

# Foundations: Bible Truths for Christian Growth

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*Perhaps no biblical doctrine is as misunderstood and misapplied as Pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit. Activities ranging from being knocked unconscious to having uncontrollable fits of so-called holy laughter are attributed to the Holy Spirit. However, Scripture's teaching regarding the person and work of the Holy Spirit is very clear.*

## The Person of the Holy Spirit

Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Son (**Matthew 28:19**). How does **Ephesians 4:30a** prove that He is a Person and not merely some sort of force? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does **Matthew 3:16–17** prove that the Holy Spirit—though equal with them—is also *distinct* and *separate* from the Father and Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

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The Holy Spirit is sometimes referred to as the “silent” member of the Trinity. That is not to say that He is any less God than the Father and the Son. Rather, it means that He is not prominent; He does not gather attention to Himself. Who does the Spirit glorify, according to **John 16:13–14**? \_\_\_\_\_

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There are many movements today that focus on the Holy Spirit to the point of distraction—they glorify Him rather than Christ. Such movements do not originate with God's Spirit. On the other hand, many Bible-believers have overreacted to this error by failing to speak of the Holy Spirit at all. It seems

that some would try to convert the Trinity into a “duet.” Both the extremes of over–emphasis and under–emphasis are *dangerous*.

A proper understanding of the Holy Spirit is essential not only for proper theology but also for godly living.

## The Works of the Holy Spirit

The works of the Spirit fall into three main categories: *works of creation, works to the unsaved, and works within the saved.*

Though most of our time will be spent on the Spirit’s ministry in believers, we will briefly address His other works as well. The Holy Spirit first

appears in **Genesis 1:2**. What did God the Father, Son and Spirit accomplish in that first chapter of Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Principle:

The **silence** of the Spirit means that He seeks to glorify *Christ*, not Himself.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit carries out two works among unbelievers:

1. **2 Thessalonians 2:7** is an obscure passage. It refers to the Holy Spirit as “He who now restrains,” and who will continue to do so until the rapture of the Church when Christ returns to take Christians from earth to be with Him in heaven.

2. The second ministry of the Spirit to the unsaved was promised directly by Christ in **John 16:8** before He ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit. Of what does the Holy Spirit *convict* the world? \_\_\_\_\_

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*(To “convict” means to prove guilt.)*

Through His ministry of conviction, the Holy Spirit draws unsaved people to salvation. Yet, His work is just beginning, for most of the Holy Spirit’s work is done in the lives of those who have trusted Christ as Savior.

## The Regenerating of the Holy Spirit

The first ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer occurs at the moment the unsaved man becomes saved. **John 3:3–6** describes the need of all people to be “born of the Spirit.” The new birth is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. How does Jesus describe that new birth in John 3:3?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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*(Titus 3:5 also teaches that the Holy Spirit is the agent of the new birth, or regeneration.)*

You were born once physically. If you have trusted in Christ, you have also been born spiritually. The Holy Spirit brought spiritual life where there was spiritual death.

**Principle:**  
The **regeneration** of the Spirit is experienced *permanently* by every believer at *the moment of salvation*.

### The Math of Regeneration:

The Bible speaks of two births: one physical and one spiritual. It also speaks of both a physical and spiritual death—the second for eternity in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14; 21:8). Notice the Bible’s unique math:

**1 birth = 2 deaths**

**2 births = 1 death**

Far better for you to have a second birth than  
a second death!

## The Baptizing of the Holy Spirit

The baptism of the Spirit is perhaps the most misunderstood of the Spirit’s ministries. In order to get a good understanding of it, consider first who has received the baptism of the spirit. The book of **1 Corinthians** was written to Christians living in the ancient city of Corinth. According to **1 Corinthians 12:13**, how many of them had received the baptism of the Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

Notice that *all* Christians have been “baptized” into the body of Christ by the Spirit of God—even Christians who are “fleshly” (**1 Corinthians 3:1**). What does that mean? Some review is in order. The English word “baptize” is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*, “to immerse”. Remember, water baptism is only an outward symbol of Spirit baptism. You must not confuse the two. The Bible teaches that at the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit *immersed* (baptized) you into the body of Christ (like a cloth dipped into dye). Because of spiritual baptism, you are now *in Christ* and He is *in you*. The two of you have been inseparably linked. **Galatians 3:27–28**

makes the application that since you have been baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer merely a Jew or Gentile, man or woman; first and foremost, you are a Christian! There is no room for division or sectarianism in the body of Christ!

