

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

PNEUMATOLOGY

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

UNIT 9: THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

Lesson 25

The Spirit as the Builder of the Church

The Temple of God, Formed and Filled by the Spirit

Builder, Bond, Power, and Presence — The Spirit's Four-Fold Ministry to the Church

Key Texts: 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; Ephesians 2:19–22; 4:3–4; Acts 1:8; John 4:23–24

“In Whom You Also Are Being Built Together into a Dwelling of God in the Spirit”

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Series Verse

*“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes,
He will guide you into all the truth;
for He will not speak on His own initiative,
but whatever He hears, He will speak;
and He will disclose to you what is to come.”*

John 16:13, NASB 1995

Introduction

Units 1 through 8 have established the Spirit's person, His work in the old covenant and in the life of Christ, His application of redemption in the *ordo salutis*, His permanent presence in the indwelling, sealing, and baptism, His sanctifying work in progressive sanctification and the fruit of the Spirit, and His gifts to the church. With Unit 9 we now expand the pneumatological lens from the individual believer to the corporate community: the Spirit's ministry to, in, and through the church as a whole. This is the ecclesiological dimension of pneumatology, and it is as rich, as practically important, and as frequently underdeveloped as any other dimension of the Spirit's work.

Lesson 25 examines the Spirit's fundamental relationship to the church in four interconnected dimensions: the Spirit as the Builder who constitutes the church as His temple (the temple dimension); the Spirit as the Bond who maintains the unity that Spirit-baptism has created (the unity dimension); the Spirit as the source of Power for the church's mission to the world (the mission dimension); and the Spirit as the enabling Presence in the church's worship and preaching (the worship dimension). These four dimensions are not four separate pneumatological functions loosely associated with the church's corporate life; they are four aspects of the single, comprehensive, Spirit-constituted reality that is the church, a reality whose depth and richness the New Testament's ecclesiological language struggles to fully articulate because the reality it describes exceeds every human analogy.

The dominant New Testament metaphor for this corporate pneumatological reality is the temple. The church is the dwelling place of God in the Spirit, not a building made of stones but a community formed of people, each of whom is indwelt by the Spirit (Lesson 15) and all of whom together constitute the living temple in which the Spirit makes His corporate residence (Ephesians 2:21–22). This is the New Covenant's most striking ecclesiological claim: the God who inhabited the Most Holy Place behind the curtain of the Jerusalem temple has moved out of the building, torn the curtain, and taken up residence in the community of His redeemed people. The church is not a place where God is worshipped; the church is a community of people in whom God dwells, and it is from this community-as-temple that worship, mission, unity, and life together flow.

This lesson will also connect the Spirit's corporate work to the series' cessationist convictions established in Unit 8: the Spirit's extraordinary authenticating work is complete, but the Spirit's corporate building work is in full and vigorous operation. Every gathering of the Spirit-baptized community is a gathering of the living temple; every act of corporate worship is the Spirit's own exercise of His resident presence; every missional engagement with the world is the Spirit's empowered extension of the church He is building. The church is not a human organization sustained by institutional inertia; it is a Spirit-built, Spirit-unified, Spirit-empowered, Spirit-worshipping community whose corporate life is the most visible evidence of the Spirit's transforming work in the world.

I. The Spirit as the Builder: The Church as the Temple of God

1 Corinthians 3:16–17 and Ephesians 2:19–22

A. The Corporate Temple: 1 Corinthians 3:16–17

First Corinthians 3:16–17 is the foundational ecclesiological temple text, and its corporate character is the most important exegetical point about it: “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are” (NASB 1995). The word “you” in this passage is plural (*humeis* in Greek, you all, the community as a whole), as is the word “temple” (*naos*, the singular temple, the single corporate dwelling). Paul is not saying that each individual believer is a temple (that is 1 Corinthians 6:19’s point); he is saying that the community as a whole is a single temple, that the Spirit’s corporate dwelling in the gathered community constitutes the community as a collective house of God.

The context of 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 is Paul’s rebuke of the factionalism that was tearing the Corinthian community apart: the party-spirit of “I am of Paul” or “I am of Apollos” (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4) was threatening to destroy the unity of the Spirit’s corporate dwelling. The warning of verse 17, “If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him”, is addressed to those who destroy the community’s unity, because destroying the community destroys the corporate temple. The severity of the warning reflects the magnitude of what is at stake: the community is not a human organization that can be reconstructed by managerial skill; it is the Spirit’s dwelling place, and the destruction of the community is the desecration of that dwelling.

The architectural metaphor of 1 Corinthians 3:9–15 provides the context for the temple claim: Paul laid the foundation (Jesus Christ), others build on it, and each builder will be evaluated for the quality of their building material (gold, silver, precious stones vs. wood, hay, straw). The Spirit is the presence within the temple that the building is designed to house; the quality of the community’s building determines whether the temple is a worthy house for the Spirit’s dwelling. The pastoral and missional implication is direct: the way the community is built, the teaching, the relationships, the discipline, the worship, the mutual care, the mission engagement, either honors or dishonors the Spirit who makes the community His dwelling.

