

'UNDER
THE
INFLUENCE.
INFLUENCE

HOLY SPIRIT
HOLY SPIRIT

UNDER THE INFLUENCE.

Encountering, Experiencing, and Embracing the
Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Six-Session LifeGroup Bible Study

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USING THIS WORKBOOK

This book is intended to help you encounter spiritual truth, engage with challenging ideas, and experience meaningful community. It contains plenty of group discussion questions, some weekly homework, and room to record prayer requests and answers to prayer.

While it can be beneficial to anyone, this study is designed to be used in the context of a LifeGroup, which is the best place for you to be encouraged and equipped to deepen your faith in Jesus and share his love with your relational world. So if you're reading through this right now and you're not in a LifeGroup, find one at centralsf.org/lifegroups.

Be sure to take time before your first meeting to familiarize yourself with this format, so you can get a sense of where we're heading over the next six sessions.

OUTLINE OF EACH SESSION

It can be hard for small groups to answer this very basic question: What do we do when we meet? That is why we have tried to provide more than enough content and questions for you. Inside this workbook you will find teaching, discussion questions, and even some material for you to explore on your own during the week.

A typical group session will include the following:

CONNECT

It's essential that we connect with others as we follow God. Relationships are built when we are around trustworthy people with whom we can be real and honest about life. It might be a while before you get to that level, but we encourage you to take the risk and share some of your story with the group. Ideally, for the sake of time, everyone will share no more than a couple minutes each.

WATCH

Spend a few minutes viewing a brief video introduction from a member of Central's teaching team. Since this series isn't tied to a specific sermon series, the videos act as important catalysts for reflection and discussion. Feel free to jot down any thoughts about the videos on pages 63-66.

ENGAGE

Read this section aloud to help set up the discussion portion of your time together. This short segment will help introduce the main concept you will be discussing during that particular session.

GOING DEEPER

This section is a brief examination of specific topics that require a little more time and attention. Our hope is that you'll gain a better understanding of concepts that are sometimes glazed over in traditional studies of scripture. (Try to carve out a few minutes to read and discuss this section as a group but don't feel pressure to totally "get it" right away. You might have to explore this on your own as part of your weekly review.)

APPLY

In this section, you'll have an opportunity to go beyond mere Bible study and into practical biblical living, moving from observation and interpretation to life application. Our hope is that you'll transcend typical Sunday School answers and get a little uncomfortable as you pursue deeper faith. Our prayer is that these questions and discussions will make a tangible difference in your life and, as a result, the lives of people in your relational world. (If you're struggling with any particular question, some suggested answers can be found in the appendix, beginning on page 57.)

THIS WEEK

It's one thing to sit and talk about concepts and quite another to put them into practice. Consider this your homework section, giving you something tangible to study more in depth and put into practice the rest of the week, moving you from head knowledge to genuine change in character and conduct.

PRAYER & PRAISE

Praying together helps us to draw closer to God, both individually and as a LifeGroup. Though life can be tough, as we enter His presence with our burdens and requests, He can remind us that we are not alone. Each time you meet, it's important to spend around 10 minutes hearing about the things that are weighing on your hearts or filling your life with joy. Be sure to use the space provided to jot down your group's prayer requests and praises, so you can be praying for each other between sessions.

THE DAILY

Located at the end of each session, this section provides you with five days worth of selected scripture passages for each week, relating back to themes from that week's study. As you gain a more well-rounded contextual understanding of the topics, you'll be able to more fully engage in group discussion. And you'll get to spend consistent time alone with God.

PREFACE

“Go out and stand before me on the mountain,” the LORD told him. And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. - 1 Kings 19:11-12

I listen to a lot of podcasts. When I’m driving, doing yardwork or (admittedly less often) housework, a variety of podcasts keep me informed, entertained, and inspired. One of my favorites is called *Good Faith*, where I recently heard Christian author Andy Crouch explain the difference between **impact** and **influence** on culture.¹ He said that impact can be defined as the effect of a large amount of force in a small amount of time. Influence, however, is the result of a small amount of force that, given enough time, grows exponentially. Think about clapping your hands versus folding your hands to pray: Impact is loud and fast. Influence is quiet and slow.

Mr. Crouch went on to describe the types of force that are typically used in order to make an impact on a group of people: either political/military force (“Obey me or be punished”), financial force (“How much money will it take to get your vote?”), or charismatic force (“Aren’t I too charming to resist?”).

Many organizations talk about impacting the world: they want to make a big splash. They use statistics to show how many people have been affected by their product or service or ministry over a short period of time in order to prove their effectiveness. (“Over the span of just three months, ten million people have downloaded our app!”) The problem is, impact is not usually sustainable. If I clap my hands as hard as I can, it hurts and I want to stop.

In contrast, think of influence like compounding interest: if you invest a small amount of money every month, over the course of fifty years, it can grow into a fortune. Is it flashy? Not really. Does it make headlines? Nope. Is it effective? Absolutely.

What is the point? Great question. I think God cares about influence way more than impact. Because, while there are certainly times that He uses a large amount of force in a short amount of time (parting the Red Sea, for example), God tends to implement more of a “slow and steady wins the race” strategy.

Look at the life of Jesus: He had no political power, no monetary wealth, and made more enemies among the elite than friends. He was “gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Yet, over the course of two thousand years, his disciples have grown in number from a dozen to over two billion. That’s influence.

During a different episode of that same podcast, the hosts were discussing spiritual revivals, particularly the recent events at Asbury University compared to their own experience at Harvard in the early 1990s.² During their discussion, they used a helpful metaphor to describe revivals. They said that a revival is like a fire: Especially if you’re using lighter fluid, a bonfire burns **briest** when it’s first lit. The flames rise high in the air and usually attract enough attention to gather a crowd. But a fire burns **hottest** when it has burned down to a pile of smoldering embers. Those glowing coals can last a long time and they create the best environment for long conversations (and great s’mores). The podcast hosts recalled how the Holy Spirit was clearly at work in the student ministries at Harvard, which quickly grew tenfold (the bonfire), but also resulted in long-lasting relationships and developed people of godly character and substance, including pastors, ministry leaders, a United States senator, and the aforementioned Andy Crouch (the smoldering coals).

My prayer for you as you read, discuss, and reflect on the content in this study is that the Holy Spirit will burn bright and hot in your life. That, regardless of the size of the initial impact, He will bring tangible, lasting change to your life. It’s my sincere hope that the time you spend in scripture and in conversation with other believers will be instrumental in your long journey with Jesus. May the Spirit’s influence in your life result in slow, steady, exponential growth, making you into the person He created you to be.

- Neil

1. Curtis Chang, host. “The Impact Fetish (with Andy Crouch).” *Good Faith*, episode 68, Redeeming Babel, April 1, 2023.

2. Curtis Chang, host. “How do Revivals Achieve Lasting Influence? (with Kevin Brown and David French).” *Good Faith*, episode 79, Redeeming Babel, June 17, 2023.

INTRODUCTION

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” - A.W. Tozer¹

When you hear the words “Holy Spirit,” what is the first thing that pops into your head? What image? What Bible story? What personal experience?

It should be no surprise that we have an incomplete view and experience of the Holy Spirit. God the Father? All powerful Creator. Check. Jesus? Redeemer of the world, Lord of my life, lover of my soul. Check. The Holy Spirit? Hmm...can I get back to you on that? In fact, when pressed, we might have more questions than we care to admit: Is He a ghost? Where is He right now? Does He know what I did Friday night? However, as we seek to know and experience the Spirit’s presence in our lives, He’ll help us grow in our comprehension of many things, including who He is and what He does. But this understanding starts with a basic knowledge of what the Bible says about Him.

In some ways, all language is metaphor. Words are never “the thing” itself; they merely point to “the thing.” And so, to aid our understanding, scripture gives us some vivid imagery, comparing the Holy Spirit to a dove, fire, wine, water, and (most commonly) wind or breath.

The Old Testament (Hebrew) word for Spirit is *ruakh*, translated as breath, wind, or spirit. This invisible, powerful, life-giving force is active throughout the Old Testament, from Genesis 1 (hovering over the surface of the waters) to Ezekiel 37 (breathing life into dry bones). The New Testament counterpart, the Greek word *pneuma*, has the same range of meaning (spirit, wind, and breath), and can be found in the gospels, the book of Acts, and many of the epistles (letters to individuals or churches). In both the Old and New Testaments combined, the word Spirit occurs hundreds of times, so any ignorance of the Holy Spirit on our part is not for lack of communication on God’s part.

While some communities place a heavy emphasis on Him, when it comes to our approach to the Holy Spirit, the majority of self-described Christians probably fall somewhere between confusion and neglect. For a variety of reasons, we’ve either deliberately avoided or been passively unaware of the Spirit’s role in our lives. As a result, many Christians feel disappointed, defeated, empty, and exhausted. Others are simply spiritually numb, focused on raising kids, working hard, and keeping up with the Joneses. Either way, many of us are not experiencing “life to the full” like Jesus offers.² We’re not spending time with God, letting the “sword of the Spirit”³ teach, correct, and mature us, not listening to His voice, not letting the wind of heaven fill our sails and provide direction and power for our journey. (See, I told you all language is metaphor.)

