

The Holy Spirit, Teacher's Guide

Week 3: The Spirit in Creation and the Old Testament

Genesis 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:19-21

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson establishes two pillars that the rest of the study will stand on. First, the Holy Spirit is eternal and has been active from the Bible's second verse: hovering over the waters at creation, giving life to man (Job 33:4), present everywhere (Psalm 139:7), and at work throughout the Old Testament age, coming upon chosen individuals to equip them for appointed tasks. This guards the class against the common assumption that the Spirit is a New Testament novelty, and it quietly reinforces last week's doctrine, because the Spirit's role in creation is a divine role; the One who creates is God (compare Genesis 1:2 with Psalm 104:30). Second, and doctrinally weightier for the weeks ahead, the Spirit is the author of Scripture. Peter's claim in 2 Peter 1:19-21 is total: no prophecy ever came by human will; men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The teacher should make this week the place where the class settles its doctrine of inspiration, because Weeks 5, 7, and 8 will build directly on it: the Spirit who spoke by the prophets completed His speaking in the New Testament, and that finished word is His voice today.

The lesson also has a formational center, and it is Peter's stunning comparison in 2 Peter 1:16-19. Peter stood on the holy mountain, saw the Lord transfigured, and heard the very voice of the Father, and then he tells his readers that they possess something "more fully confirmed": the prophetic word. The man with the experience points away from experience to the written word. In a religious world that runs on the opposite conviction, that a feeling or experience outranks a text, this passage is a quiet revolution. The aim is students who not only believe the right things about inspiration but actually treat their Bibles as what they are: the present voice of the Spirit of God, a lamp in a dark place, worthy of attention until the day dawns.

Send the class home with both pillars standing: a Spirit who was there before light existed and whose word now sits within reach of their hand, and hearts that have begun to pay attention to the lamp the way Peter begged them to.

Question 1

Student Question:

Genesis 1:2 says "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" before the first word of creation was spoken. What does the Spirit's presence at creation, together with passages like Job 33:4 and Psalm 104:30, teach us about who He is and how far back His work reaches?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Start where the Bible starts. Verse 1 declares the absolute beginning: God created the heavens and the earth. Verse 2 describes the initial state, formless, empty, dark, and then names the presence brooding over it: “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” The Hebrew participle pictures continuous, attentive motion; the same verb describes an eagle fluttering over its young in Deuteronomy 32:11. Before a single creative word is spoken in verse 3, the Spirit is present, engaged, and poised. The Bible’s portrait of the Spirit begins not at Pentecost but at creation’s threshold.

Build the supporting texts into a case for the Spirit as Creator. Job 33:4: “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” Psalm 104:30, addressing God about His creatures: “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.” Psalm 33:6 joins the word and the breath (ruach) of the Lord in the making of the heavens. Creation is consistently presented as the work of God through His word and His Spirit, and since creating is a work only God can do (Isaiah 44:24), the Spirit’s role in creation is a standing witness to His deity. This dovetails with Week 1’s conclusion and Week 2’s framework: Father, Son (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16), and Spirit are each active in the one divine work of creation, distinct persons, one God, one creation.

Draw out the reach of the phrase “how far back His work reaches.” The Spirit is eternal; Hebrews 9:14 calls Him “the eternal Spirit.” He did not begin at Bethlehem or Pentecost any more than the Son began in the manger. Everything the class will study in the coming weeks, the Spirit’s work in Christ, at Pentecost, in Scripture, in the Christian, is the continuing work of the same Person who hovered over the unformed deep. There is one Spirit across both Testaments, not an Old Testament force succeeded by a New Testament person.

