

STUDY GUIDE

Experiencing  
the Spirit

## CHAPTER I—REVEALING THE UNKNOWNABLE

1. How would you summarize your present understanding of who the Holy Spirit is? What has been your experience with the Holy Spirit?
2. As we seek to better understand the Holy Spirit's ministry to our lives, why is it important to fully realize the damage and spiritual blindness caused by sin?
3. In our coming to God and forming a relationship with Him, what is God's part, and what is our part?
4. What are your answers to the following questions from this chapter's text: *Have you gone beyond accepting the fact that there's a God? Have you moved beyond accepting Christ as God's Son and made Him Lord of your life?*
5. Why do you think so many Christians fail to experience the depths of what God has purposed for their lives?
6. Look again at what Jesus says in Matthew 12:31–32. Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit so serious?
7. How is the Holy Spirit like the wind in the sails of a ship? How does that relate to your own life?
8. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God's Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things you know God wants you to do (or keep doing)?

in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

## CHAPTER 2—THE EVER-PRESENT GOD

1. How open have your eyes been to God's work all around you? How much of His work do you think you are recognizing?
2. Look closely again at the words of Jesus in John 5:19–20. To what extent does this passage relate to your own life?
3. Why is recognizing God's activity so critically important when it comes to the spiritual warfare we face?
4. What names for God carry special significance for you in your own experience with Him?
5. How have you recognized the Holy Spirit's ministry in your life in opening your eyes to what God is doing and giving you the ability to respond to it?
6. In your own experience, what has it meant for God to pour out His Holy Spirit?
7. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God's Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

## CHAPTER 3—GIFTED TO SERVE

1. As you've read about the life of Jesus in the gospels, what stands out most to you? What kind of information about Jesus do you see the gospel writers emphasizing?
2. How would you describe the humility of Jesus? How was it demonstrated?
3. How and why was Jesus forced to rely upon the Holy Spirit as His source of wisdom and power?
4. In His life on earth, how was Christ's experience of the Spirit also meant to be like yours?
5. What most convinces you that God understands and sympathizes with your pain and troubles? How does this help you?
6. What are God's most meaningful promises to you concerning the Holy Spirit's presence?
7. As you contemplate the theme of this chapter, how is Jesus' life of humility an example to us of being "gifted to serve"?
8. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God's Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

## CHAPTER 4—HIS GIFT TO GIVE

1. At what point in Jesus' life and ministry on earth did He begin to teach His disciples extensively about the Holy Spirit? Why did He wait until then?
2. In chapters 14–16 of John's gospel, what significant things did Jesus teach His disciples about the Holy Spirit? (Take time to thoroughly explore these chapters.)
3. Why is it necessary for us to obey Christ as Lord before we receive enabling power from the Holy Spirit?
4. What is the meaning of being baptized "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16)? How have you personally experienced this?
5. What is the "chaff" in your life that the Spirit has had to winnow out?
6. What is the practical difference between (a) thinking that we're sent out as witnesses *for* Christ and (b) thinking that we're sent out *with* Christ as a witness to Him? What makes this difference significant?
7. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God's Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

## CHAPTER 5—THE GIFT OF RELATIONSHIP

1. Think about your own longings and efforts to discover your part in the work of God's kingdom. Do your thoughts and questions in this area tend to be more self-centered or more God-centered? Explain your answer.
2. What difference do you think it makes in our relationship with God when we discover that our natural talents, abilities, and skills are different from spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit?
3. A personal relationship implies many things—all built on the foundation of a solid awareness and understanding of the other person. Think about your current understanding of the Holy Spirit and what He means to you. How do you currently experience His presence? And what do you personally want most to learn about Him?
4. According to God's promise in each of the following passages, what exactly are we meant to experience because of the Holy Spirit?