But here’s the sad (and dangerous) reality: our lack of biblical fluency and corresponding neglect of life with the Spirit has not only meant that we’re lacking maturity and spiritual power on an individual level; it has also done tremendous damage

to the cause of Christ on a corporate level. Instead of being known as a source of love, hope, and grace, the Church is associated with judgment, hypocrisy, and partisan political power. To paraphrase the 46th President, that's not good, folks. We look vastly different than the first century gatherings of believers known as The Way. And the biggest difference between then and now is the prominence of the Holy Spirit. A.W. Tozer diagnosed this problem in 1960:

“If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.” - *A.W. Tozer*⁴

Do you want to have a growing, intimate relationship with God? Do you want the church to powerfully proclaim the kingdom of God to a world who desperately needs redemption? Then it's time we stop and actually listen to the Spirit, letting Him do His work in us and through us.

In order to undertake an exhaustive study of the Holy Spirit—known as pneumatology for those of you trying to expand your theological vocabulary—we could take months poring over hundreds of passages, commentaries, and popular writings. We're not going to do that. Yes, we'll explore several aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But the purpose of our time together is not primarily to be informed, but to be transformed, allowing the Creator of the universe to shape us into the people He wants us to be. To be under the influence of his divine presence and power.

So would you make a commitment today? Would you resolve to fully engage with God's Word and God's people for the next six sessions? Would you set aside any baggage or distractions and submit to God's Spirit, allowing Him to teach you and empower you? If we're all in this together, there's no telling what He might do.

1. A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*. HarperCollins, 1978.
2. John 10:10
3. Ephesians 6:17
4. A.W. Tozer, *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*. Moody, 2016.

SESSION ONE


PROMISE

PROMISE

PROMISE

PROMISE

PROMISE

PROMISE

Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’” (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.) - John 7:38-39a (NLT)

CONNECT

If your group is new, make some introductions. Allow each person to briefly share:

What do you do with most of your time (work, play, volunteering, etc.)?

How long have you been attending Central?

What do you hope to get out of this LifeGroup experience?

Open your group with a brief, simple prayer, inviting God to be with you as you meet. (If you haven't already, be sure to read the Introduction on page 9.)

WATCH - Week 1 video at centralsf.org/spirit, and write any questions, observations, or notes on pages 63-66.

ENGAGE

When embarking on a study of the Holy Spirit, it's tempting to begin with the fun stuff, like reading about the miracles of the Spirit in the book of Acts, the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians, or the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians. But if we relied solely on the New Testament for our understanding of the Spirit, we'd be ignoring thousands of years and dozens of stories of His interaction with God's people in the Hebrew scriptures. And that would be, as the experts say, dumb.

As noted in the Introduction (I realize most people don't read introductions but this whole study will be 20% more enjoyable if you do), before the coming of Christ, the Spirit of God was not merely a relief pitcher waiting in heaven's bullpen for the ninth inning. He was involved throughout the history of God's people, powerfully

performing (and equipping people for) important tasks. He breathed life into Adam, appeared to Moses as a burning bush, guided the Israelites through the desert as a pillar of cloud, empowered Samson to defeat the Philistines, anointed David as King, and (in a lesser-known story) divinely equipped Bezalel to create beautiful works of art for the tabernacle. These are just a handful of the Spirit's accomplishments, all of which must have been jaw-droppingly awesome.

These Old Testament encounters of the Holy Spirit were for specific tasks, with specific people, at specific times. This was especially on display with the prophets, who, besides inspiring the names of homeschoolers for generations to come, foretold a new era, a new covenant, when the Spirit would expand His scope.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances. - **Ezekiel 36:26-27 (CSB)**

I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike. And I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth—blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and terrible day of the Lord arrives. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. - **Joel 2:28b-32a**

What promises are made in these verses?
To whom are they made?

What is symbolized by hearts of stone and hearts of flesh?

What do these passages tell us about the role of the Holy Spirit?

GOING DEEPER

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

The prophecies of Ezekiel and Joel that we just read eventually come to fruition in the book of Acts:

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages!” - **Acts 2:1-8**

At this point, Peter steps up and delivers an impromptu sermon about what was happening, quoting Joel’s prophecy and a couple of David’s Psalms. Knowing that his audience would have also been in town during the trial and execution of Jesus a few weeks prior, Peter uses these passages to show how Jesus is the Messiah. To say that his message has a powerful effect on its audience would be an understatement:

Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter

replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.” Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!” Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

- **Acts 2:37-40**

This was the birth of the church. The promise had been fulfilled. A new age had begun. Things were about to get interesting.

APPLY

Normally in this section, you’d see five or six application questions. And there’s certainly a lot more to talk about. But since this is the first week, things are probably running long already. So let’s just focus on:

Covering the LifeGroup commitment

Communicating about what each person will do on their own in the section entitled “This Week”

Sharing prayer requests and praying for each other

Establishing when and where you’ll meet for Session 2

Before you leave this meeting, take a moment to read through the LifeGroup Commitment below. Have each person read a portion out loud. Then have everyone actually sign the agreement in their own books.

LIFEGROUP COMMITMENT (Read Aloud)

A LifeGroup is designed to be a safe place where you are cared for and challenged to become more and more like Jesus. Go around the room, each person reading one expectation. Agreeing to these expectations will help everyone get the most out of this group experience.

I commit to participate in all six sessions and engage in this community by living out the following:

MAKE LIFEGROUP A PRIORITY

I’ll prioritize the scheduled group meeting and communicate in advance if I’m going to miss the meeting. I know that inconsistent attendance is one of the major factors that will keep this group from flourishing.

TAKE OWNERSHIP

The group will be as good as I make it. I’ll share roles within the group and help challenge everyone to grow.

BE ENGAGED BUT SELF-AWARE

I’ll stretch myself to be as open and honest as I can with my perspectives and experiences. I understand some of us are talkers and some are more quiet, so I’ll be aware of not dominating the discussion or always leaving the weight of discussion to others.

FACE CONFLICT

Community can often be very messy, and conflicts may arise. I'll offer grace to others and won't leave the group over disagreements, realizing God might use conflict to develop my faith in some way I don't currently understand.

HONOR OTHERS

I'll accept everyone without judgment. I will model James 1:19, in that I will be quick to listen and slow to speak. I'll listen well and refrain from giving quick answers, simple fixes, or engaging in side conversations.

VALUE CONFIDENTIALITY

I will work to make this a safe space for others to take risks in sharing their story and burdens. I will see their honesty as a gift and honor it by safeguarding it. What I hear and say in the group stays in the group.

Signature

PRAY

An important element of community is drawing close to God by sharing each other's burdens and lifting them up to God in prayer, along with celebrating each other's praises. Use this space to write down prayer requests and answers to prayer. And be sure to pray for them throughout the week.

THIS WEEK

Carve out some time each day to read and reflect on the passages in The Daily.

WATCH

Take six minutes to watch this video from The Bible Project:
bibleproject.com/explore/video/holy-spirit/

REFLECT

Write down the things you already know—or think you know—about the Holy Spirit. How did you learn these things? What questions or concerns do you have about this topic? Bring your list with you to session 2.

Take a few minutes each day to read the assigned passages, using the reflection questions to help navigate your time with God.

Day 1: Genesis 2:7 & Ezekiel 37:1-14

How are these two stories of the Spirit breathing life into people similar?
How are they different? Why are they both important?

Day 2: Genesis 8:1-4 & Exodus 14:21-22

The ruakh (wind/Spirit) worked powerfully to move water and create dry land. How are both of these stories symbolic of the Spirit's power to save?

How has He powerfully saved you?

Day 3: Jeremiah 2:13 & John 4:1-14

A cistern is an underground tank used for collecting and storing water, as opposed to a well or spring that has its own water source.

What is the effect of having a broken cistern that you dig and fill yourself?
How have you dug your own cisterns instead of relying on God's living water?

What kind of spiritual satisfaction is Jesus talking about here? When and how have you experienced this living water from the Spirit?

Day 4: Exodus 24:1-18 & Jeremiah 31:31-34

Why did the Mosaic covenant (the Ten Commandments) still fall short of bringing complete salvation to Israel?

What is the new covenant that God promised his people?

What is the Spirit's role in the new covenant?

Day 5: John 7:37-39

Jesus ties the promise of the Spirit to Himself. How does faith in Jesus lead to experiencing the Holy Spirit?

**RIVERS
OF
LIVING
WATER
WILL
FLOW
FROM
HIS
HEART**

SESSION TWO

PERSON

PERSON

“Someone who sees God’s Spirit as an influence or supreme power will constantly say, ‘I want more of the Spirit.’ On the contrary, someone who sees Him as a wonderful Person will say, ‘How can I give more of myself to Him?’” - *John Bevere*¹

CONNECT

For those of you who completed “The Daily” from last week: What was something that stood out to you? Why was it significant?

If anyone did the “reflect” assignment, what questions or concerns did you write down? Any observations you’d like to share?