A practical teaching note: some translations render Genesis 1:2 “a mighty wind,” reflecting the range of ruach. The context decides. The construct “Spirit of God” (ruach Elohim) with the verb of hovering, plus the consistent biblical testimony that God’s Spirit creates and gives life, supports the traditional reading, and the New Testament’s full revelation of the Spirit confirms it. This is also a good moment to remind the class how Scripture interprets Scripture: the later, fuller light reads the earlier text truly.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Spirit present and active before the first creative word: no latecomer to the story
- The Spirit as Creator (Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30; Psalm 33:6), a standing proof of His deity
- The eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14): one Spirit across both Testaments
- Father, Son, and Spirit each active in the one work of creation, echoing Week 2
- Handling the “wind” translation question and letting Scripture interpret Scripture
- Creation itself as bearing the Spirit’s fingerprints, grounds for wonder and gratitude

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it matter that the Spirit appears in the Bible's second verse rather than first appearing at Pentecost?
- What does the image of hovering or brooding suggest about the Spirit's attitude toward what God is about to make?
- How does the Spirit's role in creation strengthen the case for His deity that we built in Week 1?

Question 2

Student Question:

The Spirit hovered over a world that was formless, empty, and dark, and out of that chaos God brought order, fullness, and light. Where in your life right now do things feel formless, empty, or dark? What does it mean for you that the Spirit of God is not afraid of chaos and has a long history of bringing life out of it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The order of Genesis 1 is itself a kind of gospel. The chapter opens with three lacks, formlessness, emptiness, darkness, and the rest of the chapter answers each: God forms (days one through three, separating light, sky, sea, and land), then fills (days four through six, lights, birds, fish, animals, man), and the first recorded words deal with the darkness: "Let there be light." And over the whole process, before any of it, the Spirit hovers. God's pattern, established on page one, is to move toward chaos rather than away from it, and to bring out of it order, fullness, and light.

Now let the question do its pastoral work. Every class contains lives that feel like verse 2: a marriage that has lost its shape, a grief that has emptied the house, a depression that has dimmed every window, a faith that feels formless after a hard year. The temptation in such seasons is to conclude that God works only in tidy lives, that we must get ourselves organized before He will come near. Genesis 1:2 says otherwise. The Spirit's first appearance in Scripture is over a chaos, and He is not wringing His hands; He is hovering like a craftsman about to begin.

Anchor the comfort biblically rather than letting it float as sentiment. The God who began creation with darkness and ended with very good (1:31) is the same God who shines "out of darkness" into hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6, where Paul deliberately quotes the creation account), who makes anyone in Christ "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17), and who began that new creation in us through the Spirit-given word (James 1:18; Titus 3:5). The Spirit's ordinary instrument for re-forming chaotic lives today is the Scripture this very lesson exalts, applied in prayer, obedience, and the fellowship of the church. The student in a verse 2 season should be pointed there, not toward waiting for a private lightning bolt.

Invite specificity without forcing exposure. Some students will name their chaos aloud; many will not, and the question's work is done if each one names it inwardly and sets it under this

truth: the Spirit of God has a long history with formless places, and His record in them is light, order, and life. It may help to close this question by reading Genesis 1:2–3 again slowly and letting the class hear “Let there be light” as the word God still speaks over His people.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Genesis 1 as pattern: God forms the formless, fills the empty, lights the dark
- The Spirit’s posture toward chaos: present and brooding, not repelled
- 2 Corinthians 4:6 and 5:17, creation language applied to God’s saving work in hearts
- The Spirit’s present means of re-forming lives: the word, prayer, obedience, the church
- Guarding comfort from sentimentality: no promise of instant order, but a sure trajectory
- Hope for the student in a “verse 2” season of life

Discussion Prompts

- Which of the three words, formless, empty, or dark, best describes a season you have walked through, and what brought light into it?
- Why do we tend to believe God only works in already-ordered lives, and what does Genesis 1:2 say to that?
- How can the church be the place where people in chaos meet the God who hovers rather than the judgment they fear?

