

MR. MOODY'S BIBLE CLASS

A Twelve-Part Study in the Doctrines of the Christian Faith

by

Dwight Lyman Moody

Mr. Moody's Bible Class" was a special feature published in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, a popular women's magazine of the 1890s. For twelve months beginning in November 1896, evangelist D.L. Moody published Bible studies that defined the principles of the Christian faith and encouraged readers to engage in daily Scripture reading.

Mr. Moody designed these studies for both individual reflection and group discussion. Whether you're studying alone or with others, take time to read the Scripture passages referenced and answer the reflection questions honestly before God.

These studies are ideal for personal devotions, small group Bible studies, Sunday school classes, or anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of foundational Christian doctrine.

The Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

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LESSON ELEVEN

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is probably not a Sunday-school scholar in the land who, if asked what mission Christ came to earth to accomplish, would not readily reply that it was to reveal the Father and to seek and save the lost. When you come to ask what is the work or nature of the third member of the Trinity, however, there seems to be a great deal of confusion in the minds of many professing Christians.

It was some time after I became a Christian before I learned that the Holy Spirit was a personality. I had always thought of Him as an influence or an attribute of God until I came to study the teaching of Scripture regarding Him and His work. Christ, in His teachings, especially emphasized this, and referred to the coming of the Holy Spirit, “whom the Father will send,” as one who should carry on the work which He had begun. (John 14:26)

THE FIRST WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I pity deep down in my heart any servant of God who undertakes to convict anyone else in his own might. If the archangel Gabriel himself

should come to earth and preach with all the eloquence of the unseen world, unless his words were inspired by the Holy Spirit there would not be a single listener convicted of his sins. There would doubtless be many who would thoroughly appreciate the rhetoric of the speaker and his dramatic power; his graceful gestures would be noted and his command of language admired. Some would even be delighted at the way in which he would denounce sin, and would look around to see if their neighbor was listening—but as for themselves they would be unmoved. It is the Holy Spirit that, like the prophet Nathan, points at the sinful soul and cries, “Thou art the man!” (2 Samuel 12:7)

How easy it is to speak or work when there is the conscious presence and aid of this silent Helper, and how difficult it is at other times when He does not bless your efforts. Often hours of labor in study are wasted because the labor has been solely human, while at other times a few halting, stammering words, direct from the heart, have been used by the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to many an erring soul.

GOD WILL NOT USE THE PESSIMIST

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Romans, prays that “The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Romans 15:13)

“Never will a man who has lost hope be used of God
in building up His Kingdom.”

One of the characteristics of His work then is that He inspires hope. I have never known a man who was filled with the Holy Spirit who was a pessimist, and I am very certain, from the writings of such New Testament heroes as John, Paul, James, and Peter, that even amid all their persecutions, they saw the best, truest, and brightest side of life.

When a man draws away from the influences of the Holy Spirit he may lose hope, and never will a man who has lost hope be used of God in building up His Kingdom. Just think of all the Christians whom you know to be useful men to the church and see if they are not helpful and inspiring to you.

GOD'S WORK IN THE WORLD

In the same Epistle, Paul tells that it is by the Holy Spirit, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.” (Romans 5:5) I have several times heard a young man, more zealous than experienced, make the statement that no special call or requirements are needed in Christian work.

Now that is entirely false, for there is needed a very particular call and a very essential requirement—love.

“No one can hope to succeed in doing God’s work
without God’s love.”

No one can hope to succeed in doing God's work without God's love. A person may succeed in business or in a profession without feeling love for those he comes in contact with, but there never can be any success in Christian work unless we love one another as He hath loved us.

Now it is easy to love anyone who loves us and shows us kindness, but it is quite another thing to love the unlovely. How quickly we respond to any kind word said about us to another when it comes back to us, and how quickly and almost unconsciously we find ourselves praising our flatterer. But let someone say a mean or an unkind thing about us, and instantly we are convinced in our minds that they are mean and contemptible. This is natural, but the Christian is literally supernatural and must love those who are unlovely, even as Christ has loved us in our unlovable estate. And it is the work of the Holy Spirit to shed abroad this love in our hearts.

"The Christian is literally supernatural and must love those who are unlovely."

MINISTERS NEED PRAYERS, NOT CRITICISM

The Holy Spirit brings liberty, for "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Corinthians 3:17)

Many Christian people wonder why it is that their minister hasn't more power, and why he doesn't do more. He may be well-trained for his post and eminently fitted to build up God's people, but he hasn't perfect liberty in his service either in the community or in the pulpit.

