

# Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 12, The Role of the Holy Spirit Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 12, The Role of the Holy Spirit, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Gary Meadors explores the **role of the Holy Spirit** in understanding and applying God's will, particularly in relation to interpreting Scripture. It contrasts the **Reformers' view** of the Spirit's witness to the Word with the Roman Catholic Church's emphasis on church authority. Meadors emphasizes that the Spirit's primary function is **conviction regarding the truth and authority of the Bible**, not the provision of new content or interpretations. Through an examination of various biblical texts, he argues that the Spirit **guides believers internally by prompting obedience to the already revealed Word**, rather than through direct, personal revelations. Ultimately, the responsibility for **interpreting Scripture accurately rests with the believer**, utilizing sound hermeneutics while being subject to the Spirit's convicting influence.

**2. 23 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 12 – Double  
click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Theology → Knowing the Will of God).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 12, The Role of the Holy Spirit

#### Briefing Document: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Knowing God's Will

**Overview:** This lecture by Dr. Gary Meadors explores the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers and understanding God's will. Meadors presents a perspective rooted in Reformed theology, emphasizing that the Spirit's guidance primarily occurs *through* the already revealed Word of God (Scripture), rather than through new revelations or direct, content-driven illumination. He argues against the idea of the Spirit providing new content or interpretations independent of Scripture, positioning the Spirit as a witness who convicts and persuades believers of the truth and authority of the Bible.

#### Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts:

##### 1. The Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity and His Role:

- The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, working in conjunction with the Father and the Son.
- Meadors describes the Spirit as the "application aspect" of the Trinity, applying the work of the Father and the Son in the lives of believers.

##### 2. Guidance Through the Word, Not New Revelation:

- Meadors emphasizes that Scripture is the "only infallible rule of practice."
- He quotes John Murray, stating, "we may not look for, depend upon, or demand new revelations of the Spirit. We do not live in the era of revelation and inspiration. We live in the era of being locked up to the Bible, not developing the Bible. We inherit the word of God, not create it or continue to write it."
- Expecting special revelations to direct life "undermines the sufficiency of scripture."
- The Spirit guides "through the means which He has provided...through the apostles and prophets," enabling believers to "rightly interpret and apply the scripture in the various situations of life."

##### 3. The Inner Witness of the Spirit (Illumination Reconsidered):

- Meadors prefers the term "inner witness of the Spirit" over "illumination" to describe the Spirit's work in helping believers understand Scripture.

- He cites Romans 8:16 ("The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God") and 1 John 5:10 ("He that believes in the Son of God has the...witness in him") as examples of this inner witness.
- This witness provides a confidence of salvation and affirms the truth of God's Word.

#### **4. Historical Context: Reformation and the Authority of Scripture:**

- The Reformers shifted the locus of authority from the Church (as in Roman Catholicism) to Scripture alone.
- Calvin emphasized the role of the Spirit as bearing witness to the Word, putting all believers on "level ground" in their access to God's truth through Scripture.
- Calvin viewed the Spirit's role as "convicting the believer's heart...concerning the truthfulness and authority of Scripture." He called this the "efficacious confirmation of the Word."
- The Spirit's work is one of "persuasion," convincing believers of the truth of God's Word and their responsibility to obey it, not providing new content.

#### **5. Critiquing the Term "Illumination":**

- Meadors finds the term "illumination" problematic because it can imply the giving of new content or understanding from God, rather than a conviction about the existing content of Scripture.
- He quotes Bernard Ramm, who stated, "The testimonium is a revealing action, not a revealed content. It is an illumination, not a communication." Meadors agrees with this nuance but still prefers to avoid "illumination" due to its potential for misinterpretation.

#### **6. The Spirit's Role in Relation to the Trinity:**

- The primary role of the Spirit is to "exalt Christ."
- The Spirit is not an end in himself but a "means to an end," and that end is Christ. The Spirit witnesses to Jesus as Messiah, leads to Christ, glorifies Christ, and teaches about Christ through the Word.
- Quoting Ramm again, Meadors notes that the Holy Spirit is the "executive of the Godhead," enacting salvation by witnessing to Christ and the truth of the Word.

## 7. The Spirit's Witness and Interpretation:

- Every believer has a relationship with the Holy Spirit.
- Being "filled with the Spirit" is a metaphor for being "characterized by the teaching that the Spirit convicts us about," not receiving more of the Spirit in quantity.
- The actual process of interpreting Scripture ("hermeneutics") is the task of the believer, requiring skill and a willingness to submit to what Scripture teaches.
- The Spirit helps the interpreter "to submit to the teaching which is being assessed" and convicts them against their own presuppositions, but does not directly communicate content or interpret Scripture.
- The existence of diverse interpretations among godly, well-trained believers is acknowledged as a reality decreed by God, and attributing one interpretation as morally superior to another is discouraged.