Although some churches teach that you must seek the baptism of the Spirit subsequent to salvation, Scripture teaches that you receive spiritual baptism when you are saved. You are never commanded to seek it because as a Christian you already *have* it!

**Principle:**

The **baptism** of the Spirit is experienced *permanently* by *every* believer at *the moment of salvation*.

## The Sealing of the Holy Spirit

**2 Corinthians 1:22** says that all believers have also been *sealed* with the Spirit. He is not merely the *sealer*—He is the *seal*. Like the baptism of the Spirit, the sealing of the Spirit was done *once* and *permanently*.

To seal something in the ancient world (and until the nineteenth century) was to make an impression in wax with an insignia often contained in a ring. A letter would be closed (or rolled), have hot wax dripped onto its edge, then sealed. The purposes of the seal were several:

1. First, it showed the *authenticity* of the letter.  
How? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

According to **Romans 8:16**, how does the Holy Spirit prove that you are a legitimate child of God? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Second, the seal was used to show *ownership* of an object. The sealed letter was not to be opened by anyone other than the person for whom it was intended. According to **2 Corinthians 1:21–22**, it is God who has given you the seal of the Spirit and has thereby claimed you as His own.

3. Finally, the seal would render the object *secure*. According to **Ephesians 4:30**, how long will you be sealed with the Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

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The “day of redemption” is the time when Christ will return for His people and take them to be with Him in heaven. By giving you the Holy Spirit as a seal, Christ has guaranteed that He will indeed claim you for His own when He returns. If you have trusted in Christ for salvation, you cannot and will not be lost (see **John 17:12**).

**Principle:**  
The **sealing** of the Spirit is experienced *permanently* by every believer at the *moment of salvation*.

In addition to teaching that you are sealed with the Spirit, **Ephesians 4:30** commands you not to “grieve” the Holy Spirit of God who is in you.

According to **Ephesians 4:31**, what 5 things grieve Him? \_\_\_\_\_

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Notice that although your sin grieves the Holy Spirit and hinders your fellowship with Him, it does not cause Him to depart—He will still be present until the day of redemption.

**2 Corinthians 1:22** and **Ephesians 1:13–14**, in addition to saying that you have been “sealed” with the Spirit, call Him the “pledge of your inheritance.” When one is making a purchase, what is the purpose of “pledge” money? \_\_\_\_\_

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*(A pledge is somewhat like a down payment.)*

How does Christ giving us His Spirit as the pledge of our inheritance assure us of our ultimate redemption when He will take us to heaven? \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Another ministry of the Spirit which begins at salvation is the indwelling of the Spirit. Its meaning is simple: He dwells in you! God is omnipresent (everywhere), but He lives within His people in a unique sense.

In the Old Testament, God had two unique dwelling places. He lived in the tabernacle from the time of Moses to the time of Solomon, David’s son. He then began living in the temple. Whereas the tabernacle was a temporary place (literally a tent), the temple was more permanent.

For God to dwell in any specific location was special. In order to prove to His people that He was indeed in their midst, God performed special signs, both at His



entrance into the tabernacle and His entrance into the temple.

Those signs are described in **Exodus 40:34–38** as a “cloud” or “fire” which “covered” the tabernacle and in **1 Kings 8:10–11** as a *rushing wind* which filled the temple. Similarly, on the day of Pentecost (the beginning of the church), God began dwelling in His *people*.

He again demonstrated His presence with signs (**Acts 2:1–4**), two of which are very similar to the ones just mentioned. What were they? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In the Old Testament the Spirit of God would typically enter or come upon leaders to enable them to carry out an important ministry. What particular positions were empowered by the Spirit in the following passages?