Now the trouble may be in the pulpit, but it has been my experience that in almost all the cases you need not go beyond the church vestibule to find the cause of the minister's bondage. Listen to the criticisms of the average congregation as it leaves a church. Before it reaches the sidewalk the message and the messenger have often been disposed of, and topics of greater interest occupy the conversation. The Holy Spirit will not work in an atmosphere of criticism.

“The Holy Spirit will not work in an atmosphere of criticism.”

Suppose that on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) the Apostles had been criticizing Peter, do you think the Holy Spirit would have worked so miraculously? Imagine John whispering to James, “It doesn't seem to me that Peter is quite up to himself this morning,” and James replying, “I am disappointed myself. This is a representative audience, and he lacks polish and finish.”

Suppose Andrew had turned to Matthew and said, “Really that is too bad for Peter to be so harsh on the Pharisees and rulers. There are so many other things upon which we can agree. I do wish he would avoid all controverted subjects.” Do you think that if that had been the attitude of the Apostles there would have been any conversions?

I believe that had we been present at that notable meeting, we would have heard the prayers of many disciples on behalf of Peter, and although his words were plain and simple, they convicted thousands because the Holy Spirit could work freely. What the minister needs,

my friends, is your prayers, your sympathy, your confidence, and not your criticism.

LIVING IN A LAND OF LIBERTY

Then He brings liberty to the individual life, freeing him from the bondage of an enslaving habit or besetting sin. People speak of our land being a land of liberty, and yet in what cruel bondage thousands are living.

[Editor's note: *The following story reflects the historical context of the American South during the era of slavery. While the dialect and the dynamics of the encounter may be uncomfortable for modern readers, Mr. Moody's theological insight remains valuable. The story illustrates the difference between earthly liberty and the spiritual liberty found in Christ — a truth the old man in the story understood more deeply than the educated young men who mocked him.]*

Some years ago I met a gentleman who told me that on his graduation from Yale he accepted a position as teacher in a school in Mississippi. It was in the days of slavery, and coming from the North he was interested in studying the institution. On one occasion he was walking with a companion along a country road when they came to a sign-post bearing the words, "Liberty forty miles." Just then an old slave came along the road, and the young men, thinking to have some fun, stopped him, and asked him what the sign-post said.

The old man shook his head and said, "De ole slave don't read down heah in this ar country."

“Well,” they replied, “the post says it's only forty miles to Liberty. If it's only that short distance why don't you go there?”

The old slave smiled sadly as he answered, “That ar's a sham, young Massa, but if it pointed up thar,” and he raised his trembling hand toward Heaven, “to the liberty where with Christ makes us free, that ar wouldn't be no sham.” The old slave, with all his ignorance, had even then experienced a liberty in his own soul that these young men, with all their boasted education, at that time knew nothing of.

THE IMAGE OF CHRIST IS REFLECTED

Christ's mission on earth was to reveal the Father, and the Holy Spirit is here to reveal Christ. “He shall not speak of Himself,” says Christ, “for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” (John 16:13-14) The Holy Spirit then does not call attention to Himself, and that may account for the fact that we often have such vague and confused ideas about Him and His ministry.

I think there is also a lesson to remember in this truth: a person who is truly living under the influence of the Holy Spirit does not need to call attention to the fact, and those who proclaim their spirituality loudly may well be avoided. We read that, after being in the presence of God, Moses' face literally shone, but it is carefully recorded that Moses himself was unconscious of the radiance. (Exodus 34:29-35) And so it is with the Christian. Those who are most truly like the Master are the ones least of all conscious of their own holiness.

“Those who are most truly like the Master are the ones least of all conscious of their own holiness.”

DISCERNING BETWEEN TRUTH AND ERROR

It is difficult to discern between truth and error, and only through the Divine guidance can we be safely led, for He will guide us into all truth. (John 16:13)

I imagine someone saying: “But how is it, then, that often the greatest error is claimed to have been revealed by the Holy Spirit?”

My answer to any such claim is simply this: that the Holy Spirit speaks through God's word.

“He shall teach you all things,” said Christ to His disciples when telling them of the coming Comforter, “and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26)

And if you carefully read the lives of the Apostles after Pentecost, you will find that they all quoted largely from the Old Testament and from the words of Christ. Had it not been for the presence of the Holy Spirit the entire history of the life of Christ and His crucifixion would have been forgotten. It was very evident that the angels' marvelous appearance to the shepherds at His birth had been forgotten within thirty years (Luke 2:8-14), and that the message of John the Baptist

surprised the crowds that flocked to hear him on the banks of the river Jordan. (Luke 3:16; Matthew 3:11)

ARE YOU SHOWING YOUR FAITH IN YOUR LIFE?