Question 3

Student Question:

Throughout the Old Testament the Spirit of God came upon specific people for specific work: Bezalel to craft the tabernacle (Exodus 31:1–5), the judges to deliver Israel (Judges 6:34; 14:6), and David as king (1 Samuel 16:13). What do these accounts teach us about how the Spirit worked in that age, and how does His coming “upon” select individuals for tasks differ from what was later promised to all of God’s people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Survey the Old Testament pattern with the class, because seeing several cases together reveals the shape of the Spirit’s work in that age. Bezalel is “filled... with the Spirit of God” for craftsmanship on the tabernacle (Exodus 31:1–5). The Spirit “clothed himself” with Gideon to rally Israel (Judges 6:34) and “rushed upon” Samson with extraordinary strength (Judges 14:6). The Spirit “rushed upon David from that day forward” at his anointing as king (1 Samuel 16:13), and David’s psalms flowed from that same Spirit (2 Samuel 23:2). Elders received the Spirit to help Moses judge (Numbers 11:16–25). The pattern: the Spirit came upon particular people, for particular tasks, at particular times, equipping prophets, deliverers, kings, and craftsmen for God’s appointed work.

Mark the features of that arrangement honestly. It was selective, not universal; the ordinary Israelite was never promised the Spirit's empowerment. It was task-oriented, tied to offices and missions rather than to personal salvation as such. And it could be temporary or withdrawn: the Spirit departed from Saul (1 Samuel 16:14), and David, after his great sin, pleaded "take not your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11), a prayer that belongs to David's office and age and should not be flattened into a Christian's prayer today without explanation.

Then set up the contrast the question asks for, because it is one of the Bible's great forward movements. Moses voiced the longing: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!" (Numbers 11:29). Joel turned the longing into promise: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh" (Joel 2:28-29), sons and daughters, old and young, servants both male and female. Peter will stand up at Pentecost and announce "this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16), and the gift of the Spirit will be promised to every baptized believer (Acts 2:38-39, Week 9). What was selective becomes, in the appointed senses, the shared possession of all God's covenant people. Keep the contrast at this level for now; Weeks 6 through 9 will carefully distinguish the miraculous and non-miraculous aspects of that fulfillment.

The doctrinal takeaway to leave with the class: the Spirit has always been the executor of God's purposes among His people, but God's arrangements differ across the ages. Reading any Old Testament account of the Spirit as a direct template for Christian experience today skips over Joel, Pentecost, and the whole unfolding plan. Right division of the ages (2 Timothy 2:15) is not a technicality; it is how we keep promises in their proper mailboxes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Old Testament pattern: the Spirit upon select people, for tasks, sometimes temporarily
- The Spirit's departure from Saul and David's prayer in Psalm 51:11 read in their own age
- Moses' longing (Numbers 11:29) and Joel's promise (Joel 2:28-29) pointing forward
- The movement from selective empowerment to the gift promised to all the baptized (Acts 2:38-39)
- Rightly dividing the ages: not every Old Testament experience is a Christian template
- The one Spirit working differently across God's unfolding plan

Discussion Prompts

- What differences do you notice between how the Spirit worked in the days of the judges and what God promised through Joel?
- Why is it a mistake to take David's prayer in Psalm 51:11 as a word-for-word model for Christians without explanation?
- What does Moses' wish in Numbers 11:29 reveal about the direction God's plan was always heading?

Question 4

Student Question:

Bezalel was filled with the Spirit not to preach or prophesy but to work with gold, silver, and wood. What does it tell you about God that craftsmanship was Spirit-honored work? How might you offer your own daily work, paid or unpaid, to God this week as something done skillfully for His glory?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Bezalel deserves to be rescued from obscurity. When God wanted a sanctuary built, He did not merely tolerate craftsmanship; He filled a man with His Spirit for it: “with skill and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze” (Exodus 31:3–4). The first person in Scripture said to be filled with the Spirit of God was not a prophet or a priest but an artisan. God cared how the curtains hung and how the lampstand was hammered, and He counted excellent work with the hands as holy service.