B. The Growing Temple: Ephesians 2:19–22

Ephesians 2:19–22 develops the temple metaphor in its most Trinitarian and most architecturally complete form: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (NASB 1995). The passage is both architectural (the building, the cornerstone, the foundation) and organic (the building is growing, present tense, progressive, ongoing), and both dimensions are important for the Spirit’s temple-building ministry.

The architectural dimension establishes the structure: the foundation is the apostles and prophets (the New Testament foundational revelation, Lesson 23's Foundational argument), the cornerstone is Christ (the structural key that determines the alignment of every other element), and the whole building is fitted together on this foundation. The organic dimension establishes the Spirit's ongoing work: the building is currently growing (auzēnei, is growing, present tense) into a holy temple. The Spirit is actively building: fitting the members together, unifying diverse people into a single coherent structure, and progressively completing the community's growth toward the fullness of the temple that is its intended goal.

The Trinitarian structure of Ephesians 2:19–22 is the passage's most theologically rich feature: the building is in the Lord (Christ, v. 21), the dwelling is of God (the Father, v. 22), and the community is built together in the Spirit (v. 22). The three divine Persons are each present in the temple-building: the Son is the structural principle (the cornerstone that determines the building's alignment); the Father is the One whose dwelling the building is designed to house; and the Spirit is the active agent who fits the living stones together and brings the building to its completion. The church is not primarily a human institution but the Triune God's ongoing building project, with each Person contributing His specific role to the construction of the community that will be the eternal dwelling of the living God.

II. The Spirit as the Bond: Unity in the Community

Ephesians 4:1–6 and the Gift of Peace

If the Spirit is the Builder who constitutes the church as the temple, the Spirit is also the Bond who maintains the unity that the building's construction has created. Ephesians 4:3 is the New Testament's most direct statement of the Spirit's role in the church's unity: "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (NASB 1995). The phrase "unity of the Spirit" (hēn henotēta tou pneumatos) identifies the unity as the Spirit's own creation and possession: the unity that believers are commanded to preserve is not a unity they have created by human effort but a unity the Spirit has established through the Spirit-baptism of Lesson 17 and the Spirit-indwelling of Lesson 15. The command is not to create unity but to preserve it, to protect and maintain what the Spirit has already established.

The context of Ephesians 4:1–6 is the vocational application that Paul draws from the first three chapters' theological grounding: "I... implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (vv. 1–3). The specific virtues through which the Spirit's unity is preserved, humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance in love, diligence, are the fruit of the Spirit applied specifically to the community's relational life. The Spirit's corporate unity is not maintained by institutional structures, by doctrinal agreement alone, or by the suppression of disagreement; it is maintained by the Spirit's own fruit expressed in the specific relational practices that honor each member of the community as a fellow member of the same Spirit-baptized body.

Ephesians 4:4–6's seven-fold unity statement (one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father) establishes the theological depth of the unity the Spirit

has created and calls the community to preserve. The unity is not merely organizational or sociological but ontological and pneumatological: the seven “ones” describe a community that shares the deepest possible common reality. One Spirit, the same Spirit who regenerated, indwelt, sealed, and Spirit-baptized every member is the Spirit who unifies them all into the single community. The seven-fold unity is also the most powerful argument against every form of sectarian division within the church: the church’s divisions are a contradiction of the Spirit’s own unifying work, a resistance to the bond of peace, and a partial demolition of the temple that the Spirit is building.

The practical shape of preserving the Spirit’s unity is the shape of the specific virtues Paul lists: bearing with one another in love when the differences of personality, culture, background, and theological preference create friction; choosing the patience of the long-tempered over the reactivity of the short-tempered; choosing the gentleness of the secure over the aggressiveness of the threatened; and choosing the diligence of the community-builder over the indolence of the community-consumer who benefits from the community without contributing to its relational health. The Spirit who is the bond of peace is also the Spirit who produces patience, gentleness, and kindness as His fruit (Lesson 19): the fruit-producing work of the Spirit in individual believers is the means by which the Spirit preserves His own corporate unity in the assembled community.

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” | “Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” | “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses”

1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 4:3; Acts 1:8, NASB 1995

III. The Spirit as the Source of Power: Mission and Witness

Acts 1:8 and the Ongoing Missional Empowerment

The most familiar of the Spirit’s corporate functions in popular evangelical understanding is also the most mission-shaping: the Spirit as the source of power for the church’s witness to the world. Acts 1:8 is the pneumatological charter of the church’s entire missional existence: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (NASB 1995). The verse is simultaneously a promise (you will receive power), a pneumatological grounding (when the Holy Spirit has come upon you), and a missional commission (“you shall be My witnesses”, not “will be” in the sense of inevitability but “shall be” in the sense of commissioning).

The relationship between the Spirit’s coming and the mission’s empowerment is not merely sequential (first the Spirit comes, then mission begins) but causal and essential (the mission is empowered by the Spirit, and without the Spirit the mission has no genuine power). Jesus specifically instructed the disciples not to begin the missional work without the Spirit’s empowerment (Acts 1:4: “wait for what the Father had promised”). The Spirit’s power is not

merely an enhancement to a mission that the disciples could have carried out in their own strength, however tentatively; it is the enabling condition without which the mission would be nothing more than human religious effort. The Spirit who empowered the disciples at Pentecost to preach with the bold, convicting, transforming power that produced three thousand conversions in a single day is the same Spirit who empowers every genuinely Spirit-dependent proclamation of the gospel in every generation.

