

We Believe in the Holy Spirit

Lesson 3

In the Church

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE	1
NOTES.....	2
I. INTRODUCTION (0:20).....	2
II. COVENANT GRACE (5:10)	2
A. Old Testament (8:22).....	3
B. New Testament (16:28)	5
III. SCRIPTURE (21:57)	6
A. Inspiration (22:38)	6
B. Message (28:59)	8
C. Purpose (35:25).....	10
1. Covenant community (36:03).....	10
2. Divine benevolence (40:03).....	11
3. Human loyalty (44:56).....	12
4. Consequences (50:03).....	12
IV. SPIRITUAL GIFTS (52:40)	14
A. Purpose (54:00).....	14
B. History in Scripture (59:18).....	15
C. Present Use (1:09:14)	17
V. CONCLUSION (1:16:27).....	18
REVIEW QUESTIONS	19
APPLICATION QUESTIONS.....	24
GLOSSARY	25

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

From Abraham onward, God has always had a special covenant people:

- The Greek translation of the Old Testament uses the term *ekklesia* to designate the “assembly” or “congregation” of ancient Israel.
- In the New Testament, the Greek word *ekklesia* is commonly translated “church.”

Peter indicated that the New Testament church and Old Testament Israel constitute a single, continuous covenant people (1 Peter 2:9).

Although there are differences between God’s covenant communities in the Old and New Testaments, their continuity helps us understand the Holy Spirit’s work.

II. Covenant Grace (5:10)

Scripture describes God’s relationship with his church as a covenant.

God’s covenant relationship with his people resembles ancient treaties between great emperors, or suzerains, and the vassal kingdoms that served them.

Suzerain-vassal treaties and God's covenants both record:

- the benevolence of the greater party toward the lesser party
- the loyalty owed by the lesser party to the greater party
- the consequences for obedience and disobedience

God's covenant with the church includes a greater measure of benevolence, promoting goodness and life that exceeds common grace.

A. Old Testament (8:22)

God's covenants with Abraham, Moses and David extended special grace to the entire nation of Israel.

God's covenant relationship with Abraham (Genesis 15, 17) promised that Abraham's descendants would:

- inherit the Promised Land
- rule over all the nations of the earth

God continued to show covenant grace to the nation of Israel even though they were often unfaithful to him (Isaiah 63:11-14).

God treated Israel with love and mercy, despite their flagrant rebellion. (Nehemiah 9:17-20, 30-31).

The people were so unfaithful that:

- In 930 B.C., God divided his people into the northern kingdom (Israel) and the southern kingdom (Judah).
- In 722 B.C., God sent Israel into exile.
- In 586 B.C., God sent Judah into exile.

God, in his covenant grace, protected and sustained the nation of Israel and promised to restore them to faith through his Messiah or Christ.

God said, “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication” (Zechariah 12:10, NASB).

The verb “pour out” (*shaphakh*) indicates God’s Spirit (Isaiah 32:15, 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28, 29).

B. New Testament (16:28)

Just as in the Old Testament church, the New Testament church contains both believers and unbelievers:

- Matthew 13:24-30 (parable of the wheat and the weeds) – assumes that there will be unbelievers in the church, and it warns that even professing believers might not be saved.
- Galatians 5:4 – Paul said that those who were trying to be justified by the law had fallen away from grace.
- 1 Timothy 1:19, 20 – speaks of some that had “shipwrecked their faith” and had been “handed over to Satan.”
- Hebrews 6:4-6 – warns that those who have shared in the Holy Spirit can fall away and be lost.

Unbelievers in the church will eventually fall under God's judgment, but prior to this, they receive covenant grace (Hebrews 10:26-29).

The Holy Spirit shows us a measure of covenant grace that improves our lives and presents us with the opportunity to be saved, such as:

- protection from our enemies
- provision of our needs
- forbearance regarding earthly punishment for sins

The Holy Spirit ministers to everyone in the church through the fellowship or communion of the church (Acts 2:44; 2 Corinthians 9:13, 14; Ephesians 4:3).

III. Scripture (21:57)

The Holy Spirit chose Scripture's divinely inspired human authors who delivered their writings to the church.

A. Inspiration (22:38)

The Holy Spirit inspired human authors, or *breathed* his words *into* them (2 Timothy 3:16).

Three views on how the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of Scripture:

Romantic Inspiration

The Holy Spirit simply *motivated* the human authors to write.

The Holy Spirit didn't control or supervise the words of Scripture; Scripture was written only by its human authors.

Mechanical Inspiration

The Holy Spirit so *controlled* the human authors that these men had little to no creative input into Scripture.