Let that dismantle the sacred-secular wall that quietly governs many Christians’ thinking. We tend to rank preaching and teaching as God’s work and accounting, nursing, farming, coding, and laundry as merely making a living. Scripture will not cooperate. “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men... You are serving the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23–24) was written to slaves doing utterly ordinary labor. “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17). The Christian’s desk, bench, classroom, and kitchen are all altars where excellent, honest work is offered to God.

Be precise about what we are and are not claiming, so the doctrine stays clean. Bezalel’s filling was a special, miraculous equipping for a unique redemptive project; we do not promise Christians supernatural talent infusions for their careers. What carries over is the value God placed on the work itself and the principle that skill exercised for His purposes honors Him. Today the Spirit’s role in our work runs through sanctified character, the fruit of the Spirit (Week 10) showing up as diligence, honesty, patience with coworkers, and faithfulness in small things (Luke 16:10).

Make the application concrete. Ask students to name their actual work, including unpaid work, raising children, caring for aging parents, volunteering, and then to identify one way to do it this week skillfully and “as for the Lord”: the report done thoroughly instead of adequately, the patient answered kindly at hour eleven, the meal made with care, the integrity kept when cutting a corner would be invisible. Quality and honesty in a believer’s work is a sermon the world actually attends.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Bezalel: the first Spirit-filled man in Scripture was a craftsman
- Demolishing the sacred-secular divide: all honest work offered to the Lord (Colossians 3:17, 23–24)

- Precision: Bezalel's miraculous equipping versus the Christian's providential gifts and sanctified character
- Faithfulness in small things (Luke 16:10) as the Spirit-shaped work ethic
- Work as witness: excellence and integrity commend the gospel (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12)

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think we instinctively rank some work as spiritual and other work as merely secular?
- What would change in your workplace reputation if every task were done “as for the Lord”?
- Where is the line between working for God's glory and working for our own reputation, and how do you tell which is driving you?

Question 5

Student Question:

David said, “The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2), and Peter says prophets spoke “as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). What do these passages claim about the origin of the prophets' words, and why does “carried along” rule out the idea that prophecy was merely human insight or religious genius?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Take the two texts in turn and let their claims stand at full height. David, in his last words, locates the origin of his psalms outside himself: “The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2). Not “my best thoughts about God” but “his word,” carried on a human tongue. Peter generalizes the claim to all prophecy: “no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). Two denials and an affirmation: not from the prophet's own unraveling of things (v. 20), not from human initiative (v. 21a), but from God, by the Spirit's carrying.

Linger on “carried along” (Greek *pheromenoi*), because it is the Bible's own picture of inspiration. Luke uses the same verb of the ship in the storm of Acts 27:15, 17: the sailors could not face the wind, so they “were driven along,” the wind determining the course. So the prophets: the originating power, direction, and destination of their words came from the Spirit. Yet the picture is not dictation to unconscious stenographers. The ship still had its own timbers and shape; Isaiah's soaring Hebrew is not Amos's herdsman prose, and David's psalms carry David's tears. The Spirit carried real men, with their vocabularies, histories, and personalities, so completely that what they said, God said. Verbal inspiration and genuine human authorship are both true, and Scripture feels no tension between them.

This rules out the fashionable middle positions, and the teacher should name them kindly but clearly. “Religious genius” theories, that the prophets were spiritually sensitive men recording their evolving insights, are exactly what Peter denies: “never produced by the will of man.”

Partial-inspiration theories, that the Bible contains God's word mixed with human error and we must sift it, founder on the same verse and on Jesus' own usage: He treated the tense of a verb as decisive (Matthew 22:31–32) and declared that Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). Either the Spirit carried the writers or He did not; Peter has already answered.