WATCH - Week 2 video at centralsf.org/spirit, and write any questions, observations, or notes on pages 63-66.

ENGAGE

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God... Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human... And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets...

- *The Nicene Creed (381 AD)*

For the last two millennia, the doctrine of the Trinity has given even the world’s greatest theologians a giant ice cream headache. Finite creatures can’t wrap our minds around an infinite Creator, so some truths about God are beyond our capacity to fully comprehend. But hey, let’s give it a

shot: The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. Each is fully God. Each is a distinct person. And yet there is only one God. There, that wasn’t so hard.

And while it’s sometimes necessary to believe certain spiritual truths without fully understanding them, it’s also crucial to realize the important implications of those beliefs. When it comes to the doctrine of the Trinity, here’s what it boils down to:

1. The Holy Spirit is God. He is eternal, all-powerful, all-present, and all-knowing. He’s not a second-rate stand-in for Jesus. He loves us, desires intimacy with us, and is our source of life, holiness, wisdom, and all kinds of other good things (which we’ll cover in another session).

2. The Holy Spirit is a person. He is not an “it” or a mystical power like “the Force.” This doesn’t mean that He’s a human, with elbows and fingernails. It

simply means that He possesses attributes of personhood. Don't believe me? Look what way-smarter-than-any-of-us A.W. Tozer has to say:

“Put that down in capital letters—that the Holy Spirit is not only a Being having another mode of existence, but He is Himself a Person, with all the qualities and powers of personality. He is not matter, but He is substance... The Holy Spirit has will and intelligence and feeling and knowledge and sympathy and ability to love and see and think and hear and speak and desire the same as any person has.” - *A.W. Tozer*²

Still not convinced? Then you leave me no choice but to play the Jesus card...

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you. - **John 14:16-18 (CSB)**

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes,

he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you. - **John 16:7-15 (NIV)**

What attributes of personhood does Jesus say the Advocate possesses?

Why would Jesus say that we're better off without Him? What does this imply about the Holy Spirit?

GOING DEEPER BETTER OFF WITHOUT JESUS?

Put yourself in the sandals of the twelve disciples: It's the night of Passover and, in the last couple of hours, Jesus has made some pretty impressive claims. After washing your feet, he has declared things like:

*No one comes to the Father except through Me...*³

*Apart from me, you can do nothing...*⁴

*You are my friends if you do what I command you...*⁵

And then He drops this bomb: “*It is for your benefit that I go away...*”⁶

How does this make any sense? If Jesus is God in the flesh, and I can’t do anything significant without Him, how am I somehow better off without Him?!? This Counselor or Advocate that he’s talking about (the Greek word *parakletos*, or “one who is called into close contact”) must really be someone special.

One of Jesus’ human restrictions was that he was not omnipresent: He could only be in one place at a time. So, while Jesus could walk alongside a few people at a time, the Holy Spirit could do far more. He could meet with, guide, and empower millions of people at once. So that’s just one of several reasons why we’re better off without Jesus: we don’t have to take a number and wait in line for our divine appointment. But there’s way more to it than availability. Jesus said the Counselor “will be *in* you.”

Picture it this way: If you wanted to play basketball, would you rather have LeBron James occasionally give you a coaching session, or (in some kind of *Freaky Friday* situation), be empowered with the skill, strength, vision, and drive of LeBron James?

In John 14, Jesus calls the Spirit “*another* Counselor,” and the term he uses for “another” (the Greek word *allos*) means “of the same kind.” The Holy Spirit is not some second-rate substitute. He possesses the same qualities and attributes as Jesus but with none of the physical limitations.

And He has come to empower and direct the lives of believers by living inside us. (More on this in upcoming sessions.)

APPLY

What are some of the consequences of seeing the Holy Spirit as just a power? What difference does it make to see him as God?

The Trinity is a mind-numbing mystery. What other mysteries about God do you wrestle with?

How has your growing understanding of the Holy Spirit changed your relationship with God?

PRAY

Use this space to write down prayer requests and answers to prayer.

THIS WEEK

READ

The Daily

MEMORIZE

John 15:26 in your favorite translation. Mine is the NLT because, well, it's the easiest:

But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me.

PRACTICE

Try to have at least three conversations about the Holy Spirit this week. Try to describe to someone what you're learning about Him.

THE DAILY

Day 1: Genesis 1:1-31 (pay close attention to verses 2 and 26)

How does this passage allude to the Trinity?

What do we learn about the attributes of God?

What do we learn about God's "teamwork" in this passage?

Day 2: Acts 5:1-11

What does this passage teach us about the personhood of the Spirit? In other words, what attributes are demonstrated or implied?

Day 3: Romans 5:1-5 and Romans 15:30

Is the Holy Spirit the source of God's love or merely the conduit? What difference does it make? How have you experienced God's love lately?

How do these passages influence the way you view God's love?

Day 4: Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 12:11; James 4:5

Some descriptions say that personhood requires having a mind, a will, and emotions. Which of these verses is the most compelling description of the Spirit as a person? Why?

Why does it matter that the Spirit possesses all of these attributes?

Day 5: John 15:26-27

This passage refers to all three members of the Trinity. What is the Spirit's relationship with the Father and the Son?

The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus. If He lives in us, what does that imply about our purpose? How can you point people to Jesus this week?

1. John Bevere, *The Holy Spirit; An Introduction*. Messenger International, 2013.
2. A.W. Tozer, *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*. Moody, 2016
3. John 14:6
4. John 15:5
5. John 15:14
6. John 16:7

**WE
BELIEVE
IN THE
HOLY
SPIRIT**

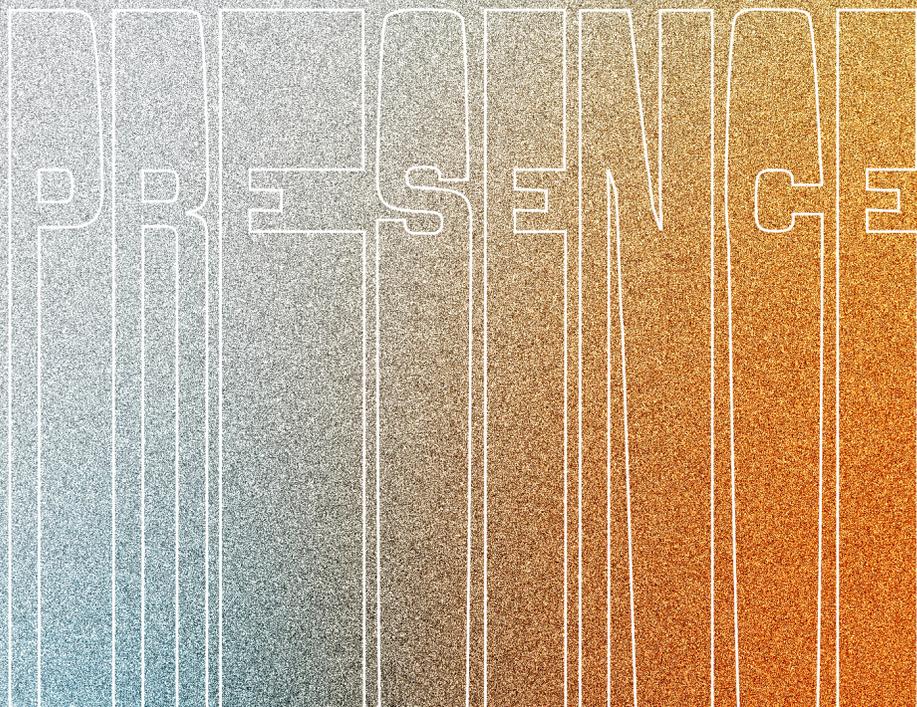
**THE
LORD**

**THE
GIVER
OF LIFE**

SESSION THREE



PRESENCE



“God, the holy, other, transcendent, majestic, magnificent, and eternal takes up residence within us.” - *Beth Felker Jones*¹

CONNECT

Who is the most impressive person you have ever met? What about this person left an impression on you?

WATCH - Week 3 video centralsf.org/spirit, and write any questions, observations, or notes on pages 63-66.

ENGAGE

God is omnipresent. He is literally everywhere. However, throughout history He has chosen to manifest (meaning clearly and convincingly reveal) his presence in a unique way among his people. In the book of Exodus, we read about the tabernacle, a portable tent that was the dwelling place of Yahweh from the time of the Israelites' 40-year detour in the wilderness through their conquest of the Promised Land. Four centuries later, King Solomon constructed the temple in Jerusalem. And, besides cutting a ribbon with a giant pair of scissors (probably), here's what happened at the dedication ceremony:

When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. The priests could not enter the temple of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled it. When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the

pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever." - 2 Chronicles 7:1-3 (NIV)

Sound familiar? If you were paying attention in session 1, that scene from 957 BC should remind you of this one in 33 AD:

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit... - Acts 2:1-4a

Like the dedication of Solomon's temple, the Pentecost event was a display of the manifest presence of God. Today, when most people come to faith and are indwelt by the Spirit, these fireworks are absent. However, this doesn't make it any less miraculous: the moment you placed your

faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit came to make his home inside you. You are now God's temple.