**Judges 6:11–16, 34** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Samuel 16:1–13** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Note: Psalm 51:11 is often cited by those who claim that you can lose the indwelling of the Spirit. However, David was praying that he would not lose the Lord’s empowering ministry which **could** be lost (see 1 Samuel 16:14). Indwelling cannot be lost.)*

**1 Chronicles 12:18** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ezekiel 2:2** \_\_\_\_\_

To what kind of people did God promise His Spirit in **Joel 2:28–29**? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Joel's prophecy was partially fulfilled in the New Testament in **Acts 2:16–18**. God now dwells in all of His people, regardless of age, position or race. God does not live in a building...He lives in *you* if you've trusted Christ as your Savior.

What does God call the Christians living in the city of Corinth in **1 Corinthians 3:16**? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the significance of being called the "temple" of God? \_\_\_\_\_

*(Hint: Think of the Old Testament temple mentioned earlier)*

Some people teach that the Holy Spirit lives only in those who are actively obeying Christ and that He will leave those who sin. Yet, how did Christ refer to the Corinthian Christians in **1 Corinthians 3:1**, just 15 verses before calling them the "temple of the Holy Spirit?" \_\_\_\_\_

*("Men of flesh" describes those who are living in disobedience to God.)*

### **Brass Tacks**

Remember this important truth: ***Doctrine is always practical.*** The fact that God's Spirit dwells in you should greatly affect your daily living. Just as you wouldn't defile a church building or the Old Testament temple, you must not defile your body, God's new temple (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

That means you need to take care of yourself physically. Alcohol, tobacco, tattoos, laziness and obesity dishonor your body, which is God's temple. Further, you need to avoid sexual sins that cause God's temple to be impure (1 Corinthians 6:18–20). *Glorify God with your body!*

The implication here is very important: *God lives in all Christians, even those who are disobeying Him.*

The indwelling of the Spirit of God is permanent and is not dependent on godly living, although it motivates godly living. As a Christian you neither seek nor endeavor to keep the Spirit's presence. If you do not have the Spirit, you do not belong to Christ (**Romans 8:9b**).

## The Filling of the Holy Spirit

Yet another ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is Spirit *filling*. **Ephesians 5:18** is the classic command to “be filled” (or literally, “be being filled”) with the Spirit. What is the first command of the verse? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The analogy to wine makes Spirit filling easy to understand. When a person is under the influence of alcohol, he behaves abnormally. What might an intoxicated person do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Just as alcohol changes the behavior of someone who is under its influence, the Holy Spirit changes the behavior of someone under His influence. One who is controlled by the Holy Spirit does not behave normally—He behaves *spiritually*.

Being filled with the Spirit does not mean that you get more of Him—you already have Him if you are a Christian. Rather, it means that He gets more of *you!* To be filled with the Spirit is to allow the Holy Spirit to call the shots— it is yielding your will to His, moment by moment.

Being filled with the Spirit, then, is different than the other ministries of the Spirit which have been discussed. How many Christians are regenerated, sealed and baptized by the Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

Being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time decision but a series of decisions to obey Him. If you desire to be filled with the Spirit, you don't need a dramatic experience. Rather, you need to submit to Him consistently, especially by spending time in prayer and Bible study. How many Christians are "filled" (or controlled) by the Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

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*(Hint: Remember, in Ephesians 5:18 you are commanded to be "filled.")*

Here are three very practical ways for you to be controlled by the Spirit of God continually:

1. Confess and forsake sin in your life (**Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9**; see page 48).

2. Study and obey the Word of God (**2 Timothy 2:15; John 15:7–8**; see Chapter 5).

Notice the striking similarities between **Ephesians 5:18–19** and **Colossians 3:16**. The best way to be filled with the Spirit of God is to be filled with the *Word* of God!

3. Fellowship with God each day in prayer (**John 15:1–11; 1 Thessalonians 5:17**; see Chapter 6).

A parallel passage to **Ephesians 5:18**—and one of Scripture's most important passages for your spiritual progress—is **Galatians 5:16–23**. What is commanded in verse 16? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Just Walking

Scripture often describes the Christian life as a “walk.” Is a walk exciting? Not usually. Heroic? No. Impressive? Not really. It is just very, very *consistent*. Christianity is step by step, moment by moment obedience.