Connect forward: the same claim covers the New Testament. Peter classes Paul's letters "with the other Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15–16), and Paul says the words he taught were "taught by the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:12–13). Week 5 will establish the promise behind that; for now, plant the conclusion: one Spirit, one library, all of it carried.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Verbal inspiration: "his word is on my tongue," the words and not merely the ideas
- "Carried along" (2 Peter 1:21; compare Acts 27:15, 17): the Spirit as originating power and director
- Inspiration without dictation: real human authors, personalities, and styles fully employed
- Against "religious genius" and partial-inspiration theories: Peter's double denial
- Jesus' own view of Scripture's precision and unbreakability (Matthew 22:31–32; John 10:35)
- The New Testament under the same claim (2 Peter 3:15–16; 1 Corinthians 2:12–13)

Discussion Prompts

- How does the picture of a ship driven by the wind help explain what inspiration is and is not?
- If the prophets' words were truly God's words, what follows for how we settle religious questions today?
- How would you answer a friend who says the Bible is a wonderful but purely human book of religious experience?

Question 6

Student Question:

Peter says "no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation" and was never "produced by the will of man" (2 Peter 1:20–21). If the Bible's words came from God's Spirit and not from human initiative, what right do any of us have to trim it, soften it, or pick favorites? Where have you been treating part of God's word as optional?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The logic of this question is simple and severe, and the teacher should not blunt it: authority follows authorship. If Scripture's words were "produced by the will of man," then men may revise them; every generation could edit its ancestors. But if no prophecy ever came by human will, if the words are the Spirit's, then no reader at any time holds editorial rights. The only

posture left is the one Isaiah describes: “this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word” (Isaiah 66:2).

Name the respectable ways we trim the word, because few in a Bible class are tempted by crude unbelief. There is the selective appetite, feasting on comfort texts while fasting from commands about the tongue, money, purity, or forgiveness. There is the soft mute, agreeing a passage is inspired while quietly never letting it apply, on marriage, on assembling, on the exclusiveness of Christ. There is cultural embarrassment, handling hard texts apologetically, as though the Spirit needed our help to be presentable. And there is the oldest trick in the garden, requoting God with a small revision, “Did God actually say?” (Genesis 3:1). Every one of these is a claim, unstated, that my will outranks the will that carried the prophets.

Balance severity with the blessing side, because the same authorship that forbids trimming also guarantees trustworthiness. A Bible men produced could only carry human wisdom and human promises; a Bible the Spirit produced carries God’s. The student who surrenders editorial rights gains certainty in exchange, every promise backed by the same authority as every command. James’s picture is apt: the man who looks intently into the perfect law and perseveres, “he will be blessed in his doing” (James 1:25). Submission to the word is not servitude; it is building on rock (Matthew 7:24–25).

End with self-examination rather than third-person critique. The question asks, “Where have you been treating part of God’s word as optional?” Keep it there. It is easy to spend this question denouncing denominations that trim doctrine; the braver hour asks where we mute the Spirit’s word about gossip, anxiety, generosity, or loving enemies. A class that leaves examining itself has heard the lesson; a class that leaves congratulating itself has not.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Authority follows authorship: Spirit-given words leave no editorial rights to readers
- The respectable forms of trimming: selective appetite, soft muting, cultural embarrassment
- “Did God actually say?” as the original assault on verbal inspiration
- Trembling at the word (Isaiah 66:2) as the posture of the humble
- The blessing side: the same authorship guarantees every promise
- Self-examination before critique of others

Discussion Prompts

- Why is selective obedience really a form of self-rule rather than obedience at all?
- Which commands of Scripture does our culture make it hardest to keep unedited, and how do we resist that pressure together?
- What is one passage you have been politely ignoring, and what would taking it seriously look like this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

In 2 Peter 1:16–19, Peter says he saw the transfiguration with his own eyes and heard the Father’s voice, and yet he calls the prophetic word “more fully confirmed,” a lamp to which we do well to pay attention. Why would Peter rank the written word of the Spirit above even his own spectacular experience, and what does that teach us about where to anchor our faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Set the scene of 2 Peter 1:16–18 so the comparison lands with its full surprise. Peter is writing near his death (1:14), defending the faith against scoffers, and he reaches for his crown jewel of experiences: the transfiguration. He was there. He saw the Majestic Glory with his own eyes; he heard the Father’s voice with his own ears, “we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven.” No Christian alive has an experience to rival it. And then comes verse 19: “and we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place.” The eyewitness of glory points his readers to the written word as the surer ground.

