our soul has free will and must choose between doing good (spirit) and wrong (flesh). To illustrate this, the following passage may be helpful:

Mark 14:38 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

To divide soul and spirit, then, means to distinguish between the spiritual aspect of a person from the decision-making soul.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we see that spirit, soul and body are not three separate parts of a person but rather three different aspects: the spiritual person, the entire person and the physical person. In this passage, Paul is asking for the thorough body and soul sanctification of the Christians in Thessaloniki.

Going further, what can we learn from the following passages?

Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (soul, KJV).

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

We learn that God’s gift of a spirit completes each of us as living beings.

Personal Reflection

Today, meditate on the difference between soul and spirit and what this means for you personally. Ask God to help you change the way you think about those around you. To see people as God may see them.

Difficult Questions – Did God really send an evil spirit to torment Saul? (June 27)

Today, please start by reading **1 Sam 16:14-15, 23**.

To understand difficult passages, it's important to find related passages that may provide helpful insights. One such passage implies that God incited David to sin by having him take a census.

2 Samuel 24:1 (NIV) Again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go and take a census of Israel and Judah."

However, a parallel passage reads:

1 Chron 21:1 (NIV) Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.

The fact that something is attributed to God does not necessarily mean God is the direct cause of it. Indeed, God allows many things to happen which are part of his sovereign will. As God allowed Satan to incite David to take a census, it's very likely that God similarly allowed an evil spirit to torment Saul.

Personal Reflection

Today, meditate on how God moves among the nations displaying his sovereign will - even if it means allowing terrible things to happen. Praise God for his sovereignty, justice and wisdom – and ask for having the mind and heart to trust Him, especially when his will is not evident.

Difficult Questions – Does the Holy Spirit live and work in us only through the Word? (June 28)

This narrow school of thought claims that the Spirit works in us today only through his representative, the Word. It denies that the Spirit can live and move personally in our hearts.

Without a doubt, there's a link between the Spirit and the Word. For example, many things normally attributed in the Bible as Spirit are also attributed to the Word which:

- Quickens us ("preserves my life" NIV) - **Psalms 119:50**
- Strengthens us – **Psalm 119:28**
- Sanctifies us – **John 17:17**
- Gives us wisdom – **2 Tim 3:14-15**
- Enlightens us – **Psalm 119:130**
- Allows us to share in the divine nature – **2 Peter 1:4**

However, there's not sufficient grounds to say that the Spirit works only through the Word, or the sword of the Spirit (**Eph 6:17**). If this were the case, **Acts 2:38** would need to be reworded, in principle at least, to read, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven. And you will receive the Word of God.

This is certainly not the natural reading, as even advocates of the narrow view admit. Indeed, **Acts 2** refers to the promised Holy Spirit in verses **17, 33, 38** and **39**. Furthermore, the natural reading of verses such as **Acts 5:32, 1 John 3:24**, and **John 14:16-23** is not that God has given us his representative but his actual presence.

So, it would seem accurate to say that the Spirit in our hearts does his work through the Word - or that God is able to work in us to the extent that we surrender to his Word. The fact that we can only know the Holy Spirit as he reveals himself through the Word is accepted, but it has no bearing on how the Spirit dwells in Christians.

Eph 3:16 Is this not the workings of the Spirit in our hearts?

Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit working in your heart? How about when you came out of the waters of baptism. Did you feel unburdened? Fresh? Clean? Exultant?

Knowing that the Spirit can move within our hearts is not to encourage the "warm fuzzies" mentality, only to help explain the everyday reality of the feeling of spiritual strength or weakness (compare **Psalms 32** and **38** with **Psalm 18:28-50**). There's no biblical support of the Spirit giving "explicit personal direction" to Christians today.

Personal Reflection

Today, meditate on how God works in your life both through the Word ("a light to our feet") and his indwelling ("a light to our hearts") and how you can be more in step with both.

Difficult Questions – Do evil spirits/demons exist today? (June 29)

The answer is yes. But the relevant question is: where are they? Unfortunately, the biblical answer is unclear.