John 7:38–39

John 16:13–15

Romans 8:11

Romans 8:15–16

Romans 8:26–27

5. As you seek to obey the Lord and live the kind of life He has called you to, what areas of need or weakness or inadequacy do you most frequently recognize and think about? And how have they limited your service to God?
6. At this point, what is your understanding of how God's Holy Spirit wants to operate in your life to provide His fullness and power in areas of perceived need? Also, how do you think He wants to work in areas of your natural strengths?
7. Acts 2:38–39 is a foundational scripture for believers to build upon. Listen again to the apostle Peter's words to the people on the Day of Pentecost: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." According to this passage, what is the spiritual gift that believers in Jesus Christ receive? And why is it so important for us to always remember this? What practical difference would it make in your life to fully grasp this truth and consistently maintain this perspective?
8. All people on earth have gifts, but only Christians have spiritual gifts. The distinction is significant. What are the most important things in your life which you are already fully convinced that the Holy Spirit has provided you? (Take time right now to thank Him again for these things.)

9. What does it really mean to walk in the Spirit's fullness and power? In your own life, how are you pursuing this?
10. Think carefully about each phrase in Paul's profound statement in 1 Corinthians 12:7: "[a] The manifestation of the Spirit... [b] is given to each one... [c] for the profit of all." How does each phrase relate to your own life and your own relationship to the Holy Spirit?
11. In what particular ways do you believe God has called you at this time to share your life with His people and serve them in order to help build up His church?
12. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God's Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

#### CHAPTER 6—SHAPED FOR SERVICE

1. How much have you struggled with thinking that God cannot use you? What reasons for this were in your mind?
2. What purposes on God's heart have you sensed that He wants you to be a part of?
3. What assignments has God already given you? What did they mean in your relationship with Him?

4. What assignment from God are you currently working on?  
How is it deepening your relationship with Him?
5. Think again of what is taught about Jesus in Hebrews 5:8:  
“He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”  
What does this statement imply about *your* life? What will it mean for the Holy Spirit to make you Christlike? What must the Holy Spirit do to build great character in you?
6. Are you willing for the Holy Spirit to build great character into your life? Are you willing no matter how much suffering and hardship it brings?
7. How has God used other believers to strengthen and encourage you as you went through challenging times?
8. Who are the Christians who are regularly praying for you now? Why are their prayers so important and valuable?
9. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God’s Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

#### CHAPTER 7—GOD’S BEST IN YOUR LIFE

1. At this point in your understanding, are you fully convinced there’s a significant difference between a spiritual gift

and a natural talent or ability that God gives? If so, how would you describe this difference? And how would you be able to detect it in your own life as well as in the lives of others you observe?

2. To what degree, if any, have you considered serving God outside your areas of strength and proficiency? Can you imagine God asking you to do that which you don't like to do?
3. What has been your experience, if any, with spiritual gift assessments or inventories? If you've taken one, what did it reveal about you? How would you assess the test's ability to discover what the Holy Spirit wants to do in and through your life, as compared with its ability to identify your natural strengths?
4. To what extent do you agree that the results of a spiritual gift inventory test should not be used as a guide for how God desires to use you in the future? Why or why not?
5. Review again Paul's foundational teaching on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1–11. What relevant principles and guidelines do you see in this passage that help us most in evaluating and determining our spiritual gifts?
6. When outsiders look at your church, do they see the power of God working through His people to accomplish what only He can do?
7. Notice the descriptions of the early church in Acts 2:42–47 (after the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost) and in Acts

4:31–35 (following a time of being filled by the Spirit).

What do you see as the most important lessons we can learn today from these passages about dependence on the Spirit?

8. To what extent are you tempted to rely on your abilities and talents rather than the power of the Holy Spirit? Has this been a problem for you in the past? Is it a danger now?
9. Can you identify any “limits” that you’ve imposed on God’s use of your life? If so, talk with God about them.
10. What are some potentially difficult or uncomfortable assignments that God might possibly be calling you to and to which you must be open?
11. Look carefully at what Peter wrote about our spiritual gifts in this passage: “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever” (1 Peter 4:10–11). What overarching purpose for the use of our gifts did Peter teach here, and what does this mean for you in practical terms?
12. From each of the following passages, summarize what the Holy Spirit guided Jesus to do in His life on earth. Then tell in what way, if any, this might relate with what you know God wants you to do in your life.