Help the class see why the written word outranks even apostolic experience as an anchor for faith. An experience, however real, is private, unrepeatable, and accessible to others only through testimony; the prophetic word is public, permanent, and testable, hundreds of predictions across centuries, confirmed by fulfillment in Christ (the very point of “more fully confirmed”). An experience can be misremembered or misinterpreted; “the word of the Lord remains forever” (1 Peter 1:25). Moreover, Peter’s readers could not climb the mountain with him, but they could open Isaiah. God anchored faith in something every generation can hold in its hands.

Now make the contemporary application explicit, because this verse quietly settles arguments your students will actually have. Modern religion is awash in experience-based authority: “I know it’s true because I felt it,” “God gave me a vision,” “the Lord told me.” Peter, holding the greatest experience-based credential in church history, refuses to play that card and points to Scripture instead. If the apostle’s transfiguration memory bows to the prophetic word, no modern experience may outrank it. This is the seed of Week 8’s fuller discussion, and the principle deserves memorizing now: experience is weighed by the word, never the word by experience.

Finish inside the image of verse 19. The world is “a dark place”; the lamp is lit; the day will dawn when faith becomes sight at the Lord’s return. Until then, the Christian’s job description is in one phrase: “pay attention.” Not admire the lamp, not defend the lamp only, but walk by its light (Psalm 119:105). Ask the class what paying attention looked like this past week, honestly, in hours and habits, and let Peter’s word do its work.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Peter's eyewitness experience deliberately ranked beneath the prophetic word
- Why the written word is the surer anchor: public, permanent, testable, fulfilled
- Experience weighed by the word, never the word by experience
- The lamp in a dark place: Scripture as present guidance until the day dawns
- The enduring word (1 Peter 1:25) versus the fading memory of even great experiences
- Groundwork for Week 8: claims of modern revelation measured by this principle

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think Peter, of all people, points away from his own greatest experience?
- How would you use this passage to help a friend who says feelings are how God speaks to her?
- What does "paying attention" to the lamp look like in an ordinary week, concretely?

Question 8

Student Question:

We live in a culture, and sometimes a religious culture, that prizes feelings and experiences over a written word, the spirit of "better felt than told." Where are you most tempted to let an emotion, an impression, or an experience outvote the Scriptures? What would change if the Spirit's written word held final authority in that area?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Define the error before applying the remedy. "Better felt than told" religion is the conviction that God's primary communication is inward and emotional, an impression, a peace, a burning in the heart, and that such experiences may confirm, supplement, or even override the written word. It has a long pedigree and a thousand modern forms, from the dramatic (claimed visions and words from the Lord) to the respectable ("I prayed about it and felt a peace, so it must be God's will," said about choices the word already addresses). The class should learn to recognize the structure of the error: the feeling is treated as revelation.

Be careful and fair here, because the Bible does not despise feelings, and neither should we. Emotions are God's creation; the Psalms run the whole keyboard from anguish to ecstasy; Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and wept at a tomb. Conviction of sin, love for God, peace that passes understanding, all are real and precious. The issue is not whether Christians feel deeply but what governs: feelings make wonderful passengers and terrible drivers. Jeremiah 17:9 warns that the heart is deceitful; Proverbs 28:26 says the one who trusts his own heart is a fool; "there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Proverbs 14:12). Sincerity of feeling is no guarantee of truth, as Saul of Tarsus's clear conscience while persecuting the church proves (Acts 23:1; 26:9).