The human authors were simply secretaries who wrote down the exact words the Spirit told them ("dictation").

Organic Inspiration

Scripture's human authors used their own ideas, words and personalities to write.

The Holy Spirit *superintended* their writings to ensure that they would say what he wanted them to say and to prevent them from falling into error (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Even though all Scripture was organically inspired, the Spirit worked with human authors in a range of ways:

- Some parts of the Bible resemble dictation where God specifically told his authors what to say (Isaiah 6:9, 10; Exodus 31:18).
- Some parts of the Bible resemble romantic inspiration where the authors considered earthly concerns (Proverbs 30:25-28).

In regard to inspiration, Scripture demonstrates at least two things:

- Scripture's human authors weren't just secretaries writing words dictated by the Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit was always intimately involved in revealing God's word to the church.

B. Message (28:59)

We can describe Scripture's central message in different ways. For example as:

- the history of humanity's creation, fall into sin, redemption, and ultimate glorification
- humanity's belief in and duty to God (Westminster Shorter Catechism, answer 3)
- Jesus' emphasis on the two greatest commandments – love for God and love for neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40)

The Holy Spirit's primary message in Scripture incorporates all of these summaries. His foremost message to the church is that:

- Scripture is fundamentally a covenant document that reveals God to us and explains our relationship with him. It:
 - records his covenant benevolence toward us
 - explains the human loyalty he requires from us
 - outlines the consequences of our obedience or disobedience
- In one way or another, every passage of Scripture serves these basic covenant functions.

When theologians tell the story of creation through glorification, they do so through various *covenant* administrations: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism's summary of Scripture focuses on God's benevolence and the human loyalty he requires — characteristics of a covenant relationship.

Jesus' focus on the commandment to "love God" comes from Deuteronomy 6:5, where God summarized his covenant relationship with his people. Deuteronomy chapter 6:

- reminds Israel that they are God's covenant people, according to the promises he made to them
- recalls God's divine benevolence in freeing Israel from slavery in Egypt
- emphasizes the need for human loyalty in obeying all of God's laws with a sincere and loving heart
- explains the great blessings his people will receive if they keep his law, and the terrible curses they'll suffer if they rebel against him

The commandment to love our neighbors is from Leviticus 19:18, where God emphasized his covenant relationship with Israel:

- God repeatedly said, "I am the Lord your God."
- God's covenant extended to the whole community.

The Holy Spirit, in inspired Scripture, repeatedly emphasized the covenantal message of God's commitment, both individually and corporately.

C. Purpose (35:25)

The central purpose of Scripture is also covenantal.

1. Covenant community (36:03)

Scripture identifies its authors and original audiences as members of God's covenant community:

- The New Testament was written by apostles and prophets who served as God's covenant emissaries.

- Most of the New Testament letters and the book of Revelation name their audiences as churches. Exceptions:
 - book of Hebrews – never names its audience but the greetings indicate it was also written to the church
 - 1 John – doesn't name its audience specifically, but clearly indicates that the audience is Christian
 - 1, 2 Timothy; Titus; 2, 3 John; Luke and Acts – written explicitly to individuals, but show evidence that they were intended for the broader church

- In the Old Testament, many prophets specifically identified their audience as Judah or Israel.

- Even prophets to Gentile nations (e.g., Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum) wrote their books for God's covenant people.

- Various New Testament passages (e.g., Romans 9:4) argue that the Old Testament was written for God's people.
- Moses said that Israel received God's law because they were God's covenant people (Deuteronomy 4:8).
- The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant were specific to Israel's covenant relationship with God (Exodus 24:1-12).
- King Josiah renewed Israel's covenant with God by reading "the Book of the Covenant" to the assembly of Israel (2 Kings 22, 23).

2. **Divine benevolence (40:03)**

Some passages that demonstrate the Spirit's covenant purpose in Scripture do this by emphasizing divine benevolence:

- Psalm 102:17-18 – The psalmist wrote so that future generations would see God's benevolence and praise him.
- Luke 1:3-4 – Luke wrote to help Theophilus know with certainty the truth of God's benevolence through Christ's death and resurrection.
- John 20:30-31 – John's purpose was to showcase God's benevolence in Jesus' miracles so that we would be drawn to him for salvation.

3. **Human loyalty (44:56)**

Biblical authors demonstrated the Spirit's covenant purpose by encouraging human loyalty.

Biblical authors wrote to motivate their readers to obey God (Romans 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:16; Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 John 2:1).

Some Scripture passages offer specific instructions for human loyalty (e.g., Ezekiel 43:11; 1 Corinthians 5:11).