The concentric geography of Acts 1:8, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the remotest part of the earth, is not merely a travel itinerary but a pneumatological vision of the Spirit's missional expansion. The Spirit who was poured out in Jerusalem (Acts 2) extended His mission to Judea (Acts 8:1–4), to Samaria (Acts 8:5–25, Lesson 17's Samaritan narrative), to the Gentiles in Caesarea (Acts 10–11), and to the remotest parts of the Gentile world in Paul's missionary journeys (Acts 13–28). This expansion is not the disciples' achievement but the Spirit's sovereign direction: He drove Philip to Samaria, directed Philip to the Ethiopian's chariot, fell on Cornelius before Peter finished speaking, and directed the Antioch community to commission Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2–4). The Spirit is not merely behind the mission; He is the mission's director, its empowerment, and its sovereign executor.

The cessationist implication of Acts 1:8's corporate missional promise is significant: the extraordinary sign gifts that accompanied the Spirit's first-century missional expansion were the Spirit's authenticating instruments for that specific redemptive-historical expansion. Their cessation does not mean that the Spirit's missional empowerment has ceased; it means that the Spirit's empowerment of the church's witness now operates through the ordinary gifts, the preaching of the Word, the demonstration of the community's transformed life, and the sovereign working of God in the hearts of those who hear the gospel. The same Spirit who filled Peter at Pentecost fills the faithful preacher who opens the Word in the power of the Spirit's illuminating and convicting work. The mode has changed; the empowerment has not diminished.

IV. The Spirit in the Worship of the Church

John 4:23–24 and Worship in Spirit and Truth

Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1–42) reaches its theological climax in the exchange about the location and nature of genuine worship. The woman raises the question of the correct place of worship (the Samaritan mountain vs. Jerusalem), and Jesus reframes the entire question in terms that transcend location and establish the Spirit's central role in the church's worship: "Yet a hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23–24, NASB 1995).

The phrase "in spirit and truth" (*en pneumati kai alētheia*) has been the subject of considerable interpretive debate. The most pneumatologically satisfying reading connects it directly to the Holy Spirit and the truth of the Word: genuine worship is worship that is enabled by the Spirit's own presence (in spirit) and grounded in the objective truth of divine self-revelation (in truth).

This reading is supported by the context of the Farewell Discourse in John's Gospel, where the Spirit is identified as both the Paraclete and "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13, the series' own verse). The Spirit of truth enables the worship that is in spirit and truth: He moves the worshipper's spirit into genuine engagement with the living God, and He does so through the truth of the Word that He inspired and now illuminates (Lesson 26's subject).

The contrast Jesus is drawing is between the formal, location-dependent, externally regulated worship of the Old Covenant, the worship that required the Samaritan mountain or the Jerusalem temple as its fixed address, and the Spirit-enabled, truth-grounded, heart-oriented worship of the New Covenant that can be offered anywhere because the Spirit who enables it has no fixed address in a building. The New Covenant's worship is not less structured or less God-centered than the Old Covenant's; it is more directly pneumatological and more intimately Christological. The Spirit who took up residence in the hearts of believers (Lesson 15) has brought the worship's locus from the external temple to the internal reality of the Spirit-indwelt community: where the Spirit is present, genuine worship is possible; where the Spirit is absent (quenched, grieved, replaced by human performance), no external structure or liturgical form can compensate for the absence of the Spirit's enabling presence.

The pastoral implications for the church's worship practice are significant. First, genuine worship is not primarily a matter of the right style, the right music, or the right liturgical form; it is a matter of the Spirit's enabling presence and the truth's guiding content. A community that worships in Spirit and truth, that brings its genuine, heart-oriented, Spirit-moved engagement to the objective truth of God's self-revelation, is worshipping in the manner that the Father seeks, regardless of whether its form is traditional or contemporary, liturgically formal or free-form. Second, the Spirit's enabling presence is not a mysterious, uncontrollable spiritual force that arrives unpredictably; it is the permanent, indwelling, always-present reality of the Spirit who has taken up residence in the community (Ephesians 2:22). The community's responsibility is not to summon the Spirit's presence but to remove the obstacles that prevent the Spirit's already-present, already-resident influence from permeating the community's gathered life.

V. The Spirit in the Preaching of the Church

1 Corinthians 2:1–5 and the Demonstration of Power

The Spirit's role in the church's preaching is one of the most practically important and most frequently neglected dimensions of the Spirit's corporate work. Paul's account of his own preaching ministry in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 is the defining pneumatological description of genuine Spirit-empowered proclamation: "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (NASB 1995).

Paul's deliberate contrast between "persuasive words of wisdom" and "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" is the pneumatological key to the entire passage. The contrast is not

between intelligent and unintelligent preaching, or between prepared and unprepared proclamation, or between engaging and boring communication. It is between preaching whose persuasive power depends on the preacher's rhetorical skill and preaching whose persuasive power depends on the Spirit's own convicting, illuminating, and converting work. Both may be compelling; both may produce apparent results in the short term. But the difference becomes apparent in the durability and the depth of the fruit: preaching that rests on human wisdom produces faith that rests on human wisdom, a faith that is as vulnerable as the human wisdom that produced it. Preaching that rests on the Spirit's power produces faith that rests on the power of God, a faith that is as durable as the God who produced it.