The term *walk* describes a consistent and careful relationship with the Lord. If you maintain fellowship with the Spirit of God, He will produce His “fruit” through you as evidence of the life He has given (**Galatians 5:22–23**). Fruit demonstrates that a tree is alive and healthy; spiritual fruit demonstrates that you are a Christian and that you are under the Holy Spirit’s control. What are the fruits of the Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Notice that spirituality is demonstrated by these virtues, not by miraculous signs.)*

The fruit of the Spirit is more than a list of positive virtues—it is a description of a life that is Christ-like. Remember, these are called the fruit of the Spirit. Try as you might, you cannot produce them yourself. Beware! **Galatians 5:17** says that there is another force seeking to control you. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Scripture teaches that there is an opposition between our flesh and the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Your flesh (also known in Scripture as the “old sin nature” or “old man”) battles the Spirit for control over you. If you submit to the Holy Spirit, you will produce godly fruit. However, if you submit

to your flesh, you will fulfill the evil works of the flesh (**Galatians 5: 19–21**). What are they? (generalize) \_\_\_\_\_

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Notice that each of the works of the flesh is the exact opposite of one of the fruits of the Spirit. Your two natures will be warring with each other for the rest of your life. In fact, **James 1:14–15** says that your flesh is your greatest source of temptation, so you would do well to respect and fear it. The only way you can resist your powerful flesh is to be in constant submission to the Spirit of God. Want to avoid sinning? Walk in the Spirit!

**Principle:**  
The **filling** of the Spirit may be experienced *moment by moment* by believers who *submit* to Him.

### Cars & Cats

It may be helpful to think of your flesh and the Spirit as passengers in the “car” of your life. Both of them will always be in the car...the question is, *who are you allowing to steer?*

Yet another silly, but accurate, illustration is the battle cartoon characters sometimes have within themselves. Remember when Tom catches Jerry, then gets suggestions from an “angel” cat on one shoulder (*“let him go”*) and a “devil” cat on the other (*“eat him”*)? That’s not far from the truth for the Christian. Don’t be irreverent, but make sure you get the point: the Holy Spirit is giving you constant promptings that are the opposite of the promptings of your flesh. *Who will you obey?*

## The Illuminating of the Holy Spirit

1 **Corinthians 2:14–16** teaches that the Holy Spirit of God *illumines* you—He enables you to understand the Bible. Whereas unsaved (“natural”) people don’t have spiritual understanding, you do if you are a Christian. Your prayer each time you open your Bible or hear a sermon should be the prayer contained in **Psalm 119:18**. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

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When studying a book, it would be a tremendous help to have the author explain its meaning to you. The Bible is not merely a human book that can be understood and applied through human effort or reason alone—it is *inspired*, the very Word of

God. What a privilege to have the Author of Scripture living in you and actively explaining and applying His Word to you! You need the Holy Spirit’s help to understand the Bible!

### Principle:

The **illuminating** of the Spirit may be experienced *regularly* by believers who seek to *understand* Scripture.

### Turn on the Light!

The word *illumine* refers to the turning on of a light. A light does not create objects; it simply sheds light on what is already there. Similarly, the Holy Spirit does not reveal new information today; He simply helps you understand what Scripture already says. That’s illumination!

By the way, 1 **Corinthians 2:14–3:1** lists three types of people and compares the way each of them responds to the Word of God. What are the three kinds of people?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (2:14a—unsaved)
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
(2:15a—saved living like it), and
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
(3:1b—saved, living like the unsaved)

## The Gifting of the Holy Spirit

At the moment of salvation, every Christian is given a unique ability for service in the local church. These special abilities are specifically listed in **Romans 12:6–8**; **1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28–30** and **Ephesians 4:11**. Many of them were miraculous sign gifts which were in use only during the lifetimes of the apostles and only in the absence of the New Testament Scriptures. Every believer has at least one of the remaining spiritual gifts. They are given at the Holy Spirit's discretion (**1 Corinthians 12:11**) and are to be used in humility, not with arrogance (**Romans 12:3**).

Read **1 Corinthians 12**. To what does Scripture compare the church (v. 12)?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why is that comparison so appropriate, especially when discussing spiritual gifts?

\_\_\_\_\_

According to this passage, which parts of the body are important? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Principle:

The **gifting** of the Spirit is experienced by *every* believer to some degree at the *moment of salvation* for the benefit of the body of Christ.