## 8. Examination of Key Biblical Texts:

- **1 Corinthians 2:6-16:** Meadors argues that the "we" in this passage refers to the apostolic community, who received revealed truth through the Spirit, forming the authoritative Word of God. This passage is not about individual illumination providing unique interpretations.
- **Romans 8:14 and Galatians 5:18:** The phrase "led by the Spirit" is presented as a metaphor for sanctification, the Spirit convicting believers to live according to the principles found in Scripture, not a mystical call to extra-biblical guidance.
- **John 14:26, 16:13, 15:26 (Upper Room Discourse):** These promises of the Spirit teaching and bringing remembrance are understood in the context of Jesus speaking to his apostles, equipping them to accurately recall and communicate his teachings, ultimately forming the foundation of the Gospels and the New Testament. They are not general promises of direct revelation to all believers.
- **1 John 2:26-27:** The "anointing" that abides in believers is interpreted as the Spirit's conviction of the truth of the initial teaching they received (from John himself in this context). The passage is not saying believers do not need teachers at all, but that they do not need to listen to false teachers who contradict the foundational truths they have already embraced.

- **Colossians 1:9:** Being "filled with the knowledge of his will" is a metaphor for being "characterized by" the knowledge of God's will they had already been taught, urging them to live in accordance with that understanding and grow in maturity.

## 9. Conclusion:

- The foundational aspects of spirituality are objective, based on the propositional truth of Scripture.
- Calls to "know" or "be filled with" knowledge are calls to engage with the already revealed Word of God, not to seek mystical or additional knowledge.
- The Spirit's primary role is to guide believers internally by convicting them in relation to the Word of God, prompting obedience and application of its teachings.
- Believers are responsible for diligently studying and understanding Scripture, allowing the Spirit to work within the framework of that revealed truth.

## Quotes:

- "The scripture is the only infallible rule of practice." (Quoting John Murray)
- "To bypass the sufficiency of scripture, to which the Spirit bears witness, is dishonoring to the Holy Spirit." (Quoting John Murray)
- "The notion of guidance by immediate impression, which is usually claimed to be Spirit, distorts our thinking on this question of guidance and stultifies what the apostles prayed for..." (Quoting John Murray)
- "The Spirit guides us but guides us through the Word..."
- "The concept of so-called illumination is best called the inner witness of the Spirit."
- "Calvin viewed the role of the Spirit to be that of convicting...concerning the truthfulness and authority of Scripture."
- "The Spirit's role is one of persuasion, not content."
- "The testimonium is a revealing action, not a revealed content. It is an illumination, not a communication." (Quoting Bernard Ramm)
- "The role of the Spirit is to exalt Christ."

- "Reflection upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit reveals that he is the executive of the Godhead." (Quoting Bernard Ramm)
- "The Spirit does not communicate content, neither new revelation, nor interpret the revelation."
- "To be filled with the Spirit is to be characterized by the teaching that the Spirit convicts us about."

**Next Steps/Considerations:**

- Review the cited biblical passages in their full context.
- Explore the works of John Murray, Calvin, Bernard Ramm, and other theologians mentioned for a deeper understanding of these perspectives.
- Reflect on the implications of this view for personal guidance and decision-making.
- Consider how this perspective interacts with other theological traditions regarding the Holy Spirit's role.

## 4. Study Guide: Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 12, The Role of the Holy Spirit

### Understanding the Holy Spirit's Role in Knowing God's Will

#### Study Guide

#### Key Concepts:

- **Subjective Challenges:** Internal factors that influence our understanding of God's will, such as conscience and the role of the Holy Spirit.
- **Conscience:** A witness to our worldview and values.
- **Pneumatology:** The theological study of the Holy Spirit.
- **Trinity:** The doctrine that God is one being existing in three co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is often seen as the "application aspect" of the Trinity.
- **Infallible Rule of Practice:** The belief that Scripture is the only perfect standard for Christian living.
- **Era of Revelation and Inspiration:** The period in history when God directly communicated and inspired the writing of Scripture, which Christians believe is now complete.
- **Sufficiency of Scripture:** The belief that the Bible contains everything necessary for faith and life.
- **Means of Guidance:** The ways through which the Holy Spirit directs believers, primarily through enabling the correct interpretation and application of Scripture.
- **Immediate Impression:** The idea that the Holy Spirit directly communicates specific guidance or instructions apart from Scripture. This view is generally cautioned against.
- **Inner Witness of the Spirit:** The Holy Spirit's work of convicting believers of the truth and authority of Scripture and their identity as children of God.
- **Testimonium (Witness):** The theological concept, particularly emphasized by Calvin, that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth of Scripture, convicting the believer's heart and persuading them of its authority.