It may be that some member of the Bible Class is even now wishing, down deep in his or her heart, that the presence of the Holy Spirit might come into his or her life. You are a Sunday-school teacher, and to your knowledge no member of your class has ever received any help from you. Or, perhaps, there are members of your family who are not in sympathy with you and care little for your profession. Let me ask you a simple question: Do you show in your daily life that your religious profession is worth having?

“Do you show in your daily life that your religious profession is worth having?”

We are all anxious to get any blessing that will make life more enjoyable, and if we see such blessings in another's life we desire them too. Or do you at home or in business give way to an irritable temper? And how is it when you come to your Bible Class that your words seem hollow and empty?

How often this is the case, and how sorely we need the keeping power of a holy presence in our lives to make them lights in the world around us. The world cares little for a religion that possesses no advantages for daily life, but a life of freedom and peace will always be attractive to those who labor and are heavy laden.

And it is the privilege of us all to live useful lives filled with joy and peace, and to be a blessing in our homes or places of business, if only we are willing to let God perfect His will in us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.



READ MORE ABOUT ...

Mr. Moody draws on both the words of Christ and the writings of Paul to describe the Holy Spirit's person and work. Study these passages to see how Jesus promised the Spirit's coming, how Paul described the Spirit's power at work within the believer, and how that indwelling presence produces a changed life.

Christ's Promise of the Holy Spirit

- John 14:16-17
- John 15:26
- John 16:7-8
- Acts 1:8
- Luke 11:13

The Spirit's Power at Work in the Believer

- Romans 8:9
- Romans 8:11
- Romans 8:26
- 1 Corinthians 2:4-5
- 2 Timothy 1:7

The Spirit's Dwelling Place

- 1 Corinthians 3:16
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The Fruit of the Spirit

- Galatians 5:22-23
- Ephesians 5:18

The Spirit's Power Foretold

- Zechariah 4:6



PERSONAL APPLICATION

Mr. Moody teaches that the Holy Spirit is not merely an influence but a *Person* who brings hope, love, liberty, and power to the believer's life. He asks pointedly, "Do you show in your daily life that your religious profession is worth having?"

Use the following questions to examine how fully you have yielded to the Spirit's presence and work.

Mr. Moody writes that he once thought of the Holy Spirit “as an influence or an attribute of God” until he studied Scripture more closely. Before reading this lesson, how did you tend to think of the Holy Spirit—as a person, a power, or simply a feeling?

How does understanding Him as a Person change the way you relate to Him?

Moody observes, “I have never known a man who was filled with the Holy Spirit who was a pessimist.”

Would the people who know you best describe you as a person of hope? If not, what might that reveal about areas where you’ve “drawn away from the influences of the Holy Spirit?”

[illegible]

Mr. Moody insists that Christian work is impossible without love, and that “the Christian is literally supernatural and must love those who are unlovely.”

Who in your life is hardest for you to love right now? What would it look like to let the Holy Spirit shed His love abroad in your heart toward that person?

The old slave in “Living in a Land of Liberty” had found a freedom in his soul that his well-educated mockers knew nothing of. Are there habits, fears, or besetting sins that still hold you in bondage despite your outward circumstances? What would true liberty in Christ look like in that specific area?

[illegible]

Mr. Moody warns that “the Holy Spirit will not work in an atmosphere of criticism,” and observes how quickly a congregation can dismantle its own minister before reaching the sidewalk.

Do you tend to criticize those in spiritual leadership over you, or do you pray for them? What would change if you replaced criticism with intercession this week?

Mr. Moody closes by asking, “Do you show in your daily life that your religious profession is worth having?”

If someone watched your daily life without knowing your religious beliefs, would they see evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence—in your temper, your words, your peace? What is one specific area where your profession and your practice don't yet match?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings visible.

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

The core text of this Bible study—Mr. Moody's teaching on the Holy Spirit—was originally published in *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1897. As a work published over 125 years ago, Mr. Moody's original text is in the public domain and free for anyone to use. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version, also in the public domain.

ABOUT THIS TEXT

This edition faithfully preserves D.L. Moody's original teaching. We have made minimal edits for modern clarity—correcting obvious errors, updating a few archaic terms, and adjusting occasional grammatical inconsistencies—while keeping Mr. Moody's voice and meaning completely intact.

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS EDITION

This 2026 edition includes:

- Updated formatting for modern readers
- Reflection and study questions
- Organized Scripture references
- Introductory paragraphs to sections titled “Mr. Moody’s Bible Verses,” “Read More About ...,” and “Personal Application”

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