Give the class the diagnostic the question implies. Where am I most tempted to let an emotion outvote Scripture? For some it is guidance: making major decisions by inner impressions while

the word's actual instructions (seek counsel, count costs, honor commitments, seek first the kingdom) go unconsulted. For some it is assurance: feeling saved as the evidence of being saved, rather than the testimony of God's word about what He promises to faith-obedience (1 John 5:13; Acts 2:38). For some it is worship: rating an assembly by the feelings it produced rather than the truth it offered. For some it is offense: "I feel hurt" quietly becoming "I was wronged," with no scriptural audit.

The remedy is not emotional flatness but reordered authority: the Spirit's word as the standard by which every impression, peace, and impulse is tested (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21, anticipating Week 12). The beautiful irony to leave with the class: feelings make the best servants precisely when the word is master, for the deepest and most durable emotions in the Christian life grow out of truth believed, not out of moods pursued. "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Defining "better felt than told" religion: feelings treated as revelation
- The Bible's honest anthropology: the heart deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), sincerity no guarantee (Acts 26:9)
- Feelings as passengers, not drivers: governed, not despised
- Common forms: guidance by impressions, assurance by emotion, worship rated by feelings produced
- Testing everything by the word (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21)
- True and durable emotion as the fruit of truth believed (John 15:11)

Discussion Prompts

- Why is "I prayed about it and felt peace" not a safe final test for a decision the Scriptures already address?
- How can we honor genuine emotion in our faith without letting it take the wheel?
- Where have you seen feelings-first religion lead someone away from a plain teaching of Scripture?

Question 9

Student Question:

Jesus and the apostles treated Old Testament events and words as fully real and fully authoritative, and the New Testament attributes Old Testament Scripture directly to the Spirit (Acts 1:16; 28:25; Hebrews 3:7; 10:15). What do these passages teach about who was speaking through David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and what does that imply about the unity, reliability, and authority of the whole Bible, both Testaments together?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the week's heaviest doctrinal question, and it asks the class to follow a chain with enormous consequences: the New Testament writers, and the Lord Himself, identify the Spirit as the speaker of the Old Testament, which binds the two Testaments into one Spirit-authored book. Walk the texts. Peter: "the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David" (Acts 1:16). Paul: "the Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet" (Acts 28:25), introducing Isaiah 6. Hebrews: "as the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you hear his voice..." (Hebrews 3:7), present tense, introducing Psalm 95; and "the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us" (Hebrews 10:15), introducing Jeremiah 31. David by the Spirit calls the Messiah Lord (Matthew 22:43). The pattern is unmistakable: what the psalmist or prophet said, the Spirit said; and what the Spirit said then, He "says" still.

Draw the first implication: unity. Sixty-six books, roughly forty human writers, some fifteen centuries, three languages, and one mind behind it all. This is why the Bible can interpret itself, why Matthew can find Christ throughout the Law and the Prophets, why the New Testament quotes the Old hundreds of times as a living authority, and why promises made in Genesis are kept in Revelation. The unity of Scripture is not a lucky accident of anthologizing; it is the signature of a single Author. For the class's confidence: predictive prophecy, Bethlehem named (Micah 5:2), the suffering servant drawn in detail (Isaiah 53), the timing and nature of the kingdom (Daniel 2:44), is the Spirit's self-authentication, exactly the "more fully confirmed" word Peter praised.

Draw the second implication: the authority of the whole, both Testaments together. Jesus treated Old Testament events as fully real, Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-5), Noah (Matthew 24:37-39), Jonah (Matthew 12:40), and its words as decisive and unbreakable (John 10:35). A Christian cannot accept Jesus and dismiss the Scriptures Jesus authenticated. At the same time, teach the class to distinguish authority from covenant obligation: the Old Testament is entirely the Spirit's word and remains profitable, "written for our instruction" (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11), while the law's covenant demands were fulfilled in Christ and nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14-17; Hebrews 8:13). We are New Covenant people who revere the whole Spirit-given library; we learn from Leviticus and obey the gospel.

