



## BIBLE LENS

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Shining a light on the weekly Bible Lessons published in the *Christian Science Quarterly*®

# Spirit

February 5–11, 2024

## from the **Responsive Reading**

### Numbers 11:24–29

*Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!*

At this time Moses is feeling burdened by the Israelites' demands in the wilderness during the Exodus. God's answer is twofold: He provides a team of helpers and pledges the descent of His spirit on them.

Nothing is known about the elders Eldad and Medad, including the reason they didn't join the other officials at the tabernacle. But Joshua's complaint about them, made out of concern for Moses' honor, is rebuked: Moses wants the gift of the spirit to be universally bestowed. A scholar remarks, "When it comes to serving God, there is plenty of room for everyone."

Mark 9:38–40 recounts a similar event: Christ Jesus' disciples censure a man who has cast out demons in Jesus' name. The Savior admonishes them: "Forbid him not: . . . For he that is not against us is on our part."

### I Corinthians 3:16; 6:20

*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . Glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

Mentions of the body occur over forty times in this epistle. In Paul's imagery of a temple, it refers not only to the human body but to the church community as well. In each application, it is the Holy Spirit—God's presence—that animates and uplifts.

## from Section 1

### 1 | Galatians 5:22, 23

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

#### Translation

*... the fruit the Holy Spirit produces is love, joy and peace. It is being patient, kind and good. It is being faithful and gentle and having control of oneself. There is no law against things of that kind.*

—New International Reader's Version™

### 2 | Isaiah 61:1, 3

*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; . . . to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.*

#### Translation

*The Sovereign LORD has filled me with his Spirit.*

*He has chosen me and sent me*

*To bring good news to the poor,*

*To heal the broken-hearted,*

*To announce release to captives*

*And freedom to those in prison.*

*. . . . .*

*To give to those who mourn in Zion*

*Joy and gladness instead of grief,*

*A song of praise instead of sorrow.*

*They will be like trees*

*That the LORD himself has planted.  
They will all do what is right,  
And God will be praised for what he has done.*

—Good News Translation

God’s act of conferring His spirit on someone endows them with His power (see comparable passages at [11:2](#); [42:1](#); [59:21](#)). To Jews, this outpouring signaled the endorsement of judges, prophets, and kings. (In the New Testament, divine approval is publicly given to Jesus at his baptism; see [Matthew 3:16, 17](#).)

Clear contrasts—“beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”—indicate a comprehensive shift, a promise of spiritual freedom and healing where bondage and sorrow have reigned.

By reading this text from Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth centuries later (see [Luke 4:16–21](#)), the Master announces that God has authorized him to liberate humanity from every form of mental and physical subjection.

## **from Section 2**

### **3 | [Exodus 35:29–31, 34, 35](#)**

*The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses. And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; . . . And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.*

At this point in the Exodus, God’s covenant with Israel (including the Ten Commandments) has been confirmed. Now God directs Moses to build a tabernacle—a portable shrine. The Hebrew leader requests sacrifices of personal wealth for this purpose, and the people respond generously (see [vv. 4, 5, 20–29](#)).

God has designated Bezaleel for specialized work on the tabernacle, supplying him and his assistant Aholiab with artistic skills and teaching ability. Bezaleel’s respected position is apparent in the detailed account of his craftsmanship on the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat, and the altar of the tabernacle (see [chaps. 37, 38](#)).

Early genealogical references—“son of” and “of the tribe of”—helped identify individuals, much as prefixes such as Mac and Fitz later came into use in British surnames. Some commentators suggest that Bezaleel’s grandfather Hur was the man who joined Aaron in holding up Moses’ hands during battle and who assisted with oversight of the people when Moses

was on Mount Sinai (see 17:12; 24:12–14).

## from **Section 3**

### 5 | Romans 12:2

*Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

#### **Translation**

*Don't live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect.*

—New International Reader's Version™

### 6 | Romans 8:6, 9

*To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. . . . Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.*

#### **Translation**

*If our minds are ruled by our desires, we will die. But if our minds are ruled by the Spirit, we will have life and peace. . . . You are no longer ruled by your desires, but by God's Spirit, who lives in you.*

—Contemporary English Version

Paul's counsel is consistent with Jesus' decisive differentiation between the flesh and Spirit (see examples in [John 3:3–6](#); [6:63](#), citation 7). The apostle repeats this distinction in his letter to the Galatian Christians: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

One source summarizes: "The Spirit-controlled life, the Christ-centred life, the God-focused life is daily coming nearer heaven. . . ."