The practical shape of Spirit-empowered preaching is neither the absence of careful preparation nor the presence of spectacular pneumatological phenomena. Paul was not arguing for lazy, unprepared proclamation; his letters demonstrate a theological depth, a scriptural richness, and an argumentative precision that required extraordinary intellectual and spiritual investment. What Paul is describing is the disposition and the dependence that undergird the prepared proclamation: the awareness that the most carefully crafted sermon, the most theologically precise exposition, and the most pastorally sensitive application will accomplish nothing of eternal significance without the Spirit's own work in the hearts of the hearers. The preacher's role is to proclaim the Word faithfully; the Spirit's role is to make the Word effective. The preacher who conflates these two roles, who trusts in the effectiveness of the Word itself or in the quality of his own proclamation rather than in the Spirit's sovereign empowerment, is the preacher whose faith rests on the wisdom of men rather than on the power of God.

VI. The Spirit and the Corporate Community Life

The Spirit's Comprehensive Presence in Every Dimension of Church Life

The Spirit's corporate ministry to the church extends beyond the specific functions of temple-building, unity-maintaining, mission-empowering, worship-enabling, and preaching-empowering to the comprehensive presence of the Spirit in every dimension of the community's shared life. The corporate community is the Spirit's dwelling (Ephesians 2:22); therefore, every aspect of the community's life is the Spirit's territory, every relational interaction is a potential expression of the Spirit's transforming work, and every gathering of the community is an occasion for the Spirit's presence to be either honored or resisted.

The corporate prayer life of the community is a primary arena of the Spirit's corporate work. Romans 8:26–27 describes the Spirit's role in the prayer of both individual believers and the corporate community: "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." The Spirit's intercession is not merely for individuals in their private prayer; it is for the saints, the community as a whole, whose corporate prayer is continually taken up and presented before the Father by the Spirit who knows the Father's will perfectly and who aligns the community's prayer with that will.

The corporate discipline of the community, the church's exercise of the authority Christ has given it to address sin, restore the wayward, and maintain the community's holiness, is also a pneumatological function. First Corinthians 5–6 addresses the Corinthian community's failure to exercise discipline, and the entire context is the Spirit's temple: a community that tolerates unrepentant sin in its midst is a community that is tolerating the desecration of the Spirit's dwelling. The Spirit who calls the individual believer to mortify sin (Lesson 20) calls the corporate community to maintain the communal holiness that is the corporate expression of the same mortification.

The corporate suffering of the community, the persecution, the economic hardship, the social marginalization, and the spiritual assault that the New Testament consistently presents as the normative experience of the Spirit-filled community in a hostile world, is also the arena of the Spirit's specific corporate empowerment. Jesus promised the Spirit's specific assistance in the moment of persecution: "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11). The Spirit who empowers the church's mission in moments of open invitation empowers the church's witness in moments of hostile arrest; He is the comprehensive corporate presence who meets the community in every circumstance.

VII. The Pastoral Vision: A Spirit-Built, Spirit-Unified, Spirit-Empowered Community

What the Church Looks Like When the Spirit Is Genuinely at Work

The pastoral vision of the Spirit's corporate work in the church, drawn from the New Testament's own description of the Spirit-built, Spirit-unified, Spirit-empowered, Spirit-worshipping community, is the vision toward which every pastor and every congregation is called to strive. It is not a vision of the church as a perfect, conflict-free, spiritually uniform community; the New Testament's own communities were full of conflict, failure, and doctrinal error. It is a vision of a community whose life is oriented toward the Spirit's work rather than toward human performance; whose unity is maintained by the Spirit's fruit rather than enforced by institutional authority; whose mission is empowered by the Spirit's presence rather than driven by human marketing; and whose worship is animated by the Spirit's own enabling rather than managed by liturgical professionals.

Acts 2:42–47 provides the New Testament's most vivid sketch of the Spirit-filled community in its earliest expression: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

The four marks of the early community's Spirit-filled life that Acts 2:42 identifies, apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer, are the ordinary means of grace around which Spirit-filled corporate life is organized. The extraordinary signs (v. 43) were the Spirit's authenticating work in a unique redemptive-historical moment; the four ordinary marks are the Spirit's permanent pattern for the community's life in every generation. The cessationist community that devotes itself to the apostles' teaching (the completed Scripture, Lesson 23's sufficiency argument), genuine fellowship (the shared life of the Spirit-baptized community), the breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper as the Spirit's memorial), and prayer (the Spirit's enabling of the community's approach to the Father through the Son) is the community that is organized around the Spirit's permanent means and that can expect the Spirit's permanent, comprehensive, transforming work.