- **Conviction (by the Spirit):** The Holy Spirit's ongoing ministry of persuading believers that the Word of God is true and their responsibility to obey it. This is distinct from providing new content.
- **Illumination:** A term often used to describe the Spirit's help in understanding Scripture. However, the source material suggests it can be misleading as it sometimes implies the reception of new content. "Inner witness of the Spirit" is a preferred term.
- **Efficacious Confirmation of the Word:** Calvin's description of the Spirit's role in persuading believers of the truth and authority of Scripture.
- **Executive of the Godhead:** A description of the Holy Spirit's role in enacting the plans of the Father and the Son, particularly in salvation.
- **Objective vs. Subjective Aspects of Spirituality:** The discussion of whether the foundations of Christian spirituality lie in external, verifiable truth (Scripture) or internal, personal experiences. The source leans towards the foundational aspects being objective.
- **Filled with the Spirit:** A metaphor in Scripture (e.g., Ephesians 5:18, Colossians 1:9) meaning to be characterized by the qualities or the teaching that the Spirit convicts us about, not necessarily to receive more of the Spirit.
- **Hermeneutics:** The science and art of interpreting texts, especially Scripture. The ability to understand Scripture depends on applying hermeneutical principles and submitting to its teachings.
- **Apostolic Community:** The group of apostles through whom God revealed the foundational truths of Christianity, recorded in Scripture.
- **Prophet (New Testament):** Some believe this refers to an inspired preacher who accurately conveyed the teachings of the apostles.
- **Upper Room Discourse:** Jesus' final teachings to his disciples before his crucifixion (John 14-16), often cited in discussions about the Holy Spirit's role. The source argues that many promises in this discourse were specifically for the apostles.
- **Anointing (1 John 2:27):** Interpreted in the source as the Spirit of God working in the conviction that the teachings the recipients had already received were true, particularly in the context of false teachers trying to lead them astray.

## Quiz



Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Dr. Meadors, what is the primary way the Holy Spirit guides believers in the church age, and what does this imply about new revelations?
2. Explain Calvin's concept of the "testimonium of the Holy Spirit." What is the Spirit's role in relation to the content of Scripture according to this view?
3. Why does the source material suggest that the term "illumination" can be a problematic way to describe the Holy Spirit's work in helping us understand Scripture? What alternative term is preferred?
4. Describe the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Trinity, particularly focusing on the Spirit's role in relation to the Father and the Son.
5. How does the source interpret passages like Romans 8:14 and Galatians 5:18 that speak of being "led by the Spirit"? What is the metaphor of "led" understood to mean in these contexts?
6. According to the lecture, how should we understand the promises Jesus made to his disciples about the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room Discourse (John 14-16)? Were these promises intended for all believers in the same way?
7. Explain the source's interpretation of 1 John 2:27, where it says believers "have no need that anyone should teach you." What is the "anointing" likely referring to in this context?
8. When Paul uses the metaphor of being "filled" with the Spirit or the knowledge of God's will (e.g., Colossians 1:9, Ephesians 5:18), what does the source suggest this metaphor signifies?
9. What is the crucial difference between having inspired Scripture and having inspired interpreters, according to the lecture? How does this relate to the diversity of interpretations among godly believers?
10. Summarize the main conclusion of the lecture regarding the Holy Spirit's role in guiding believers. What is the Spirit's primary work in relation to the Word of God?

### Quiz Answer Key

1. The Holy Spirit guides believers primarily through the Word of God, enabling them to rightly interpret and apply Scripture in various situations. This implies

that believers should not expect or demand new revelations from the Spirit that bypass the sufficiency of Scripture.