Matthew 12:28

Luke 4:1

Luke 4:14–16

Luke 4:18–19

Acts 10:38

13. Why did Jesus need the Holy Spirit's power as He followed His Father's will in His ministry?
14. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God's Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

#### CHAPTER 8—TALENTED OR GIFTED?

1. Look closely at each of the following passages. What does it teach us about those whom God chooses and why He chooses them?  
Deuteronomy 7:7–9  
Matthew 11:25–26  
1 Corinthians 1:26–29  
James 2:5
2. In 2 Chronicles 16:9, one of the Lord's prophets speaks these words to the king of Judah: "For the eyes of the LORD

run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.” Other versions render this last phrase as “blameless toward him” (ESV), “fully committed to him” (NIV), and “completely His” (NASB). What does such a heart toward God mean to you personally? How would you describe it in your own words? What is it that makes possible such a loyal, obedient heart within you?

3. What strong encouragement for a better heart do you find in each of the following passages?  
2 Corinthians 4:6  
2 Thessalonians 3:5  
Hebrews 10:22–23
4. What examples from Scripture can you recall of ordinary people who were gifted and equipped by God to do something far outside the “normal” range of their abilities?
5. What man or woman in the Bible do you most look up to as an ordinary person whom God chose and gifted? In what ways can you most identify with this “hero”? What was most important in this person’s life—relationship or talents?
6. In Paul’s discussion in Romans 12:3–8, notice how he brought together the dynamics of humility, faith, and our active use of spiritual gifts. How does this passage relate most to what you’ve been learning about spiritual gifted-

ness? And what encouragement and help do you find here for your own life?

7. Acts 8:9–24 tells the story of a new believer who wanted to obtain a spiritual gift in the wrong way. What do you think are the most important lessons for us to learn from this incident?
8. In regard to the spiritual gifts we may seek, what conclusions did Paul come to in 1 Corinthians 12:27–13:3? How do you think this applies to your life at this time?
9. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God’s Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

## CHAPTER 9—FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

1. Why is it so important to remember that equipping *follows* our assignments from God rather than precedes them?
2. Think objectively and in a fresh way about these words of Jesus: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20). How do His words convince you that He wants you involved in His work to redeem this world?

3. Reflect in the same way on these words of Jesus: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (John 15:16). Again, how do these words convince you that your Savior wants you involved in His work to redeem this world?
4. What is the Holy Spirit doing right now to bring your life into harmony with His activity so that He can accomplish His work through you?
5. What would you say are the most important things you’ve seen God do in your past as they relate to what He may want you to do now and in the future?
6. What particular abilities, skills, and talents do you possess as a result of what God has done for you in the past?
7. What exactly has God called you to invest your life in?
8. What are the ministries that have captured your heart?
9. Is the Lord using your life in such a way that you sense God’s pleasure?

10. What tasks do you face that require the work of the Holy Spirit in order for you to accomplish them?
11. What is there in your life right now to indicate that you trust in the Lord?
12. How confident can you be in the Holy Spirit's personal guidance for you? And how can you pray effectively for His guidance? Read the following passages reflectively, and record your thoughts on each one:  
Psalm 143:10  
John 16:13–15  
Romans 8:14  
Colossians 1:9–10
13. Are you ready for God to reveal His assignment in your life? *Any* assignment? Are you prepared to say yes before you know what He'll ask?
14. Read Luke 10:1–12, where Jesus sends out a large group of His followers in ministry. How would you summarize their assignment?
15. In Luke 10:17, what results did these disciples report when they returned?
16. In Luke 10:19, what did Jesus say He had given to these disciples so they could fulfill their assignment?
17. In Luke 10:21–24, what is most significant to you about the way Jesus responded to the ministry of these disciples?

18. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God's Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

#### CHAPTER 10—KEEPING THE RELATIONSHIP ALIVE

1. What appropriate response to God and His work in our lives is taught in Philippians 2:12–13? How does this passage relate to your own response to God in this season of your life?
2. What wrong response to the Spirit did Paul mention in Ephesians 4:30–31? How would you describe this kind of response in your own words?
3. In what way might you have recently grieved the Holy Spirit? If the Lord brings something to mind, use this as an opportunity for confession before Him.
4. What wrong response to the Spirit is mentioned by Stephen in Acts 7:51? How would you describe it in your own words?
5. You may be particularly inclined to a certain way of resisting the Holy Spirit. If so, what is it? The degree to which we resist the Holy Spirit is the degree to which we prevent