Don't you realize that all of you together are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Why do you think Paul uses the phrase, "Don't you realize...?" Why would he ask that question?

Paul is writing this to a church, not just to individuals. How does this change your understanding of the passage? What are the implications for when we gather to worship with other believers?

In light of the fear and awe associated with God's presence throughout Israel's history, how do you think the disciples felt when they realized that they were the new temple?

GOING DEEPER **DON'T LIVE LIKE AN ATHEIST**

Whether we deny God's existence or merely his presence, the practical outcome is the same—we live as functional atheists... We may set aside a few moments now and again to think about God, attend a worship service every few weeks, read a verse of scripture on a mug or bumper sticker, or offer a brief prayer for help before a difficult task, but most of our days are spent oblivious to his presence and indifferent to his commands." - *Skye Jethani* ²

Knowing that the Holy Spirit is always with us should make a difference in our lives. For most of us, however, this is not always the case. I don't know about you, but I am so easily distracted by information and entertainment (yes, including podcasts) that I can sometimes go for hours without talking to, listening to, or even thinking about God. But nothing is more vital in the life of a Christian than a growing, intimate relationship with the Lord. And, like any growing relationship, it takes practice.

Over the years, millions of people have turned to the writings of Brother Lawrence, a guy who lived in a French monastery 400 years ago, even though he wasn't technically a monk. I'm assuming it's a long story. Anyway, his writings serve as a helpful guide for developing our intimacy with the Spirit. So, if you want help with not being a functional atheist, go out and buy his book *The Practice of the Presence of God*. For now, try these excerpts on for size:

“The most holy and necessary practice in our spiritual life is the presence of God. That means finding constant pleasure in His divine company, speaking humbly and lovingly with Him in all seasons, at every moment, without limiting the conversation in any way.”

“Simply present yourself to God...and fix your attention on His presence. If your mind wanders at times, don’t be upset, because being upset will only distract you more. Allow your will to recall your attention gently to God...cultivate the holy habit of thinking of Him often.”³

APPLY

My friend Rick talks to God conversationally throughout the day, like He is walking right there beside him on the sidewalk. Do you know anyone like Rick who practices the presence of God? How would you describe this person’s character? Maturity? Faith?

Look back over your life. What evidence of the Spirit’s presence can you remember?

Currently, how vital is God’s presence in your life? What would your life be like without the Holy Spirit? Would it look any different?

How does your life invite other people to encounter the presence of God?

The early church was acutely aware of and desperately dependent upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Why do you think this seems to be more rare today?

PRAY

Use this space to write down prayer requests and answers to prayer.

THE DAILY

THIS WEEK

Read

The Daily

Memorize

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

Practice

Think of activities and circumstances where you can practice the presence of God (e.g. doing the dishes, driving to work, going for a walk, etc). Speak to Him, then listen for what He says to you.

Day 1: Exodus 33:12-17

Why was God's presence so important to Moses? What events/circumstances in Moses' life do you think caused him to know that importance?

In what area of your life do you desire a greater assurance of God's presence?

Day 2: Psalm 27

What was David's first priority in life?

Does verse 4 reflect your desire? If not, take a minute to be honest with the Lord, asking Him to reveal his beauty, goodness, and love to you.

Day 3: 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Why do you think Paul ties the concept of our bodies being God's dwelling place with avoiding sexual sin?

In what other ways can you honor God with your spiritual temple?

Day 4: Psalm 143

Unless you're vehemently opposed to marking up your Bible, underline all the words that convey a desire to be with the Lord.

Pray this Psalm back to God, acknowledging that you get to be in his presence right now.

Choose a couple of verses and rewrite them in your own words as a prayer.

Day 5: 2 Corinthians 3:17 and Psalm 139:7-10

If both of these verses are true, why isn't there freedom everywhere?

(Hint: a better translation of the first verse is "Wherever the Spirit is Lord, there is freedom.")

How have you experienced the Lord's freedom in your life? In what areas do you still need his freedom?

1. Beth Felker Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Living and Thinking Theologically*. Baker Academic, 2014.
2. Skye Jethani, "Psalm 14: We Are All Functional Atheists." *With God Daily*. Measure the Clouds, May 18, 2023.
3. Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Baker Books, 1989.

SESSION FOUR



PURPOSE



PURPOSE

hokkose

“People ask me, ‘Do I need the Holy Spirit to go to heaven?’ Bro, you need the Holy Spirit to go to Walmart.” - *Anonymous*

CONNECT

We’re halfway through our study. How have the last three weeks expanded your understanding of the Holy Spirit?

WATCH - Week 4 video centralsf.org/spirit, and write any questions, observations, or notes on pages 63-66.

ENGAGE

The Holy Spirit is one busy deity. If you were to scan the pages of the New Testament, you’d find a pretty exhaustive list of the Spirit’s accomplishments. But it’s important to note that He is not merely a task-oriented, Type A worker who only cares about the bottom line. All of his roles are performed in the context of relationship; for the purpose of increasing our intimacy, maturity, and love for Jesus. So, whether this is a job description or a résumé, here’s a look at some of the roles the Holy Spirit plays in the life of a believer. As a group, take the next few minutes to look up the following passages and collectively marvel at a few of the Spirit’s career highlights.

- 1. Counselor:** He encourages, comforts, advises, guides, and gives wisdom (John 16:13).
- 2. Adoption Agent:** He assures us that we’re loved and accepted unconditionally because we’re God’s children (Romans 8:15-16).
- 3. Emancipator:** He frees us from spiritual bondage (2 Corinthians 3:17).
- 4. Life-giver:** He brings new vitality to our existence (Romans 8:10-11).
- 5. Gardener:** He produces spiritual fruit in our character (Galatians 5:22-23).
- 6. Gift-giver:** He distributes spiritual gifts for the common good of the church (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).
- 7. Guarantor:** He’s a deposit, ensuring our salvation and inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14).
- 8. Sanctifier:** He gives us new desires and transforms us, making us more like Jesus (Galatians 5:16-17).
- 9. Hype Man:** He glorifies Jesus, pointing people to Him as Savior and Lord (John 16:14).
- 10. Teacher:** He explains spiritual things to us, giving wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).
- 11. Power-source:** He empowers us to serve, give, worship, and witness (the entire book of Acts).

Which of these roles of the Holy Spirit resonates the most with you? Why?

Baptized in the Spirit (He makes you identified with Christ) - 1 Corinthians 12:13

Sealed with the Spirit (He guarantees your salvation) - Ephesians 1:13

So if all these things are already true of us, why do we also have to be filled with the Spirit? Paul answers this for us in his letter to the Galatians:

GOING DEEPER FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Pop quiz: For 100 points, what is the most important command in all of Paul's writings? (Ok, that wasn't fair. Let's make this an open book test.)

It could be argued that, out of all the imperatives that Paul delivers across thirteen different letters in the New Testament, the most important is this: "...be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18b) This requires some explanation.

To "be filled with" something means to be influenced or controlled by that thing. People can be filled with joy or jealousy, rage or compassion. So to be filled with the Spirit means to be directed and empowered by the Spirit. We'll come back to this concept in a moment.

If you are a Christian, several things are true of your relationship with the Holy Spirit. Even if you didn't know it at the time, the Bible says that the moment you came to faith, you were:

Indwelt by the Spirit (He lives inside you) - 1 Corinthians 6:19

How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? - **Galatians 3:3**

One of the dangers of human nature is that we often try to accomplish things through our own effort and strength. This is especially true of the Christian life: instead of depending on the Spirit, we tend to be self-centered and self-reliant, with a wide range of results, from regret and recklessness to pride and prejudice (the vices, not the novel).

Whether you're inclined to be a rule breaker or a rule follower, if you live without relying on the Spirit, you eventually destroy your intimacy with God. When we take the driver's seat, we end up harboring sin in our lives, walking in shame or in pride: shame if we mess things up and pride if we end up succeeding. Whenever we live self-directed lives, we don't lose our relationship with God, but our fellowship with Him is blocked and our prayers are hindered. And Paul says it well in the above verse: that's just foolish.

But the key to restoring intimacy with the Spirit is simpler than you might think:

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. - **Colossians 2:6**

How did we receive Jesus? By repentance and faith. And that's exactly how we're to live with Him. Every. Single. Day. So, in order to renew this intimate reliance on the Spirit, we need to develop a lifestyle of repentance and faith.

One helpful spiritual habit to develop is called "spiritual breathing."¹ No, it doesn't involve yoga mats and gongs. It's simply a way of envisioning and experiencing this lifestyle of dependence, living under the influence of the Spirit.

Exhale: Confess your sin the moment you become aware of it. Agree with God that your sin is wrong and that he has forgiven you by Jesus' death on the cross. And repent, meaning turn your attitude, posture, and behavior from selfishness to gratitude and humility.

Inhale: Surrender control of your life to Christ and—by faith—rely upon the Holy Spirit to direct and empower you.

Being Spirit-filled is not simply a rededication that you make every summer at Bible Camp. It's actually an ongoing lifestyle of living under His influence, yielding to Him and letting Him call the shots. Repent and believe. Turn and trust.