## from **Section 4**

### 7 | John 6:63

*It is the spirit that quickeneth.*

*Quicken* (Greek, *zōopoieō*) signifies giving, maintaining, and restoring life. The Savior’s assertion here clarifies his teaching about eating his flesh and drinking his blood (see vv. 53–58). Perceiving that the disciples’ understanding is literal, he explains that it is the spirit behind the words—not the words themselves—that brings to light God’s enlivening action.

## 8 | Matthew 13:1–8, 18–23

*The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. . . . Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

First in a series of parables referencing seeds in Matthew 13 (see also vv. 24–32), this story offers two perspectives. One focuses on soil quality (hearers of the “word of the kingdom”), the other on the outlook of the sower (the spreader of the Word).

Familiar with farming methods, most listeners would have known that not every seed sown takes root and bears fruit. Yet the parable ends on a reassuring note, presenting the qualities needed to receive the seed of the Word and affirming that some recipients will be fruitful.

## 9 | Galatians 6:8, 18

*He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. . . . Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*

## Translation

*... if you plant in the field of the Spirit, from the Spirit you will gather the harvest of eternal life. ... May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, my friends.*

—Good News Translation

## from Section 5

### 10 | John 3:34

*He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*

## Translation

*He whom God has sent speaks the words of God [proclaiming the Father's own message]; for God gives the [gift of the] Spirit without measure [generously and boundlessly]!*

—Amplified® Bible (AMP)

Here John the Baptist is replying to his closest followers. Jealous for their own mentor, they have evidently taken exception to Jesus' popularity (see vv. 25, 26). John corrects them unequivocally, specifying proofs of Jesus' unique status—in this verse, the Messiah's immeasurable God-given power (see other mentions of proof in vv. 31, 32, 35).

A Bible authority observes, "Others have been conscious of the help of the Holy Spirit in their ministry, but no one else ever had such a Spirit-filled ministry as the Son of God."

## from Section 6

### 13 | Deuteronomy 6:5–7

*Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: ... when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

## Translation

*Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength. These words that I am commanding*

*you today must always be on your minds. . . . when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are getting up.*

—Common English Bible

Part of the sacred Jewish prayer called the Shema, [verses 4–7](#) convey the central role God is to represent in everyday life. A scholar notes, “The Shema calls for radical, total, whole-hearted, full-bodied devotion.” Speaking of its place in Jewish tradition, she writes, “Its words are to be recited to begin and end the day, at home and abroad; they are to be worn on one’s hands and forehead; they are to be inscribed on the doors of homes and the gateposts of cities; they are to be taught each new generation.”

## 15 | [Acts 2:1, 4–6, 12–17, 21](#)

*When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. . . . And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: . . . and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Peter’s response to skepticism and mockery on the Day of Pentecost is momentous. It’s the first time since Jesus’ ascension that one of his disciples has borne witness of him publicly—here, to an audience of pious Jews who have come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks, an annual harvest festival. And on what is now celebrated by Christians as Pentecost, the Holy Spirit enables Peter to speak with great authority, even after his having denied knowing the Savior (see [Luke 22:54–62](#)) and been absent at the cross.

At this period, many Jews held that divine prophecy had ended after the passing of such seers as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—and that this special ability would reappear only at the arrival of the Messiah (widely assumed to be a distant future happening). Citing the prophet Joel (see [Joel 2:28, 29](#)), Peter declares that with Christ Jesus’ advent, this moment has come and that salvation is available to all believers.

## 15 | [Acts 2:43, 44, 46, 47](#)

*Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; . . . And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.*

The book of Acts highlights the strong sense of community among those early adherents who shared everything from food to belongings “as every man had need” (v. 45). One commentary suggests, “A fellowship of believers shares more than common beliefs and core values; they display a profound regard for one another’s spiritual and physical well-being as a community of friends.”

## 16 | I Corinthians 14:15, 31

*What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. . . . Ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.*

### Translation

*Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand. . . . In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged.*

—New Living Translation

Paul follows his discourse on charity (Greek, *agapē*, also translated *love*; see chap. 13) with guidance to communicate the things of God clearly. Apparently, the Christians at Corinth valued speaking in tongues as an ecstatic phenomenon but did not provide interpretation for others.

To the apostle, both the spirit and the understanding are vital to the encouragement and comfort of community members. “In the church,” he continues, “I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue” (14:19).

The charge to prophesy “one by one” is intended to establish order and harmony among those sharing their inspiration. Paul adds, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (v. 33).

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Read a related article, “[Pentecostal momentum](https://cssentinel.com/pentecostal-momentum)” by Melanie Wahlberg, at [cssentinel.com/pentecostal-momentum](https://cssentinel.com/pentecostal-momentum).

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