2. Calvin's "testimonium of the Holy Spirit" describes the Spirit's role as bearing witness to the truthfulness and authority of Scripture, convicting the believer's heart and persuading them of its divine origin. The Spirit's role is one of persuasion and conviction about the existing content of Scripture, not the provision of new content.
3. The term "illumination" can be problematic because it sometimes carries the implication of receiving new content or a special understanding apart from the careful study of Scripture. The preferred term is "inner witness of the Spirit," which emphasizes the Spirit's role in confirming the truth of the Word.
4. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and acts as the "executive of the Godhead," carrying out the intentions and work of the Father and the Son. The Spirit's role is to exalt Christ, lead people to Christ, and teach about Christ through the Word; the Spirit is not an end in himself.
5. The source interprets "led by the Spirit" in Romans 8:14 and Galatians 5:18 as a metaphor for sanctification, where the Spirit convicts believers to follow the teachings of Scripture, producing the fruit of the Spirit and resisting the works of the flesh. It is not understood as a direct, mystical leading apart from the Word.
6. The promises in the Upper Room Discourse, such as the Spirit teaching them all things and bringing things to their remembrance, are primarily understood as applying specifically to the apostles and those who would accurately preserve the memory and teachings of Jesus in what became Scripture. They are not general promises of direct revelation to all believers.
7. The "anointing" in 1 John 2:27 is interpreted as the Holy Spirit's work in convicting the believers that the teachings they had already received from John were true, especially in the face of those trying to teach contrary doctrines. It does not mean believers have no need for any teachers, but rather no need for teachers who deviate from the foundational truths they had already embraced.
8. The metaphor of being "filled" with the Spirit or the knowledge of God's will signifies being characterized by the qualities of the Spirit (like those listed in Ephesians 5:19-21) or by the knowledge of God's will that they have been taught. It is a call to live in accordance with and demonstrate the truths they have already received, not necessarily a call to obtain more of the Spirit or new knowledge.

9. Having inspired Scripture means that the Bible is the authoritative and infallible Word of God, produced through the Spirit's work with the apostles and prophets. Not having inspired interpreters means that while the Spirit helps believers understand and submit to Scripture, even godly and well-trained individuals can have differing interpretations, highlighting the need for careful hermeneutics and humility.
10. The main conclusion is that the Holy Spirit's primary role in guiding believers is to convict them of the truth and authority of the Word of God and their need for obedience. The Spirit works within the parameters of the already revealed Scripture, enabling believers to understand and apply it to their lives, rather than providing new content or interpretations.

## **Essay Format Questions**

1. Discuss the tension between the objective truth of Scripture and the subjective experience of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers. How does the presented material attempt to balance these two aspects?
2. Critically evaluate the view presented in the lecture that the Holy Spirit's primary role is conviction related to the existing Word of God, rather than the communication of new content or direct guidance. What biblical passages or theological arguments might support or challenge this perspective?
3. Explore the implications of the lecture's interpretation of the Upper Room Discourse (John 14-16) and 1 John 2:27 for contemporary Christian practices related to seeking spiritual guidance and the role of teachers.
4. Analyze the significance of the distinction made between having inspired Scripture and inspired interpreters. How does this distinction address the reality of diverse interpretations within the Christian community?
5. Consider the practical implications of understanding the metaphor of being "filled with the Spirit" as being "characterized by" the Spirit's qualities or teachings. How might this understanding shape a believer's pursuit of spiritual growth and obedience?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Adjudicating the Bible:** Determining the correct meaning and application of the Bible.
- **Apostolic Community:** The group of individuals chosen by Jesus to be his primary witnesses and establish the early church, through whom foundational Christian teachings were revealed.
- **Arminian:** A theological system that generally emphasizes free will and God's universal atonement, contrasting with Calvinism.
- **Calvinism:** A theological system emphasizing God's sovereignty in salvation and predestination.
- **Corollary:** A proposition that follows easily from the proof of another proposition.
- **Efficacious:** Effective; capable of producing the desired result.
- **Epistles:** Letters, particularly those written by apostles in the New Testament.
- **Epistemology:** The theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope.
- **Eschew:** To deliberately avoid using; abstain from.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of scripture.
- **Extrapolate:** To extend the application of something to an unknown situation by assuming that existing trends will continue.
- **Formal Theological Way:** A systematic and precise way of describing theological concepts.
- **God-breathed (Theopneustos):** The biblical concept that Scripture is inspired by God.
- **Hob and Joy Experience:** A colloquial term used to describe a subjective, emotional, and potentially unreliable basis for spiritual guidance.
- **Infallible:** Incapable of being wrong or making mistakes.
- **Inspired Interpreters:** The idea that individuals today are uniquely and authoritatively guided by the Holy Spirit to understand and explain Scripture without error, similar to the biblical authors.