Throughout Scripture, true covenant faithfulness is always motivated by love for God (Deuteronomy 6:1-6).

Loving God includes faithfulness and loyalty expressed in heartfelt obedience to his commands (Deuteronomy 11:13, 30:1-6; Joshua 22:5; John 14:15).

4. **Consequences (50:03)**

The consequences of being in covenant with God include blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

Many passages of Scripture encourage the church to pursue God's blessings through faithful obedience. For instance:

- Deuteronomy 6:1-4 – God gave commands so that people would pursue his blessings by their obedience.
- Joshua 1:8 – The book of the Law was written to produce the obedience that leads to prosperity and success.
- 1 Kings 2:3, 4 – The purpose of Moses' law includes teaching God's people how to prosper in his blessings.
- Romans 15:4 – "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."
- John 20:31 – John wrote his gospel to lead people into God's covenant blessing of eternal life through Jesus.
- 1 John 5:13 – John wrote so that believers could be assured of their eternal life.

Scripture also warns against God's curses. For instance:

- Deuteronomy 28:58 – If God's people don't obey the words written in Deuteronomy, they'll suffer his curses.
- Jeremiah 36:6, 7 – Jeremiah intended to produce repentance in God's people so they would avoid his wrath.
- 1 Corinthians 10:11, 12 – The troubles of God's ancient people warned future generations to avoid the same judgments.

Scripture is the product of the Holy Spirit inspiring and superintending his representatives to deliver his covenant message to his covenant people.

IV. Spiritual Gifts (52:40)

Spiritual gifts (or “gifts of the Spirit”) – Manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s power that produce or enhance abilities in human beings, especially to benefit the church.

A. Purpose (54:00)

Spiritual gifts are given especially to benefit the church, rather than to enhance an individual’s relationship with God.

1 Corinthians 12–14 contains extensive teaching on spiritual gifts:

- Spiritual gifts are works God performs through us in service to, and for the good of, the church (12:1-7).
- Spiritual gifts are like a human body: each part depends on and benefits from the others; not everyone has the same gift (12:8-31).
- Unless the gifts are used in love for each other, they’re useless (13:1-13).
- Even if some gifts have personal applications, they should also be used publicly to benefit the church (14:22, 27-28).

B. History in Scripture (59:18)

Spiritual gifts first appeared during the days of the Old Testament:

- In Genesis 41, the Spirit enabled Joseph to interpret dreams.
- In Daniel 4, the Spirit enabled Daniel to interpret dreams.
- Many times, God appointed and empowered prophets to speak to his people.
- Old Testament figures performed miracles and healings.

The New Testament makes it clear that prophecy and healings and miracles are spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29).

- The Holy Spirit gifted craftsmen with extraordinary talents and abilities (Exodus 35:30-35).
- The Holy Spirit gifted kings with special talents that enabled them to rule and administer their kingdoms. For instance:
 - King Saul received power from the Holy Spirit to accomplish his work (1 Samuel 10:10, 11:6).
 - David was anointed to the office of king after God removed Saul's spiritual gifting and gifted David instead (1 Samuel 16:13, 14).

Spiritual gifts in the Old Testament were rare and reserved for those whom God called to special service on his behalf (e.g., prophets and kings).

The prophet Joel declared that in "the last days" or "end times," God would pour out his Spirit on the whole covenant community (Joel 2:28-29).

In fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the entire church (Acts 2:16-18).

Since Pentecost, spiritual gifts have been available to everyone in the church.

Lists of spiritual gifts in Scripture are only meant to provide examples of what the Spirit has done and was doing at the time (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4).

The Spirit grants gifts according to his own purpose and will (1 Corinthians 12:11; Romans 12:6).

Most theologians believe the Holy Spirit is committed to giving every believer at least one spiritual gift (Joel 2:28, 29; Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11).

Even unbelievers in the church can receive spiritual gifts. For instance:

- the prophet Balaam (Numbers 22–24)
- those who have prophesied, cast out demons and worked miracles in Jesus' name, but are not saved (Matthew 7:21-23)
- those who have “tasted the heavenly gift,” “shared in the Holy Spirit,” and “tasted ... the powers of the coming age,” but still fall away from the church (Hebrews 6:4-6)

C. Present Use (1:09:14)

Evangelicals tend to agree that the Holy Spirit still grants spiritual gifts today, but they differ regarding the nature of the gifts he gives — especially with regard to spectacular gifts.