In summary, to be filled with the Spirit doesn't mean you'll heal lepers or leap over tall buildings. It simply means you are directed and empowered by Him, moment-by-moment. Empowered for what? We'll look at that in the next session.

APPLY

There was a lot of content packed into this session. Which of these concepts was confusing? Convicting? Inspiring?

How can you tell if you're filled with the Spirit? How does a self-directed life look different from one directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit? How has this played out in your life?

PRAY

Use this space to write down prayer requests and answers to prayer.

THIS WEEK

Read

The Daily

Memorize

Don't get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit.

- **Ephesians 5:18 (CSB)**

Practice

Carve out some time alone with God to practice spiritual breathing, confessing any sinful attitude or behavior that comes to mind and yielding control over specific areas of your life.

THE DAILY

Day 1: John 3:1-17

What does it mean to be “born of the Spirit?”

What is the Spirit’s role in our salvation?

Day 2: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

In what ways does the Spirit function as a teacher?

How does the contrast of foolishness and wisdom explain why some really smart people don’t understand spiritual things?

Day 3: Ephesians 5:18-21

Why does Paul compare/contrast being drunk with being Spirit-filled?

Why do you think Paul includes instructions on praise in this passage about being filled with the Holy Spirit? What does this say about how our environment influences our spiritual life?

Day 4: Luke 4:16-22

This is the beginning of Jesus's public ministry. Do you see followers of Jesus doing the things mentioned in verses 18-19 today? Why or why not?

If Jesus were here in the flesh today, who would He be spending time with? Pray that the Spirit would guide and empower you to fulfill His mission.

Is there anyone in your relational world who could be described here? How can the Spirit empower you to love them in a practical way this week?

Day 5: Romans 8:1-27

Take some time to let this passage marinate. What is the Spirit's role in our freedom? Our lifestyle? Our identity? Our prayer life?

Sometimes guilt or perfectionism keeps us from intimacy with God. How should the truth of Romans 8:15-17 restore that intimacy?

1. Bill Bright, *Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?* CruPress, 2013.

SESSION FIVE



POWER
BOMBEB

“I don’t want my life to be explainable without the Holy Spirit. I want people to look at my life and know that I couldn’t be doing this by my own power. I want to live in such a way that I am desperate for Him to come through. That if He doesn’t come through, I am screwed.” - Francis Chan¹

CONNECT

If you could have any superpower what would you choose?

WATCH - Week 5 video centralsf.org/spirit, and write any questions, observations, or notes on pages 63-66.

ENGAGE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” - Acts 1:8

One of the words most associated with the Holy Spirit is “power.” From performing miracles (like parting the Red Sea and conquering cities) to equipping prophets, the Spirit’s power is on full display in the Old Testament.²

Even Jesus relied on the power of the Spirit. Jesus was conceived by, led by, empowered by, anointed by, and raised by the Spirit.³

But since none of us are killing lions with our bare hands⁴ or being resurrected on a regular basis, it’s most practical to look to the early church for a model of the Spirit’s empowerment.

The disciples had seemingly everything they needed to continue Jesus’s ministry: three years of teaching and training, plus

undeniable proof of the resurrection, which provided motivation and inspiration. But they were missing one key ingredient...

I will send you the one my Father has promised, but you must stay in the city until you are given power from heaven.

- Luke 24:49 (CEV)

That group of 120 disciples waited on the power of the Holy Spirit. And the results of this empowerment were undeniable. Thousands came to faith. Hundreds were healed. People of different ethnicities and cultures loved each other and served each other in historically radical ways. What started as a group of a few dozen fearful followers eventually became a global movement that literally changed the world. This tidal wave of change could only be explained by one thing: the Spirit of God working powerfully in and through the people of God.

And while we could take an additional three weeks to do this topic justice, let’s attempt it in three passages. (**Note: There are more questions in this session than you’ll have time for, so just pick one or two of your favorites for each passage.**)

Power to serve

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. - **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**

What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

What is the difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents?

Do you know what your spiritual gift(s) is/are? (If not, pay attention to the assignment this week.) See THIS WEEK on page 39.

What are some tangible ways the Holy Spirit can work through you to bless the people around you?

Power to change

I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, we must also follow the Spirit. We must not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

- **Galatians 5:16-18, 22-26 (CSB)**

What does it mean to walk by the Spirit?

How would you define "the desire of the flesh?" How are the flesh and the Spirit opposed to each other?

If Christians have "crucified the flesh," why do we still struggle with sin?

Power to witness

When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. - 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (NIV)

When you hear words like “evangelism” or “witnessing” what emotions are stirred up in you?

The gospel is simply the message of who Jesus is, what He has done, and why it matters. Why would Paul have “resolved to know nothing” except the gospel?

How can the Spirit's power be on display when we share the gospel?

GOING DEEPER

POWER COUPLE

One of the best pictures of life with the Spirit is that of a partnership. And one of the best verses to describe that partnership is right here:

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. - Philippians 2:12b-13

Here's how this partnership plays out: In whatever situation He leads us into, the Holy Spirit gives us the want-to and the how-to. But we don't just sit idly by. We work *out* what He has worked *into* us. Here's what my favorite commentary writer has to say about it:

“The Spirit's work is not independent of our activity or a substitute for our effort, rather, ‘*the Spirit helps us in our weakness*’ (Romans 8:26). He works with us to strengthen our inner being. We do not cause his activity... the power of the Spirit is already working in us. What we seek is our spirit being brought into line with God's Spirit.” - *Klyne Snodgrass*

So, contrary to bumper sticker theology, it's not a good idea to “let go and let God,” especially if you're driving 80 miles an hour down the Interstate. The Spirit won't empower passive people, nor can He steer a parked car. We need to be aware of our need, attentive to God's leading, and ready to be obedient. When it comes to the Spirit-filled life, we are responsible and active in this process, relying on Him for direction and power. He works it in, we work it out.

APPLY

How does thinking of your relationship with the Spirit as a partnership sit with you?

How has God given you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him? Give an example of this partnership in action.

Comparing your life now to a few years ago, how has the fruit of the Spirit been ripening in your life? In other words, how has God been making you more like Jesus?

How often do you get to talk to non-Christians about Jesus? How does it usually go?

PRAY

Use this space to write down prayer requests and answers to prayer.

THIS WEEK

Read

The Daily

Memorize

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

- Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

Practice

If you haven't already, take a spiritual gift inventory at giftstest.com

THE DAILY

Day 1: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-6

The gospel is the good news of who Jesus is, what he has done, and why it matters.

What is the relationship between the gospel and the Holy Spirit?
Why is it important that the gospel comes with power and conviction?

Day 2: Mark 13:9-11

This passage says to not worry about what to say when you're under duress. How has the Spirit given you the right words at the right time?

Day 3: Romans 12:3-8

Which of these gifts are operating in you? How do you know?
What will happen to the Body of Christ if you neglect using your gifts?

Day 4: Ephesians 3:14-21

How does the power of the Spirit increase our intimacy with God?

When have you seen the Spirit strengthen your faith?

Day 5: Romans 15:13-21

How do all three facets of the Spirit's power (power to change, power to serve, and power to witness) come together in this passage? How can this work in tandem in your life?

1. Francis Chan, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*. David C Cook, 2009.
2. Exodus 14:21, Joshua 6:1-21, Micah 3:8
3. Matthew 1:20, Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:14, Luke 4:18, and Romans 8:11
4. Judges 14:6
5. Klyne Snodgrass, "Ephesians." *The NIV Application Commentary*. Zondervan, 1996.

**FOR GOD
HAS NOT
GIVEN US
A SPIRIT
OF FEAR
AND
TIMIDITY,
BUT OF
POWER,
LOVE,
AND
SELF-
DISCIPLINE.**

SESSION SIX



PROHIBITIONS

“In some evangelical churches, we’ve downplayed and neglected the role of the Spirit and elevated biblical truth and theological knowledge in its place. So our alternative Trinity is Father, Son, and Holy Bible.” - *Skye Jethani*¹

CONNECT

This is the last session of *Under the Influence*. If you haven’t already, use this time to discuss your next steps as a group. Are you going to keep meeting? If so, how often and what are you going to cover? If not, what are some other options for people who want to try another long-term LifeGroup? (We’re here to help: centralsf.org/lifegroups)

WATCH - Week 6 video centralsf.org/spirit, and write any questions, observations, or notes on pages 63-66.

ENGAGE

Congratulations! You’ve made it through five sessions that were chock full o’ Spirit. If you’ve completed the daily reading and reflection assignments, you’ve immersed yourself in dozens of passages about the Holy Spirit. Hopefully these last few weeks have helped you encounter, experience, and embrace the ministry of the Spirit.

But we’ve saved some of the most head-scratching passages until the end: the prohibitions. And while it would be ironic in a study called “Under the Influence” to address the nationwide alcohol ban in the 1920s, that’s not the prohibition we’re talking about here. No, we’re simply going to examine a few verses about the Holy Spirit that forbids something.