- **Metaphysical:** Relating to the branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things, including abstract concepts such as being, knowing, substance, cause, identity, time, and space.
- **Ontological:** Relating to the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being.
- **Orthodox:** Conforming to what is generally or traditionally accepted as right or true, especially in religious beliefs.
- **Paradigm:** A typical example or pattern of something; a model.
- **Pietistic Idea:** An emphasis on personal piety and religious experience, sometimes to the neglect of doctrine or external expressions of faith.
- **Propositional Truth:** Truth expressed in the form of declarative statements or assertions.
- **Providence:** God's foreknowledge, active involvement, and guidance in the universe and human history.
- **Ratio (Scripture Ratio):** A less common term here likely referring to the body of scriptural writings.
- **Sanctification:** The process of being made holy or set apart for God.
- **Sui Generis:** Unique.
- **Virtual Advice List:** A conceptual list of principles and guidelines for behavior, often descriptive rather than concrete.
- **Worldview:** A fundamental set of beliefs and assumptions about the world and reality that shapes one's understanding and interpretation of events.

## 5. FAQs on Meadors, Knowing the Will of God, Session 12, The Role of the Holy Spirit, [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Knowing God's Will

#### 1. How does the Holy Spirit guide believers according to this perspective?

The Holy Spirit guides believers primarily *through* the Word of God (Scripture). The Spirit's role is not to provide new revelations or immediate impressions as content or direct instruction, but rather to enable believers to rightly interpret, understand, and apply the already revealed Word of God to their lives. The Spirit convicts us of the truth and authority of Scripture and persuades us to obey it.

#### 2. How does this view contrast with the idea of direct revelation from the Spirit?

This perspective rejects the idea that believers should look for or depend upon new, direct revelations from the Holy Spirit for guidance. It asserts that the era of revelation and inspiration concluded with the apostles and prophets who provided us with Scripture. Seeking special revelations undermines the sufficiency of Scripture, to which the Spirit himself bears witness.

#### 3. What is the "inner witness of the Spirit," and how does it relate to conscience?

The "inner witness of the Spirit" is the Spirit's work of bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, providing an internal conviction of our salvation and the truth of God's Word. It operates similarly to the conscience, which also acts as a witness to our worldview and values. While they can be hard to distinguish in our internal processes, the ultimate arbiter for truth remains the Word of God.

#### 4. What was Calvin's understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in relation to Scripture?

John Calvin viewed the Holy Spirit's primary role as "efficacious confirmation" of the Word. This means the Spirit convicts the believer's heart (mind) concerning the truthfulness and authority of Scripture. The Spirit persuades believers that the Word of God is true and that they have a responsibility to live according to it. Importantly, Calvin emphasized that the Spirit's role is one of persuasion and conviction, not the provision of new content, which is already found in Scripture.

## **5. Why is the term "illumination" potentially misleading when discussing the Spirit's role in understanding Scripture?**

The term "illumination" can be misleading because it often carries the connotation of the Spirit directly imparting new understanding or content. This perspective argues that the Spirit's work is more accurately described as a "witness to the Word" or "inner persuasion" that the Scripture is true and applicable. "Illumination" can be misused to justify personal interpretations without sufficient grounding in the text itself.

## **6. How should believers understand passages like John 14:26 and 16:13 regarding the Spirit's guidance and teaching?**

Passages from the Upper Room Discourse (John 14-16) where Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will teach and guide the disciples, and bring things to their remembrance, should be understood within the specific context of Jesus speaking to his apostles. These promises primarily relate to equipping them to accurately recall Jesus' teachings and lay the foundation for the New Testament Scriptures. They are not general promises of direct revelation for all believers in the church age.

## **7. How should 1 John 2:27, which speaks of an "anointing" that means believers "need not that anyone teach you," be interpreted?**

This verse is not saying that believers have no need for teachers within the church. Instead, it is addressing a specific situation where false teachers were trying to lead John's audience astray with doctrines different from what they had initially been taught and convicted of. The "anointing" refers to the Holy Spirit's work in convicting them of the truth of the original teaching. It assures them that they don't need to listen to these deviating teachings because they already possess the truth they were persuaded of through the Spirit's witness to the initial apostolic teaching.

## **8. What is the significance of Paul's use of metaphors like "filled with the Spirit" or "led by the Spirit" in his epistles, such as Colossians 1:9 and Romans 8:14?**

When Paul uses metaphors like "filled with the Spirit" or "led by the Spirit," he is not typically referring to a mystical experience of receiving more of the Spirit or direct, extra-biblical guidance. Instead, "filled" often means to be characterized by something (e.g., the qualities of the Spirit as reflected in the Word), and "led" (particularly in the context of sanctification) refers to the Spirit's work of convicting believers to live according to the teachings of Scripture. These are calls to engage with and be transformed by the objective truth of God's Word, not to seek subjective, independent guidance.