Close the chain with its sharpest link: if the Spirit is the speaker of Scripture, then how a person treats Scripture is how he treats the Spirit. Hebrews 3:7 makes the Spirit's ancient words a present address: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." The Bible on the student's lap is not a relic of what the Spirit once said; it is what the Spirit says. That single sentence, firmly believed, would revolutionize the reading habits, the listening posture, and the obedience of any congregation, and it is the foundation on which Weeks 5 through 8 will build.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The New Testament's pattern: what Scripture says, the Spirit says (Acts 1:16; 28:25; Hebrews 3:7; 10:15)
- The unity of the Bible: one Author across centuries, languages, and writers

- Predictive prophecy as the Spirit's self-authentication of the word
- Jesus' total confidence in the Old Testament's history and wording (Matthew 19:4–5; John 10:35)
- Authority of the whole Bible distinguished from covenant obligation: instructed by the Old, governed by the New (Romans 15:4; Colossians 2:14–17)
- Hebrews 3:7, "Today": Scripture as the Spirit's present voice
- Treatment of Scripture as treatment of the Spirit Himself

Discussion Prompts

- What difference does it make that Hebrews says the Holy Spirit "says," present tense, when quoting a thousand-year-old psalm?
- How does the unity of sixty-six books written across fifteen centuries argue for a single divine Author?
- How do we honor the whole Bible as the Spirit's word while recognizing that Christians live under the New Covenant?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this week, the Spirit hovering over dark waters and breathing through the prophets. The same Spirit's words are now on your shelf and in your hands. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this truth. What is one concrete change in how you read, trust, or obey the Scriptures that you will make this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question hands the week's two pillars to each student and asks what they will build on them. Pillar one: the Spirit who hovered over the dark waters is eternal, divine, and has been working from before the first sunrise. Pillar two: the words He carried prophets to speak now sit bound on the student's shelf, the surest light available in a dark world. The formation question is whether those pillars change anything by Thursday.

Help the class translate doctrine into reading habits, because that is where this week's truth becomes flesh. If the Bible is the Spirit's voice, then reading it is not a discipline to feel guilty about but an audience with God; suggest students begin their reading this week with Samuel's prayer, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:9–10), and end it by naming one thing to obey before nightfall (James 1:22–25). If the word outranks experience, then one concrete change might be deciding a current question, a decision, a doubt, an offense, by searching the Scriptures rather than by consulting feelings first (Acts 17:11). If craftsmanship honors God, someone's concrete change happens at a workbench or a kitchen counter.

Listen for the difference between resolution and formation. "I should read my Bible more" is the sound of guilt; let it become "I will read before breakfast, starting with 2 Peter 1, and write

down one sentence the Spirit says that I will obey that day.” “I trust the Bible” matures into “I am going to stop saying ‘I feel like God wants...’ and start saying ‘the Scriptures say...’” Small, named, dated changes are how the Spirit’s word gets from the shelf into the bloodstream.

Send them out with next week’s horizon: the Spirit who created the world and authored the Scriptures was also preparing, through every prophet He carried, for the coming of the Christ He would anoint. The lamp of prophecy was always shining toward a Person. Week 4 follows that light to Nazareth and the Jordan.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The week’s two pillars: the eternal creating Spirit and the Spirit-authored word
- Reading as audience: approaching Scripture as the Spirit’s present voice
- Obedience as the goal of reading (James 1:22–25)
- Replacing feelings-first speech with Scripture-first speech
- Specific, dated commitments as the vehicle of formation

Discussion Prompts

- What is one concrete change in how you will read Scripture this week, stated with a time and a place?
- Which truth from this lesson would most change our congregation if every member believed it operationally?
- What did you learn about the Holy Spirit this week that moved you to gratitude, and have you told Him so in prayer?