## Temporary and Permanent Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:8–10 lists several gifts that were *revelatory* in nature (including healing, prophecy, tongues, etc.). That is, those gifts were part of God’s *direct* communication to men during the ministries of the apostles and prior to the completion of the New Testament. Hebrews 2:3–4 and Mark 16:20 clearly explain that the purpose of such “signs and wonders” was to authenticate the message God was giving through the Apostles. Once that message was completed (with the last word of the book of Revelation), the gifts were no longer needed. Thus, they ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8). The gifts that are still functioning today are:

**Evangelist** —missionaries and church planters

**Pastor-teacher**—pastors/shepherds

**Teaching**—the ability to explain God’s Word to people

**Exhortation**—encouraging, comforting, and admonishing

**Leadership**—ruling/governments/organization

**Service**—exceptional ministry in physical helps

**Giving**—superlative giving without thought of return

**Mercy**—overwhelming desire to help those who hurt

## The Empowering of the Holy Spirit

The empowering of the Spirit is the special blessing of the Spirit on a believer’s particular ministry for the Lord’s glory and the furthering of the Lord’s work. A clear example of the Spirit’s giving a “divine enabling” for ministry is Paul’s statement regarding his preaching in

**1 Corinthians 2:4**, *“And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”*

### **Principle:**

The **empowering** of the Spirit may be experienced by *every* believer during times of ministry.

Scripture repeatedly teaches your need for the Lord's blessing on your ministry efforts, whatever they may be. As the Lord instructed Zerubbabel in **Zechariah 4:6**, ministry is *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.”*

Since the work of ministry is God's, the glory belongs to God as well. Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 1:27–29** that God often uses unlikely tools so that *“no man may boast in His presence.”* Be delighted if God uses you, but return the credit to Him!

### Elephants and Mice

Someone has well said that a believer who boasts because of a ministry which God performs through him is like a mouse who crosses a bridge with an elephant and brags, *“We sure shook that bridge, didn't we?”*

## The Sanctifying of the Holy Spirit

**2 Corinthians 3:18** describes the process by which Christians are transformed into the image of Christ. This transforming process is sanctification. Chapter 10 will discuss the topic of *progressive sanctification*. For now it is sufficient to answer one question: According to this verse, who accomplishes your sanctification? \_\_\_\_\_

*You have just taken in a lot of information!*

*Here is a quick review:*

- The ***silence*** of the Spirit means that He glorifies Christ, not Himself.
- The ***regeneration, baptizing, sealing*** and ***indwelling*** of the Spirit all take place at the

moment of salvation and are permanent. At the same moment, He gives to every Christian at least one spiritual *gift* to be used for God's glory and the church's good.

- The *filling* of the Spirit takes place when Christians allow the Holy Spirit to *control* them. It is not permanent but is the result of confessing sin, submitting to the Lord and fellowshiping with Him in the Word and prayer.
- The *illuminating* of the Spirit is His explaining and applying His Word to the believer's life.
- The *empowering* of the Spirit is His particular blessing on the ministries of His people.
- The *sanctifying* of the Spirit is the process through which he changes believers to make them like Christ.

## Scripture Memory

### Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

### 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

## Check Your Progress

What are the three most significant lessons that you have learned in this Bible study? Why are they important?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following questions to measure your understanding of the Holy Spirit:

1. According to John 16:13–14, who does the Holy Spirit glorify? (p. 160) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is *regeneration* and who accomplishes it? (pp. 162–162) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Explain the relationship between spiritual baptism and water baptism? (p. 163–164) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Into what are you *baptized* by the Spirit? (p. 163) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the *sealing* of the Spirit? When is it accomplished? (pp. 164–165) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. How many Christians are *indwelt* by the Spirit?  
(pp. 168) \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What is the *filling* of the Spirit? (pp. 169) \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What is the *illuminating* of the Spirit? (pp. 173)

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9. Which of the Spirit's ministries in the Christian's life are permanent? Which are "occasional," happening moment by moment? (pp. 164–177) \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Check off the following verses only when you can say them from memory:

Galatians 5:16

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Do you believe that you know this material well enough to teach it to someone else? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, review it until you do!