The format of this session will be unique: instead of reading the commentary up

front, you’ll read the passage and answer the questions first. This is designed just to keep you on your spiritual toes. The goal today is to use what you’ve learned about and experienced with the Spirit to help you engage with scripture together, relying on Him to guide your conversation. Let’s get after it.

Don’t Grieve the Spirit

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

- Ephesians 4:29-32 (NIV)

What kinds of things grieve the Holy Spirit?

And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. - **Ephesians 4:30**

How should our realization that the Spirit can be grieved affect our attitude toward sin? (see 2 Corinthians 7:9-11)

Paul's prohibition is a reference to a passage in the book of Isaiah:

He said, "They are my very own people. Surely they will not betray me again." And he became their Savior. In all their suffering he also suffered, and he personally rescued them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years. But they rebelled against him and grieved his Holy Spirit...

- **Isaiah 63:8-10a**



One of the keys to biblical interpretation is understanding literary, historical, and cultural context. That is certainly true of this passage: Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus to remind them about what Christ has done for them (chapters 1-3) and how they ought to live in light of that (chapters 4-6). Earlier in this chapter, Paul uses the word "walk" several times, meaning "way of life" or "behavior." And in the verses immediately preceding this passage, he uses the metaphor of clothing: take off your former way of life and clothe yourself with a new lifestyle, a new identity of holiness. He gives practical examples of living this out: integrity, forgiveness, generosity, and edification. So *not* walking worthy of our calling, *not* living as redeemed people, would grieve the Spirit. It would be like being gifted a whole new wardrobe from LuluLemon, and then changing back into your nasty clothes that you retrieved from the dumpster. Sad. Here's how the NLT puts it:

Notice the similarities between this passage and the one in Ephesians 4: God saves and redeems us, expecting us to live like redeemed people. So our rebellion causes Him to grieve.

In short, our sin makes the Lord sad. And causing Him sorrow should result in our sorrow, which, in turn, should lead to repentance and faith.

Don't Quench the Spirit

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. - **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 (NIV)**

Other translations of this passage use words like suppress, stifle, extinguish, restrain, or smother. How does this affect your understanding of the passage?

Any ideas about what prophecies Paul is talking about? What might they have to do with quenching the Spirit?



When it comes to the expression of the Holy Spirit, most churches fall somewhere in between two extremes: the Frozen Chosen and the Charismatic Carnival.

Congregations with a Pentecostal bent expect their Sunday services to include speaking in tongues, words of prophecy, spontaneous healings, and expressive worship. On the other hand, churches with a stoic, liturgical tradition would probably have a collective heart attack if someone raised their hands and shouted “Hallelujah!”

It’s hard to know where the Thessalonian church fell on this spectrum. It’s likely that the congregation was composed of converts from local cults, who would have been familiar with all kinds of “ecstatic” activities in the many pagan shrines in their city. These new Christians may have been leery of anything that seemed to be similar to these practices. And one of these manifestations of the Holy Spirit that may have spooked them was the gift of prophecy.

Based on Paul’s description in 1 Corinthians 14, prophecy can be defined as “spontaneous, Spirit-inspired, intelligible messages, orally delivered in the gathered assembly, intended for the edification or encouragement of the people.”² This was

apparently a common practice in early Christian communities. And who wouldn’t want to be publicly edified or encouraged? But apparently, this gathering of brand-new Christians was gun-shy: How were they to know if somebody was speaking a word of Spirit-led prophecy or they were just imitating the wackiness of the Greek, Roman, or Egyptian cults across town?

That’s why Paul gives some good advice. He says, essentially, don’t throw out the baby with the bathwater. Of course, don’t blindly accept anything that is said, but “test” these claims. How? Use spiritual discernment, pray for wisdom, examine each claim to determine if it’s trustworthy or genuine. Does it jive with the teachings of Scripture? Does it strengthen, encourage, or comfort? Then hold onto it. Don’t reject it. Don’t quench the Spirit.

Don’t Blaspheme the Spirit

“So I tell you, every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven—except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will never be forgiven. Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come.” - **Matthew 12:31-32**

Okay, first things first: What the heck is blasphemy?

How does a person blaspheme the Holy Spirit?

Why would blasphemy against the Holy Spirit be unforgivable? Does this mean that if I do it, I would lose my salvation?

Easy, young Grasshopper. Before you lose any sleep over accidentally committing the unforgivable sin, let's be good students of scripture and examine—you guessed it—the context.

Jesus has just healed a demon-possessed man, causing the crowds to wonder if He is the Messiah. The Pharisees, who would totally thrive in our era of false accusations and fake news, accuse Jesus of being in cahoots with Beelzebul, the prince of demons. And Jesus counters by saying, essentially, “Are you kidding me?” He goes on to refute the faulty logic of their argument and warn them that they are tiptoeing on dangerous ground. Jesus is not saying that the Pharisees are toast, but he's cautioning them that they're on the verge of being incapable of repentance.

To blaspheme the Spirit is to flat out reject the divinity of Jesus. And it's only unforgivable because it's a refusal to acknowledge their need for forgiveness. It's a symptom of having hearts that are too hard to repent.

So, can you “accidentally” commit blasphemy against the Spirit? Nope. A person who is so hard-hearted that they

call Jesus's miracles, mission, and message “Satanic” would have no concern for forgiveness. So, ironically, worrying that you may have done something that cuts you off from forgiveness is actually evidence that you believe Jesus is the Messiah and, therefore, you can't blaspheme the Spirit. All that to say, fuhgetaboutit.

APPLY

Although there are plenty of more issues we could cover, now seems like a good time to wrap up this extensive study of the Holy Spirit. Looking back on all the videos, group discussion content, and daily reading assignments, what is one thing that stands out to you? One thing that you're still struggling with and want to explore even deeper? And what one thing are you going to do differently as a result of this study? Take time as a group and incorporate this into your prayer time together.

PRAY

Use this space to write down prayer requests and answers to prayer.

THIS WEEK

Read

The Daily

Memorize

Review the memory verses from the last five weeks. Keep them in your mind and heart, then add more verses from this study to your memory repertoire.

Practice

Spend time at the end of each day taking account of your interactions with the Holy Spirit. Confess anything that could have grieved the Spirit or any time that you have not yielded control to Him. Then thank Him for his work in your life, asking Him to empower and direct you moment by moment.

Spend the next four days examining these verses that contain the phrase “in/by the Spirit.” Take some notes about how you can put these commands into practice, using an online commentary if necessary:

DAY 1

Galatians 5:16

Walk by the Spirit

Romans 8:1

Put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit

DAY 2

1 Corinthians 12:3

Confess Jesus as Lord in the Spirit

Philippians 3:3

Serve by the Spirit

THE DAILY

DAY 3

1 Corinthians 14:16

Give thanks in the Spirit

Galatians 6:1

Restore a wayward brother in the Spirit

DAY 4

Ephesians 6:17-18

Pray in the Spirit

2 Thessalonians 2:13

Sanctification by the Spirit

DAY 5

2 Corinthians 7:9-11

Causing the Lord to experience sorrow should cause us to have godly sorrow. Thank Him for his forgiveness and ask for his power to pursue a life of holiness, humility, and unity.

1. Skye Jethani, *The Holy Post* podcast.

2. Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Writings of Paul*. Baker Academic, 2009.

BONUS QUESTIONS

Feeling like you need to ask yourself more probing spiritual questions? Or maybe your group wants to take an extra week to continue discussing the Holy Spirit. Try these on for size:

The Spirit is most obviously active in situations where people are desperate for Him. Why does our culture make this less common? In other words, is it possible that we're not experiencing the Comforter because our lives are already comfortable? How comfortable is your life? How desperate are you for the Spirit's presence?

By definition, submitting to the Spirit's leading means giving up control. What emotions do you experience when you think about yielding fully to the Holy Spirit? Historically, what has kept you from giving up control?

How have you experienced God's leading in your life? How do you know? Why doesn't God always make it 100% clear? What has the Spirit used in the past to direct you? In what area of your life do you most need Him to lead you right now?

Our lives are often enveloped in noise. What are some things that distract you from intimacy with God? How can you eliminate or minimize these distractions?

What would our city look like if every Christian in the area fully submitted themselves to the Spirit's leading?

APPENDIX

A. MORE HOLY SPIRIT RESOURCES

1.) Books/articles/podcasts

Experiencing the Spirit: The Power of Pentecost Every Day by Henry and Melvin Blackaby

Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit by Francis Chan

God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Writings of Paul by Gordon Fee

How Do We Pray in the Spirit? by John Piper

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-we-pray-in-the-spirit>

How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit by A.W. Tozer

Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Living and Thinking Theologically
by Beth Felker Jones

Satisfied? by Keith Davy

<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/satisfied.html>

The Holy Spirit: An Introduction by John Bevere

“The Holy Spirit Series.” *The Bible Project Podcast*.