Evangelical approaches to spectacular gifts fall along a continuum between complete cessation and widespread continuation:

- Cessation – The Holy Spirit no longer gives spectacular gifts.
 - Spectacular gifts were foundational and only pertained to the apostles and prophets while they established the New Testament church (Ephesians 2:20).
 - Spectacular gifts were given only to validate the gospel and apostolic authority; once these were validated, the gifts ceased.
- Continuation – Spectacular gifts won't end until Jesus returns.
 - All believers since the New Testament have had access to all the spectacular gifts.
 - The Holy Spirit has the freedom to bestow spectacular gifts where and when he chooses.
 - The only passage of Scripture that specifically mentions the end of spectacular gifts places the timing of that end at Christ's return (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

There are a variety of perspectives that blend elements of cessation and continuation.

The Spirit has given us gifts to build up the church, not as a reason to tear each other down.

V. Conclusion (1:16:27)

9. Explain two different ways that Evangelicals have approached the present use of spiritual gifts, especially with regard to spectacular gifts like miracles, healing, and prophecy.

Application Questions

1. Why is it important for us to recognize that Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church constitute a single, continuous covenant people?
2. Is it fair and/or right that the Holy Spirit's covenant grace includes greater patience, forbearance and mercy for the church than for the rest of humanity? Explain your answer.
3. The Old Testament teaches that God was always faithful to his covenant, even when the nation of Israel was unfaithful. What does this mean to you personally? What should it mean for the church corporately?
4. There are both believers and unbelievers in the church, so some who have received the Spirit's covenant grace will still be condemned in the final judgment. How should this fact affect the way we minister in our churches?
5. How would you respond to someone who claims that Scripture was written by human authors alone who were simply urged by the Holy Spirit to write?
6. How would you respond to someone who claims that the Holy Spirit dictated every word of Scripture, and the human authors of Scripture just wrote down what the Spirit told them to write?
7. Think about a time when you made a formal agreement (or covenant) with another person or entity. What was the purpose of the agreement? What were the terms? In what ways was your agreement similar to God's covenant with his people? In what ways was it different?
8. Paul taught that the purpose of spiritual gifts was to build up the church. How are you currently using your gifts to benefit the people of God? How might you encourage others in your church to do the same?
9. Imagine what it was like on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the entire church. How is your experience in the church today similar to and different from the day of Pentecost?
10. Do the Spirit's more spectacular gifts — like miracles, healing, and prophecy — continue today, or have these gifts now ceased? Explain your answer.
11. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

berîth – Hebrew term (transliteration) most commonly translated "covenant"; also spelled "berit"

cessationist – A person who holds the view that supernatural gifts manifested in the time of the New Testament, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and miraculous healing, were given only for the special spread of the gospel and the establishment of the church at the time of the apostles, and these gifts have now ceased

church – The covenant people of God; his congregation; the visible manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth

common grace – God's benevolence shown to all people

continuationist – A person who holds the view that supernatural gifts manifested in the time of the New Testament, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and miraculous healing, continue even today

covenant – A binding legal agreement made between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

covenant grace – The forbearance and benefits that God gives to everyone who is part of his covenant people, even if they are not true believers

diatheke – Greek term (transliteration) for "covenant"

ecclesia/ekklesia – Greek term (transliteration) for "assembly," "people of God," "church"

inspiration – Theological term that refers to the way the Holy Spirit moved human beings to write God's revelation as Scripture and superintended their work in a way that made their writings infallible

mechanical inspiration – View of inspiration that asserts that the Holy Spirit essentially dictated the Bible, and human writers passively recorded what he said

organic inspiration – View of inspiration that asserts that the Holy Spirit used the personalities, experiences, outlooks, and intentions of human authors as he authoritatively and infallibly guided their writing

Pentecost – Jewish festival, often called the "Feast of Weeks," that celebrated the early harvest; celebrated by Christians as the day the Holy Spirit was poured out on the early church

prophecy – Divinely-inspired proclamation or revelation

romantic inspiration – View of inspiration that asserts that the Holy Spirit inspired biblical authors to write but did not superintend their writings

saving grace – The blessings of salvation applied to true believers by the Holy Spirit

shaphakh – Hebrew term (transliteration) meaning "pour out"

spiritual gifts – Manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power that produce or enhance abilities in human beings, especially to benefit the church

suzerain – A powerful emperor or king that ruled over smaller nations; the more powerful party of a covenant, the one to whom it was necessary to submit

tongues, gift of – The ability to pray or communicate a message in a language that is unknown to the one speaking it

vassal – A king or nation that must submit to a more powerful emperor or king (suzerain)

Westminster Shorter Catechism – A traditional Protestant summary of Christian teaching, originally published in 1647