The Lord adding to the community's number (v. 47) is the Spirit's own missional work through the community's ordinary faithfulness: the community's transformed life, its generosity, its joy, its mutual care, and its proclamation of the apostolic gospel together constitute the Spirit's witness to the surrounding world. The community that is being built as the Spirit's temple, maintained in the Spirit's bond of peace, empowered for the Spirit's witness, and animated in the Spirit's worship is the community through which the Spirit is most actively extending the church's boundaries outward. The Spirit builds the church from within through the ordinary means and extends the church outward through the ordinary gifts and the ordinary witness of the ordinary members of the extraordinary community that He is building.

*“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,
but you are fellow citizens with the saints
and are of God’s household...
in whom you also are being built together
into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”*

Ephesians 2:19, 22, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Corporate Temple	The New Testament designation for the church as a whole as the Spirit's dwelling place, as distinct from the individual believer's body as a temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). In 1 Corinthians 3:16–17, the plural "you" (humeis) and the singular "temple" (naos) together establish that the community as a corporate whole is a single temple in which the Spirit dwells. In Ephesians 2:21–22, the whole building fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, and the believers together are built into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. The corporate temple is the New Covenant's fulfillment of the Old Covenant's localized shekinah presence: the divine dwelling that once required a physical building now inhabits the living community of the redeemed.
Unity of the Spirit	The bond of community that the Holy Spirit has established through His Spirit-baptism of all believers into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13), described in Ephesians 4:3 as the unity that believers are commanded to preserve ("being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"). The unity is the Spirit's own creation and possession, not a human achievement; the command is to preserve what the Spirit has established, not to create what human effort must achieve. Preserved through the specific Spirit-produced virtues of Ephesians 4:2: humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance in love.
Bond of Peace	Ephesians 4:3's description of the relational medium through which the Spirit's unity is maintained: "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The bond of peace is both the product of the Spirit's work (the peace of Galatians 5:22's fruit list) and the relational context in which the Spirit's unity is preserved. The specific virtues through which the bond of peace is maintained, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, are the Spirit's own fruit applied specifically to the community's shared life. The community that cultivates these relational virtues is the community that is actively cooperating with the Spirit's corporate work of maintaining the bond of peace.
Demonstration of the Spirit	Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 2:4–5 of the pneumatological character of genuine gospel proclamation: "my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Distinguished from rhetorical persuasion (which depends on human skill) as the Spirit's own convicting, illuminating, and converting work through the preached Word. Preaching in demonstration of the Spirit produces faith that rests on the power of God rather than on the wisdom of men, faith that is as durable as the divine source that produced it.

Term	Definition
Worship in Spirit and Truth	Jesus' definition of genuine New Covenant worship in John 4:23–24: "true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth." The Spirit enables genuine encounter with the living God; the truth (the Word's objective revelation of who God is) grounds the worship in the reality of who is being worshipped rather than in the worshipper's subjective experience. Together, spirit and truth constitute the New Covenant's pneumatological and revelatory frame for genuine worship: neither pure subjectivism (experience without truth) nor pure externalism (truth without Spirit-enabling) but the integration of both. The Father seeks such worshippers, establishing that genuine Spirit-and-truth worship is not a special achievement but the normal expectation of every New Covenant believer.
Acts 1:8 Commission	Jesus' pre-Pentecost commissioning of the Spirit-empowered witness: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." The concentric geography (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts) is both a travel itinerary and a pneumatological vision of the Spirit's sovereign missional expansion. The Spirit's power is not merely an enhancement to human missional effort but its enabling condition: without the Spirit, no proclamation has genuine converting power. The Spirit directs, empowers, and accomplishes the mission; the witnesses proclaim in the Spirit's power.
Katoiktērion tou Theou	Greek: dwelling of God (from katoikēsis, dwelling + theou, of God). The phrase used in Ephesians 2:22 for the corporate community as a dwelling of God: "in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." Carries the sense of permanence and intentionality (a chosen, permanent home rather than a temporary lodging). The Spirit's corporate indwelling of the church community is God's intentional, chosen, permanent habitation within the New Covenant people, the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Covenant's foundational promise: "I will be their God and they will be My people."
The Whole Building Growing	The organic dimension of the Ephesians 2:21–22 temple metaphor: the whole building "being fitted together is growing into a holy temple." The present-tense participiple (auzānei) establishes the ongoing, progressive, Spirit-directed growth of the community toward the fullness of the temple that is its intended goal. The growth is not automatic or independent of human cooperation; it requires the faithful preaching of the Word, the exercise of the continuing gifts, the maintenance of the Spirit's unity, and the communal participation in the means of grace. But the ultimate architect and growth-agent is the Spirit, who fits the living stones together according to the Triune God's design.
Acts 2:42 Pattern	The four foundational marks of the Spirit-filled community described in Acts 2:42: apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. These four marks are the permanent, ordinary means around which Spirit-filled

Term	Definition
	corporate life is organized, the cessationist equivalent of the extraordinary signs of verse 43. The community that devotes itself to these four ordinary marks, the completed apostolic Scripture, genuine shared life, the Lord's Supper, and Spirit-empowered corporate prayer, is organized around the Spirit's own permanent provision for the community's life and can expect the Spirit's ongoing, transforming, community-building, and community-extending work.
Spirit as Director of Mission	The New Testament's consistent presentation of the Holy Spirit as the active, sovereign director of the church's missional expansion in Acts: the Spirit drove Philip to Samaria (Acts 8:29, 39), directed Philip to the Ethiopian's chariot (v. 29), fell on Cornelius' household before Peter finished preaching (Acts 10:44), and directed the Antioch community to commission Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2–4). The Spirit is not merely behind the mission as a general enabling force; He is its specific, providential, case-by-case director. The implication for the contemporary church: the Spirit who directed the apostolic mission directs the church's contemporary mission through the ordinary means of prayer, community discernment, and obedient response to the Word's missional imperatives.