<https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series/holy-spirit-series/>

Thirsty: A Devotional on Living a Spirit-Filled Life by Rick James

Who on Earth is the Holy Spirit? by Tim Chester

2.) Great quotes (that just wouldn't fit anywhere else)

“God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.” - *Henry Blackaby*

“Will God ever ask you to do something you are not able to do? The answer is yes—all the time! It must be that way, for God's glory and kingdom. If we function according to our

ability alone, we get the glory; if we function according to the power of the Spirit within us, God gets the glory. He wants to reveal Himself to a watching world.” - *Henry Blackaby*

“If the Spirit is supposed to empower us, why don’t we experience this power more? Why the ineffectiveness, division, and sin? The real problem is that we do not care enough. We do not have the necessary discontent within ourselves that will lead to change.”

- *Klyne Snodgrass*

“There’s nothing better than being absolutely sure that the most powerful Being in the universe adores you as His own child. This is precisely the confidence the Holy Spirit offers us.” - *Francis Chan*

“The Holy Spirit will never impose His will on us. If we refuse to engage with Him, He will be silent...He will not engage us unless we first position ourselves to hear his voice...We are responsible for taking the first step.” - *John Bevere*

“You’re free to be yourself with the Holy Spirit. He knows you inside and out. When you can’t seem to ‘find yourself,’ He can tell you exactly where you are. He permanently abides in you to strengthen, encourage, and guide. Go to Him anytime, anywhere. You cannot weary Him or wear out your welcome.” - *John Bevere*

“If you want to experience the power of the Spirit, read the Bible expectantly, hear it taught reliably, and use it to encourage one another. And ask the Spirit to speak to you. Don’t read the Bible just to learn more about God. Come to Scripture ready to be addressed personally by God.” - *Tim Chester*

“There are good reasons to exercise caution around wild claims about the Spirit’s power, but there are also bad reasons for such caution, especially when that caution is linked to cowardice and pride.” - *Beth Felker Jones*

“Tongues are one gift among many possible gifts of the Spirit, but they are not to be demanded of all Christians...we must respond to the abuse of gifts not with a denial of those gifts but with discernment.” - *Beth Felker Jones*

B. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

Before His ascension to heaven, Jesus gave the Great Commission:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with

you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

Since these were His parting words, it would seem that making disciples is of great importance to Jesus. So, for over 2000 years, the church has been trying to figure out how to do this effectively.

According to a recent study, one of the key predictors of spiritual maturity is participation in a small group. Real transformational discipleship involves moving from sitting in rows (during a weekend service) where you are simply in proximity to one another, to sitting in circles, being in community with one another.

That’s why we value meaningful community. As you are with others, you can give and receive encouragement, wisdom, and accountability to let God work in you and through you. You become a disciple who not only loves and follows Jesus, but also wants to share his love with others.

C. WHAT IS A LIFEGROUP?

A LifeGroup is a Christ-centered group of 8-15 people committed to gather together regularly in an environment of grace and truth to become more like Jesus.

A brief explanation

Christ-centered: The gospel is at the heart of who we are and what we do, knowing that we’re more broken than we care to admit but more loved by God than we can imagine.

8-15 people: Healthy things grow. A group should always be looking to grow in depth, intimacy, maturity, and number. Once it reaches more than 15 people, the group typically seeks to multiply into two groups of 8 in order to have the capacity to involve more people.

Gather regularly: Relationships take quality and quantity time. Meeting weekly (or at least three times per month) helps foster a sense of community.

Grace & truth: Truth gives us the understanding we need to live the Christian life. Grace provides the acceptance & encouragement we need to keep on going. Truth lets people know where you stand. Grace lets people know that you love them.

More like Jesus: Sanctification is a process where we are becoming who God intended—displaying spiritual fruit, doing what Jesus did, and sharing his love with your relational world.

D. LEADING FOR THE FIRST TIME

Facilitating a group is not nearly as difficult as you may fear it is. No one is expecting you to be a spiritual giant. This workbook is designed so that you can come alongside one another as co-learners. This can be as simple as opening your home, reading Scripture and questions aloud, playing a video, and having a conversation from the heart. Trust us, after your first meeting, you'll find that your group will fall into a familiar rhythm and this whole process will become less daunting.

Be sure to use the workbook as a guide, not a straitjacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the one in the lesson, ask it! Your group has the freedom to ask the questions that the Spirit is prompting. Sometimes those can lead to the most useful discussions of all.

If you approach each meeting with prayer and a little preparation, you will find this guidebook easy to use. Know that you are not alone on this journey; as a church we want to support you and your group along the way. Feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you have regarding your group. You can email Central's Community Life Pastor at neil.downey@centralsf.org or call the church office at (605) 336-3378.

Here are a few tips for you as you get ready for your first meeting:

Lead with hospitality: Creating a warm and welcoming environment is the first step of hosting a group. Who doesn't like the idea that someone is expecting them? Keep in mind that for many people, the thought of going to someone's house to have a "spiritual conversation" can be intimidating. It can trigger all kinds of insecurities. Be mindful of this in all your interactions with your group. From email communication to the way you greet them at the door, a warm and welcoming environment will go a long way toward easing their fears.

Learn names quickly: It's ok to use name tags! For new groups, it's especially hard to remember the flood of new names that come rushing at you and you are embarrassed to ask once you get to week three! So, for this six week journey, have name tags available to deepen connection within the group.

Start with Introductions: Especially for week one, hearing stories trumps getting through content. So take time to go around the circle and have everyone introduce himself or herself. Share some of the raw data from their life (family, occupation, etc.) but also include one significant thing about their life that would be good for the group to know about them.

Group Commitment: The key to getting off on the right foot with your group is to appropriately discuss and set expectations. Before you dive into the week one content, you will read through the Group Commitment on page __ and have an opportunity to lay out clear expectations.

E. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When should I reach out for help from the Spiritual Development Team?

Anytime you want! Sincerely, we want to hear from you! Don't feel like it has to be something big or really important to contact us. We love to be a sounding board for you. Call us early. Call us often.

Neil Downey	neil.downey@centralsf.org
Haley Wiggers	haley.wiggers@centralsf.org
Mike Carr	mike.carr@centralsf.org

Is it okay to invite someone to the group who is not a Central attendee?

The short answer is, of course! If the person does not have a home church or doesn't yet have a relationship with Jesus, a group can be a great 'on-ramp' to the Christian faith while providing a good connection to the local church. Joining a group also provides a way to get to know other church members on a deeper level and develop new relationships with neighbors in your area. If the person has a home church, ideally they would get connected in their own church, however, there are times when it may be appropriate to make an exception.

What should we do if a member misses a meeting (or several)?

Define mutual expectations early on with the Group Pact. If attendance becomes an issue with someone in the group, address it with them in person, not via email. Again, in this type of situation, err on the side of grace. Be in a place emotionally where you are more saddened that you didn't get to see the person at your meeting than you are frustrated that they didn't show up. Encourage them that they are a valuable member of the group with good things to contribute.

How long will this group meet?

Your commitment to this group is through the duration of the six-week series. We certainly hope and pray that your group will continue to meet well beyond the length of this campaign, but we are structuring this campaign so that people who have always been

hesitant about getting connected to a group will be able to experience authentic Christ-centered community.

At the end of this study, each group member may decide if he or she wants to continue on for another study. Some groups may launch relationships for years to come. Others might be stepping-stones into another group experience. Either way, enjoy giving it a try for six weeks and appreciate the journey.

If your group decides to continue meeting, you should decide as a group what the next study should be. There are several good ideas for resources at centralsf.org/lifegroups. If you're having trouble deciding, contact us for help.

How often should we meet?

During this series, most groups meet every week. After the campaign, we recommend that LifeGroups meet three weeks a month and take the fourth week off. This works with busy schedules while also helping to maintain a sense of community. We need an occasional break, but we also need to be intentional with one another.

Some groups choose to meet every other week. One of the challenges of meeting every other week is that if someone misses, it will be a month since you have met with them. Therefore, groups that meet every other week will need to be intentional about looking for additional ways to build a sense of community.

What if this group is not working for us?

You're not alone! This could be the result of a personality conflict, life stage difference, geographical distance, or any number of things. Relax. Pray for God's direction, and at the end of this six-week study, decide whether to continue with this group or find another. You don't typically buy the first car you look at or marry the first person you date, and the same goes with a group. However, don't bail out before the six weeks are up—God might have something to teach you. Also, don't run from conflict or prejudge people before you have given them a chance. God is still working in their lives, too!

Who is the leader?

Most groups have an official leader. But ideally, the group will mature and members will rotate the leadership of meetings. We have discovered that healthy groups rotate hosts or leaders and homes on a regular basis. This model ensures that all members grow, give their unique contribution, and develop their gifts. This workbook and the Holy Spirit can keep things on track even when you rotate leaders. Christ has promised to be in your

midst as you gather. Ultimately, God is your leader each step of the way. (Yeah, it sounds a little cheesy, but it really is true.)

How do we handle the childcare needs in our group?

Very carefully. Seriously, this can be a sensitive issue. We suggest you empower the group to openly brainstorm solutions. You may try one option that works for a while and then adjust over time. Our favorite approach is for adults to meet in the living room or dining room and to share the cost of a babysitter (or two) who can watch the kids in a different part of the house. This way, parents don't have to be away from their children all evening when their children are too young to be left at home.