- Him from working through us. If the Lord brings something to mind, use this opportunity to confess it to Him.
6. Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” (John 13:20). How do these words apply to situations in which we resist the Spirit’s message as it comes through other people?
  7. If you want the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart, you must let Him speak through any means He chooses. In what circumstances are you most likely to resist something that the Spirit might be telling you through others? Who are the people with whom your resistance is more likely to happen? Again, if the Lord brings some people to mind, use this opportunity to confess this to Him, and ask for His help in overcoming this resistance in the future.
  8. What wrong response to the Spirit is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:19? How would you describe this response in your own words?
  9. Have you witnessed someone quench the Spirit’s work? In what way might you have recently quenched His work? Once more, if the Lord brings something to mind, use this as an opportunity for confession before Him.
  10. The good news is that *in Christ* we are free to not quench or resist or grieve the Spirit. Why is this good news true, according to your own understanding of what Jesus Christ

has done for us? (You may want to look especially at passages such as Romans 6:4–14; 6:22; and 8:5–14.)

11. What correct response to the Spirit did Paul teach in Ephesians 5:18? How would you describe this response in your own words? What did Paul mean?
12. According to Galatians 5:16–25, as you allow the Spirit to fill you and as you walk in His presence, what can you expect Him to do for you? (Think of this especially in terms of your everyday life, and the specific circumstances and responsibilities that are now yours.)
13. What else besides time does the building of godly character take, according to your understanding of the Scriptures?
14. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant things God's Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

## CHAPTER II—A LIFE FILLED TO THE FULL

1. What do you anticipate life in the Spirit to look like in your future? What are your expectations, especially in terms of the fulfillment and joy you hope to experience and the kind of service among God's people that He will lead you into?

2. What degree of inner satisfaction did Jesus discuss in John 4:14 and John 7:37–39? How would you relate these words of Jesus to your own experience?
3. Think deeply about Jesus' invitation in John 7:37—"Come to Me and drink." Take a moment to praise and thank Jesus Christ for how He wants to fill you and for what this reveals about His heart and His character.
4. Regarding your attitudes toward sin and self, what relevant truths for your life do you find in the following passages? How does each one especially concern your life at this time?  
Ephesians 4:17–24  
Colossians 3:1–17
5. How is a hunger to know Christ demonstrated in each of the following verses? How is each statement a standard for your own spiritual hunger?  
Philippians 1:21  
Philippians 3:8–10
6. When it comes to our spiritual gifts, what purpose for them did Paul teach us to strive for in 1 Corinthians 14:12? And what does this mean to you in practical terms?
7. In 1 Timothy 4:14, what did Paul tell Timothy *not* to do with his spiritual gift? In your own life, how can you avoid making this mistake that Paul warned Timothy not to make?
8. Quietly review what you have learned through reading this chapter and from your study. What are the most significant

things God's Spirit is saying to you at this time? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to this encounter with Him? What adjustments does He want you to make?

### CHAPTER 12—COMPLETE SURRENDER

1. How have you already discovered the *uniqueness* of your relationship with God? In what ways do you see the personal nature of your relationship with Him?
2. Have you made the deliberate decision to allow the Holy Spirit to have complete access to your life? Describe that moment or explain why not.
3. Do you generally make decisions based upon your ability to achieve results, or upon the Spirit's leading and equipping? Explain.
4. Read John 20:19–23 and think about what Jesus did for His disciples on the evening following His resurrection. How would you describe the significance of this event for those men—and for us?
5. What most convinces you that you are alive at this moment in history because of a mission from Jesus—because He is sending you?
6. Looking at the lives of the disciples and the early believers

who followed, what do you honestly expect your own mission from Jesus to cost you?

7. As you follow the Lord in obedience in the assignments He has for your life, what are you convinced that you can rely on the Holy Spirit for?
8. Explore God's heart and His promises for His people in each of the following passages:  
Jeremiah 33:2–3  
Jeremiah 32:17  
Romans 8:31
9. Take a moment to express to the Lord your faith and confidence in Him as you consider the Holy Spirit's desire to guide and empower you in His assignments.
10. How would you answer these questions: *Who is the Holy Spirit to me? What have I done with Him? What has He done with me?*
11. Quietly review what you have learned through your reading and study in this book. What are the most significant things God's Spirit is saying to you? What are the things that you know God wants you to do (or keep doing) in response to your encounter with Him at this time? What adjustments does He want you to make?