Practical Application

A. For the Mind: *What Must We Believe?*

We must believe that the church is not primarily a human institution organized for religious purposes; it is the Spirit's living temple, the Triune God's permanent dwelling, and the community that the Spirit is actively building, unifying, empowering, and animating. This conviction must be sufficient to actually change the way the church thinks about itself, organizes its life, makes its decisions, and evaluates its health. The church that thinks of itself primarily as a voluntary religious association managed by human leadership according to organizational best practices has misunderstood its own nature at the most fundamental level. The church that thinks of itself as the Spirit's dwelling, the Spirit's mission community, and the Spirit's worship offering will organize itself, make decisions, and evaluate its health by the Spirit's standards rather than by the standards of institutional performance.

We must also believe the corporate dimension of the Spirit's work with equal conviction as the individual dimension. The series has given extensive attention to the Spirit's work in the individual believer (Lessons 11–20), and rightly so; but the Spirit's corporate work is not an extension of His individual work, it is a distinct, irreducibly corporate dimension of His ministry that the individual believer cannot experience except in the corporate context of the gathered community. The Spirit who indwells each believer individually also indwells the community corporately, and the corporate indwelling produces realities, the body's unity, the community's worship, the shared fellowship of the Spirit-baptized, that cannot be reproduced by any accumulation of individual spiritual experiences.

B. For the Heart: *What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the temple metaphor do its most pastorally searching work: the community you gather with on the Lord's Day is the Spirit's dwelling. The specific, perhaps ordinary, perhaps disappointing, perhaps frustrating, perhaps deeply beloved people who gather with you each week in the Spirit's name are the living stones of which the Spirit's temple is being built. They are not raw material to be improved before they are worthy of the Spirit's residence; they are the temple as it currently exists, imperfect and incomplete, but genuinely and presently the Spirit's dwelling. Let the awareness of this produce the reverence for the community that the temple deserves: the willingness to bear with one another in love, to maintain the Spirit's unity with the patience and humility of one who knows that each member is a living stone in the same Spirit's temple.

Desire the Acts 2:42 community pattern for the specific community you serve: the devotion to the apostles' teaching that builds the community on the Word's foundation; the fellowship that is genuine, costly, and Spirit-produced rather than merely sociable and comfortable; the breaking of bread that is the regular, communal, Spirit-empowered remembrance of the One who gave His body and blood; and the prayer that expresses the community's collective dependence on the Spirit's sovereign intercession and provision. This is the Spirit's own pattern

for the corporate life; desire it with the specific, practical urgency of one who knows that the Spirit is building through these ordinary means.

C. For the Hands: *What Must We Do?*

- Read Acts 2:42–47 as a pastoral vision and then honestly assess your specific congregation against its four marks. How devoutly and how genuinely is your community devoted to the apostles' teaching (the preached and taught Word, the serious engagement of Scripture in the community's life)? How genuine and how costly is the fellowship (the actual shared life, the bearing of one another's burdens, the genuine knowledge of one another)? How regular and how meaningful is the breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper as the Spirit's memorial)? How earnest and how communal is the prayer? For each of the four marks, identify one specific change that would bring your community's practice into closer alignment with the Acts 2 pattern.
- Study Ephesians 4:1–6 as a practical guide to preserving the Spirit's unity. Identify the specific relational failures in your community that most threaten the Spirit's unity: the unresolved conflicts, the factional tendencies, the personalities that the Spirit's bond of peace most consistently struggles to hold together. For each identified threat, apply the specific Ephesians 4:2 virtues: which virtue is most needed to address this specific threat, humility, gentleness, patience, or tolerance in love? And what specific, practical step would express that virtue in relation to the specific threat?
- Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 and then honestly evaluate the current preaching culture of your congregation. Is the preaching characterized by the dependence on the Spirit's power that Paul describes, or by a dependence on rhetorical skill, creative presentation, or the preacher's personal authority that Paul contrasts with genuine Spirit-empowered proclamation? What would it look like for the preaching culture to be shaped by Paul's pneumatological principle: careful preparation, faithful exposition, and the explicit, conscious, ongoing dependence on the Spirit to do what no human preparation can accomplish?
- Consider the Acts 1:8 missional geography applied to your specific congregation's context: who is your Jerusalem (the immediate community you inhabit), your Judea (the region surrounding your immediate community), your Samaria (the people groups or communities that feel foreign or distant), and the remotest part of the earth (the global mission context in which your congregation participates)? For each concentric sphere, identify one specific Spirit-dependent, gift-deploying, prayer-saturated missional engagement that your congregation is currently making or could make in the next year.
- Pray specifically and regularly for the Spirit's corporate work in your congregation: for the Spirit to build the community as His holy temple, to maintain the bond of peace, to empower the community's witness, and to animate the community's worship with His genuine enabling presence. This is not a general prayer for the church to do well; it is the specific pneumatological prayer of one who has understood that the church's health depends on the Spirit's corporate work and who is asking the Spirit to do that work through the community's faithful, ordinary, Spirit-dependent engagement with the means He has provided.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