A second option is to use one home for the kids and a second home for the adults. This works extremely well if the homes are within a few blocks of each other. Another option is to make your own arrangements for childcare. No matter what decision the group makes, the best approach is to dialogue openly about solutions.

F. DISCUSSION GUIDE (THE ANSWERS)

Before each session, familiarize yourself with the passage, the main concepts, and the questions. If your group gets stumped or seems to go off track, the following might help keep them moving in the right direction.

SESSION 1: PROMISE

What promises are made in these verses? To whom are they made?

The main promise is that the Spirit will transform people, giving them new motives and new desires, meaning obedience to the Lord will be out of love instead of obligation. The mention of visions and wonders indicates that there will be no doubt about the divine source of this spiritual outpouring, resulting in the salvation of all who believe.

What is symbolized by hearts of stone and hearts of flesh?

Stubborn, rebellious people will become tender and sensitive to God's leading.

What do these passages tell us about the role of the Holy Spirit?

He is the presence and power of God on earth, resulting in signs and wonders. He is the agent of true inward life change.

SESSION 2: PERSON

What attributes of personhood does Jesus say the Advocate possesses?

The Counselor/Advocate convicts, guides, speaks, hears, glorifies, makes known.

Why would Jesus say that we're better off without Him? What does this imply about the Holy Spirit?

Because the Holy Spirit is God and is not restrained by human limitations, He is omnipresent (everywhere), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipotent (all-powerful). He indwells each person, empowering and directing us to live the abundant life that Jesus promised.

What are some of the consequences of seeing the Holy Spirit as just a power? What difference does it make to see Him as God?

If the Holy Spirit is just a power (like "the Force") we will view Him as a commodity, something to be manipulated for our own good (like Simon the Sorcerer did in Acts 8:18-24). But if He is God, we'll want to yield our lives to His will, grateful that we can have an intimate relationship with Him.

The Trinity is a mind-numbing mystery. What other mysteries about God do you wrestle with?

Responses might include the incarnation of Jesus (How is He both fully God and fully man?), the sovereignty of God vs the free will of people, and how prayer affects God's will.

How has your growing understanding of the Holy Spirit changed your relationship with God?

Responses could range from increased intimacy, assurance, and dependence to a realization that the more we know the more we realize how much we don't know.

SESSION 3: PRESENCE

Why do you think Paul uses the phrase, "Don't you realize...?" Why would he ask that question?

The people in Corinth apparently didn't realize the reality of the situation. God lived inside them. Therefore, if they were mistreating their body, they were abusing His dwelling place. They were acting in a way that wasn't in line with the truth of the gospel, so Paul was rhetorically asking, "Don't you get it?"

Paul is writing this to a church, not just to individuals.

How does this change your understanding of the passage? What are the implications for when we gather to worship?

We don't function in a solo capacity. The church—the gathering of people united in Christ—isn't just a family but the place where God lives. But the Spirit isn't confined to a building because the church is the people.

In light of the fear and awe associated with God's presence throughout Israel's history, how do you think the disciples felt when they realized that they were the new temple?

They probably felt humility, thankfulness, and an overwhelming sense of privilege and responsibility to honor God with their lives.

My friend Rick talks to God conversationally throughout the day, like He is walking right there beside him on the sidewalk. Do you know anyone like Rick who practices the presence of God? How would you describe their character? Maturity? Faith?

Allow a few people to share about a person in their life.

Look back over your life. What evidence of the Spirit's presence can you remember?

Answers could include spiritual fruit, spiritual gifts, increased understanding, etc.

Currently, how vital is God's presence in your life? What would your life be like without the Holy Spirit? Would it look any different?

Allow for vulnerability and honesty.

The early church was acutely aware of and desperately dependent upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Why do you think this is more rare today?

Distraction, overreliance on resources (wealth, talent), relative lack of persecution, etc.

SESSION 4: PURPOSE

Which of these roles of the Holy Spirit resonates the most with you? Why?

Allow a few people to share. Try to get a variety of responses.

There was a lot of content packed into this session. Which of these concepts was confusing? Convicting? Inspiring?

Don't feel the need to explain confusing concepts on the spot. Agree as a group how to find more clarity by next session.

How can you tell if you're filled with the Spirit? How does a self-directed life look different from one directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit? How has this played out in your life?

A Spirit-filled person will exhibit spiritual fruit, relying on the Holy Spirit for wisdom, submitting their will to God's.

SESSION 5: POWER

What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

The gifts of the Spirit are for the edification and service of the body of Christ. They are never to be used for personal gain.

What is the difference between spiritual gifts and natural talents?

Plenty of non-Christians are patient and kind. The difference is a Christian should be growing in all these areas to a supernatural degree.

Do you know what your spiritual gift(s) is/are? (If not, see THIS WEEK on page 39.)

Have people state their gifts. Also, refer them to the link to the online inventory.

What are some tangible ways the Holy Spirit can work through you to bless the people around you?

There are literally dozens of service opportunities that provide an opportunity for us to use our gifts. Try to come up with a few inside the church and a few outside.

What does it mean to walk by the Spirit?

To walk by or in the Spirit means to develop a lifestyle of sensitivity to and dependence on the Holy Spirit, experiencing intimacy with Him and relying on His abundant resources. It is a deep trust/faith/belief that His plans are best and living in light of that.

How would you define “the desire of the flesh?” How are the flesh and the Spirit opposed to each other?

This doesn't have to be a blatantly evil thing; it can also be wanting the right thing for the wrong reasons (like memorizing scripture so you'll appear more spiritual or smart). Whether it's active rebellion or passive indifference, anything we do that is guided by our self-centered desires is contrary to the Spirit, who wants to glorify Jesus.

If Christians have “crucified the flesh,” why do we still struggle with sin?

The flesh (our unhealthy patterns of meeting our own needs apart from God) doesn't ever stay dead. While we're free from the penalty of sin, we're not totally free from its power or presence. We must continue to live in the power of the Spirit to keep putting the flesh to death.

When you hear words like “evangelism” or “witnessing” what emotions are stirred up in you?

Answers could range from fear and inadequacy to excitement and commitment.

The gospel is simply the message of who Jesus is, what He has done, and why it matters. Why would Paul have “resolved to know nothing” except the gospel?

That way, he could rest assured that people weren't drawn to him but to Jesus.

How can the Spirit's power be on display when we share the gospel?

If our speech isn't eloquent or clever, using rhetorical tools and persuasive language, but simply connecting with people at a heart level because of the beauty of the gospel, that's the power of the Spirit at work.

How does thinking of your relationship with the Spirit as a partnership sit with you?

Hopefully it's a balance between relief and responsibility, knowing that we can't be passive but that the results don't depend on us.

How has God given you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him? Give an example of this partnership in action.

Allow a few people to share.

Comparing your life now to a few years ago, how has the fruit of the Spirit been ripening in your life? In other words, how has God been making you more like Jesus?

Allow for a few people to respond.

How often do you get to talk to non-Christians about Jesus? How does it usually go?

Allow a few people to share stories.

SESSION 6: PROHIBITIONS

What kind of things grieve the Holy Spirit?

Any symptoms of selfishness or disunity (like the list of things in Ephesians 4) would grieve the Spirit.

How should our understanding that the Spirit can be grieved affect our attitude toward sin?

We should never want to grieve God's heart. Take a moment to read 2 Corinthians 7:9-11 for a biblical response.

Other translations of this passage use words like suppress, stifle, extinguish, restrain, or smother. How does this impact your understanding of the passage?

Even though the Holy Spirit is the all-powerful God of Creation, somehow we can snuff out His activity in our lives like a candle. The Spirit never forces Himself upon us but invites our cooperation.

What are these prophecies that Paul is talking about? What do they have to do with quenching the Spirit?

Prophecy is a spiritual gift. If a person speaks prophetically from the Spirit in a public setting, it's for the encouragement and edification of the people. If people leading a worship service shut down what the Spirit wants to communicate, they're quenching His work in that moment.

Okay, first things first: What the heck is blasphemy?

"The act of cursing, slandering, reviling, or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God...It was a violation of the Third Commandment, which required that the name and reputation of the Lord be upheld (Ex. 20:7). The unbelieving Jews of Jesus' day charged Him with blasphemy because they thought of Him only as a man while He claimed to be God's Son (Matt. 9:3)"¹

How does a person blaspheme the Holy Spirit?

By attributing the work of Jesus to Satan, thereby rejecting Him as Savior.

Why would blasphemy against the Holy Spirit be unforgivable? Does this mean that if I do it, I would lose my salvation?

It's only unforgivable because that person is so hard-hearted that they are incapable of repentance and don't want to be forgiven. No, you can't lose your salvation.

Although there are plenty of more issues we could cover, we're at the end of this extensive study of the Holy Spirit. Looking back on all the videos, group discussion content, and daily reading assignments, what is one thing that stands out to you? One thing that you're still struggling with and want to explore even deeper? And what one thing are you going to do differently as a result of this study?

Allow several people to share. Since this is the last question of the entire study, do an all-play if there's time.

1. Herbert Lockyer, Sr. *Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible*. Thomas Nelson, 1997.

*Helping you share the love of **Jesus**
with your relational world.*



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