One school of thought is that Jesus and the Apostles cast all demons into the lowest level of hell, a.k.a., “the Abyss” (**Luke 8:31**) while another is that some still roam freely but lay low, certainly compared to biblical times.

“The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn’t exist” – Charles Baudelaire, 1864. And famously reprised by the character Keyser Soze in the film “The Usual Suspects”.

Here’s some of the things we know about evil spirits/demons from the Bible:

- They’re organized under Satan in hierarchical levels known as rulers, authorities, powers, and spiritual forces of evil. **Eph 6:10-12**
- God sent angels when they sinned to the Abyss, putting them in chains to be held for judgment. **2 Pe 2:4-5**
- They can possess people. **Luke 8:26-39**
- They’re afraid of being cast into the Abyss. **Luke 8:31**
- They respected and feared Jesus. **Luke 8:28**
- They can inhabit animals. **Luke 8:32**
- Jesus gave authority to cast out demons to the twelve. **Matthew 10:1**
- The 7 sons of Sceva attempted to cast out demons without any direct authority from Jesus and suffered greatly for it. **Acts 19:13-16**
- They confuse the truth by spreading lies and half-truths. **1 John 4:4**
- Those who worship idols are really worshipping and sacrificing to demons. **1 Cor 10:20**
- Christians can be unwittingly influenced by evil spirits which is why they must be tested. **1 John 4:1-6**
- During the time of the great tribulation, demons will be released from the Abyss to cause pain and torture on non-Christians. **Rev 9:1-6**
- Satan and all his evil spirits will ultimately be condemned to the Abyss and tortured for eternity. **Rev 21:10**

Can Christians be demon possessed? Not likely. There are no NT examples and to believe so would be inconsistent with:

- **1 Cor 10:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, Ephesians 1:13-14, and 1 Samuel 16:14**

As noted above, the real question is where are the evil spirits/demons? Were they all cast into the Abyss or are some still roaming around today? Consider this thought-provoking scripture:

- **1 Tim 4:1** The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

So, is the referenced ‘later times’ before or during the period of tribulation described in Revelation 9? It’s hard to say. Assuming evil spirits/demons still wreak havoc today, what can we do to protect ourselves?

- **Eph 6:10-17 10**
- **James 4:7**
- **1 John 4:4**

Personal Reflection

Today, meditate on this devotional, let it inspire you to equip yourself daily with the armor of God and know that God is protecting us.

Difficult Questions – The Guiding Voice (June 30)

You may recall the old cartoon scenario of a devil sitting on someone's shoulder telling him to do bad things while an angel sits on the other shoulder reminding him to be good. Well, such portrayals have a biblical reference - although, not really.

Isaiah 30:19-21 People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Cartoon portrayals aside, some people think this passage prophesies the direct leading of the Holy Spirit, that is, a prompting "inner voice" for the faithful. A closer look at the history and context of this passage, however, proves this is incorrect.

The referenced "teachers" were the spiritual teachers, or prophets, who were hiding during the time of wicked King Ahaz. In saying that they will be hidden no more, Isaiah was prophesying their return, not the coming of a "whispering voice" of the Holy Spirit.

In the OT, "turning neither to the right nor the left" means obeying God's commands as opposed to one's personal or religious preferences. For example:

Deuteronomy 28:14 Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.

So, the "voice" of **Isaiah 30** is the true prophet's voice leading Jews to repentance as opposed to a subjective message and religion of false prophets.

However well intentioned, we must always guard against carelessly interpreted scriptures that allow people to read into them their own perspectives. Can you think of other scriptures people often use that are outside of their contexts? How about:

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

For biblical context, we must read the preceding verse:

Jeremiah 29:10 This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.

Clearly this passage was intended for a specific audience at a specific time. So, instead of using **Jeremiah 29:11** to encourage someone that God has plans for them, how about using:

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

But when you do use **Romans 8:28**, be sure to include versus **29** and **30** as God's idea of working for our good is us conform to the image of his Son, not getting what we want.

Personal Reflection

Today, ask God for the wisdom to know and understand proper biblical contexts before using scriptures. To not fall into careless interpretations, no matter how well intentioned.