1. If someone asked you to describe the most significant evidence that the Holy Spirit is genuinely at work in your congregation, what would you say? Is your answer primarily about extraordinary experiences and dramatic manifestations, or primarily about the ordinary marks of the Spirit's corporate work, unity, holiness, transforming preaching, missional fruitfulness, and Acts 2:42 devotion? What does your instinctive answer reveal about the pneumatological framework that most shapes your understanding of the Spirit's corporate work?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

2. Read 1 Corinthians 3:9–17. Paul uses two metaphors for the church in quick succession: God's field (v. 9) and God's building (vv. 9–17). What does each metaphor contribute to the understanding of the Spirit's corporate work? Note that in verse 16, the Spirit "dwells in" (oikei en) the community, the same verb used in Romans 8:9 for the Spirit's indwelling of the individual believer. What does the use of the same verb for individual indwelling (Romans 8:9) and corporate indwelling (1 Corinthians 3:16) suggest about the relationship between the Spirit's individual and corporate work?
3. Read Ephesians 2:19–22 and trace the architectural argument. The passage moves from the community's identity (fellow citizens, God's household, v. 19) to the building's structure (foundation, cornerstone, v. 20) to the building's character (holy temple, v. 21) to the building's purpose (dwelling of God in the Spirit, v. 22). What is the Trinitarian structure of the passage, what role does each Person of the Trinity play in the building's construction? And what does the present-tense participle "being fitted together" (sunarmologoumenē, v. 21) indicate about the ongoing nature of the Spirit's building work?
4. Read Ephesians 4:1–6. Paul's appeal to "walk worthily" rests on the seven-fold unity of verses 4–6: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. What is the logical relationship between the theological unity (the seven ones) and the behavioral command (walk worthily, maintain the bond of peace)? Does the theological unity of the seven ones automatically produce the behavioral unity Paul commands, or must the behavioral unity be actively pursued? And what is the specific role of the Spirit's one-ness (one Spirit) in grounding and motivating the community's behavioral unity?
5. Read Acts 1:4-8 and Acts 2:1–47 together. What specifically does Jesus command the disciples to wait for (Acts 1:4-5), and why does he give this specific instruction before

the missional commission of verse 8? And looking at Acts 2:42–47, which elements of the Spirit-filled community’s life are extraordinary (signs and wonders, the disciples’ communal sharing) and which are ordinary (apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayer, praising God)? What does the relationship between the extraordinary and the ordinary marks suggest about the community’s long-term life under the Spirit?

6. Read John 4:19–24. Jesus reframes the woman’s question about the correct location of worship into a question about the correct character of worship. What specific contrast is Jesus drawing between the old worship (mountain or Jerusalem) and the new worship (in spirit and truth)? And note that Jesus says “the Father seeks such worshipers” (v. 23), what does it mean that the Father actively seeks genuine Spirit-and-truth worshippers? How does this seeking relate to the Spirit’s enabling role in producing the worship that the Father seeks?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

7. The lesson argues that the Spirit’s corporate temple-building work is ongoing and progressive (“the whole building being fitted together is growing”, Ephesians 2:21). The growing temple metaphor suggests that the church in its present form is incomplete and in process. What are the implications of this incompleteness for how the church evaluates its current state? Does the growth metaphor provide an excuse for the church’s present failures, or does it provide the framework within which the church’s failures should be addressed? How does the Spirit’s role as the active builder relate to the community’s responsibility to cooperate with the building process?
8. The lesson presents the Spirit’s corporate unity as already established by Spirit-baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13) and commands the community to preserve it (Ephesians 4:3). What does it mean to preserve unity rather than to create it? Does this distinction relieve the community of the responsibility to work at unity, or does it reframe that responsibility in a more Spirit-dependent direction? And what is the difference between preserving the Spirit’s unity and the merely human effort to maintain organizational cohesion by suppressing conflict?
9. Paul’s description of Spirit-empowered preaching in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 contrasts “persuasive words of wisdom” with “demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Does this contrast mean that skillful, rhetorically effective preaching is incompatible with genuine Spirit-empowerment? Or does the contrast identify a disposition and a dependence rather than a stylistic choice? How does the Spirit-empowered preacher relate to his own rhetorical and intellectual gifts, using them fully while depending on the Spirit rather than on them?
10. Jesus promises the Spirit’s specific assistance to believers who are arrested and brought before authorities (Mark 13:11). The cessationist who denies the continuation of revelatory prophecy must account for what this promise means for present-day believers who face persecution. Is this a continuing promise of specific Spirit-given words in the moment of persecution, or is it a promise of Spirit-empowered boldness

and clarity in expressing the already-received Word? How does the answer relate to the broader distinction between the Spirit's illuminating work (which continues) and the Spirit's revelatory work (which has ceased)?

11. The Acts 2:42 pattern identifies four marks of the Spirit-filled community: apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. The lesson argues that these are the permanent ordinary marks of the Spirit's corporate work, in contrast to the extraordinary signs of verse 43. But the extraordinary signs (wonders and signs through the apostles) are listed alongside the ordinary marks in the same passage, without any explicit hierarchical distinction. Does the lesson's ordinary/extraordinary distinction in Acts 2:42–47 represent an accurate exegetical reading of the text, or does it impose a cessationist framework on a passage that does not itself make the distinction?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

12. The lesson proposes applying the Ephesians 4:2 virtues to specific relational threats to the Spirit's unity in your community. Identify the most significant current threat to the Spirit's unity in your specific congregation: the unresolved conflict, the factional tendency, the difficult personality, or the theological disagreement that most consistently resists the bond of peace. Which specific virtue, humility, gentleness, patience, or tolerance in love, is most needed to address this specific threat? And what one concrete action would most directly express that virtue in relation to the threat you have identified?
13. The lesson argues that the preaching culture of a congregation should be shaped by 1 Corinthians 2:1–5's pneumatological principle: careful preparation and faithful exposition, combined with explicit, conscious dependence on the Spirit to do what no human preparation can accomplish. Describe your current practice of prayer in relation to sermon preparation and delivery: when do you pray, what do you pray for, and how conscious is your dependence on the Spirit's work in the hearer as you preach? What specific change in your preaching preparation would make the Spirit's work more explicitly central to the whole process?
14. The lesson applies Acts 1:8's missional geography to the specific congregation's context. Having identified your congregation's Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and uttermost parts, identify the most neglected sphere in your congregation's current missional engagement. What is the Spirit's most urgent missional call in that neglected sphere? And what specific, Spirit-dependent, gift-deploying, prayer-saturated engagement would represent faithful obedience to the Acts 1:8 commission in that sphere in the next twelve months?
15. The lesson's pastoral vision is a community organized around the Spirit's permanent provision (Acts 2:42's four marks) rather than around institutional performance or programmatic activity. Evaluate your congregation's current organizational structure against this pneumatological standard: does the community's organizational structure primarily serve the four ordinary marks (the apostolic Word, fellowship, table, and

prayer), or has the institutional structure grown to serve its own perpetuation at the expense of the Spirit's ordinary means? What one structural change would most directly serve the Spirit's ordinary corporate work?

Prayer Focus

Open this lesson by reading Acts 2:42–47 aloud, slowly, with attention to the specific marks of the Spirit’s corporate work: the devotion, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, the prayer, the awe, the generosity, the gladness and sincerity, the praise, the favor, and the Lord’s ongoing addition to the community’s number. After the reading, sit for a moment in the question: which of these marks is most alive in our specific community, and which is most deficient? The honest assessment of the community’s current state against the Spirit’s own standard is the beginning of the prayer that asks the Spirit to bring the community into greater alignment with His own corporate vision.

Begin the prayer with a corporate act of gratitude for the Spirit’s temple-building work in the specific gathered community. Not a generic gratitude for the church’s existence, but the specific gratitude of one who understands what the community actually is: the Spirit’s dwelling, the Triune God’s permanent habitation, the living temple being built from people who were once strangers and aliens but are now fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household. Thank the Spirit for each specific member of the gathered community, for their specific gifts, for their specific contribution to the temple’s construction, and for the Spirit’s own faithful work of fitting them together into the coherent, growing structure that the passage describes.

Pray then for the Spirit’s four-fold corporate work: the building (ask the Spirit to continue fitting the community together into the holy temple, bringing to the community the people it needs and removing the obstacles that prevent the building’s growth); the unity (ask the Spirit to produce in each member the specific virtues that preserve His bond of peace, particularly in the relational areas where the community’s unity is currently most threatened); the mission (ask the Spirit to empower the community’s witness in each concentric sphere of the Acts 1:8 geography, directing the community to the specific missional opportunities He is preparing); and the worship (ask the Spirit to enable the community’s gathering as the Father seeks it: genuinely in spirit, genuinely in truth, genuinely the Spirit’s own worship offered through the community as His dwelling).

Close with the 1 Corinthians 2:4–5 prayer for the preaching: ask the Spirit to demonstrate His own power through the preaching that the community’s teachers offer, so that the community’s faith may rest not on the wisdom of men but on the power of God. Pray this for the specific preacher who will preach to this community in the coming week; for the Spirit’s specific, convicting, illuminating, transforming work in the hearts of the specific hearers who will be in the room; and for the faith that will be strengthened, the sin that will be convicted, the life that will be reoriented, and the mission that will be re-energized by the Spirit’s own “demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” *Soli Deo Gloria.*

*“My message and my preaching
were not in persuasive words of wisdom,
but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men,
but on the power of God.”*

1 Corinthians 2:4–5, NASB 1995

Key Texts: 1 Corinthians 3:9–17; Ephesians 2:19–22; 4:1–6; Acts 1:4–8; 2:1–47; John 4:19–24; 1 Corinthians 2:1–5; Romans 8:26–27; Mark 13:11; Acts 13:2–4

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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