

Way of Discipleship Small Groups

Who is the Holy Spirit?

How do I respond to the Spirit?



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

What do you feel about the Holy Spirit? Why?



Understanding the information (30 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

How is it that God can be with each person, and in each place, throughout time and space? How can God act in the world?



From the beginning of the Bible, it is through the Holy Spirit that God carries out every aspect of His purposes. It is the Holy Spirit who is the agent of God's mission and the way in which God is present to us. He is God's personal and empowering presence. No aspect of God's mission is possible without God's Spirit.

It is good to know as well that the Holy Spirit is not only an invisible "power", but a person who helps, strengthens, cries out from within our hearts, knows our own spirits, prays for us, works things together for good, and creates the character of God in us, known as the fruits of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is more than personal, but also not less than personal.

The Holy Spirit is a divine and a distinct person. Yet the Holy Spirit only works to point us to the Father or the Son. He is 'God behind the scenes', acting anonymously, meaning we are never directly aware of the Holy Spirit, but His presence will make us more aware of the Father or Son. Jesus said the Spirit will "testify about me." (John 15:26) In one way, if we find the Holy Spirit hard to relate to, it is perhaps a sign that what really matters is that He is helping us see the Father, through the Son, even more clearly.

So even while we honour the Holy Spirit as a distinct person it is consistent to know the Spirit in our lived experience as the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Paul talks about the “Spirit of Christ” three times, and the “Spirit of God” 16 times. Nevertheless, as the Bible progresses there is an increasing move to celebrating the Spirit as “Holy” as the normal way of addressing the Spirit. **The Spirit’s holiness is not about distance, but about a uniqueness** – in being the only one who creates life as a distinct person.

Practices such as prayer, worship, or stillness can become opportunities for us to allow the Holy Spirit to influence the desires of our hearts, and to change our character to become more like Christ. Jesus’ whole life and ministry was led by the Holy Spirit.

While most Christians know that we need God’s Spirit to empower us, we might have different understandings and expectations about how this might happen, and what our experience can be.

Some expect there to be two distinct stages, in which someone can be baptised in the Spirit at a later stage to coming to faith.

Some might emphasise being filled with the Spirit as an ongoing journey and not a once-for-all experience (“Keep on being filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18))

Others might emphasise that a disciple receives the Holy Spirit when they first say they have faith in Christ

While these differences can cause confusion, and at worst a reluctance to seek the Holy Spirit, Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit as the best gift anyone can receive saying, “...how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” (Luke 11) The Holy Spirit is promised to every disciple – there are not different levels of Christian.

The way that people are empowered by the Holy Spirit who “blows where it pleases” fittingly resists formulas. There are three ways in which the New Testament describes how the Holy Spirit comes to us, but they all speak of a complete dependence on Him. We can be baptised with the Spirit, clothed with the Spirit be full of the Holy Spirit or be filled by the Spirit. People and communities experience the Holy Spirit in different ways. “The Spirit blows where it pleases.” (John 3:8)

The Spirit can come upon people. He can fall upon people. He can be poured out on people. We are constantly encouraged to depend on the Spirit: “eagerly desire spiritual gifts”. (1 Corinthians 14:1) Paul assumes that it is possible for us to be in step with the Spirit, but also to get out of step with the Spirit.

If we want to be individuals or communities who seek to be a blessing empowered by God’s Holy Spirit, these questions may help keep us open:

How am I or how are we receiving from God before we give?

Am I/are we experiencing a balance between my/our effort and relying on God?

Do I/we have the humility to know that it is God’s work that matters and not mine/ours?

Where am I/are we stepping out into situations in which I/we need His Spirit?

Am I/are we prepared to give space to wait for God before acting?

Am I/are we open to being used by God for His purposes?

Am I/are we thirsty for His presence?

Am I/are we able to trust God's love and goodness so much that I/we can surrender to His control?

Discuss: Which of these questions speaks most to you? Why?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read John 14: 15-27 in which Jesus promises the Holy Spirit.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:

What does this passage teach me about God?

What does this passage teach me about people?

How does this passage call me to obey God?

What might I do in response to this this week?



Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

<https://youtu.be/vHYd1vKR-a4>

What struck you as important in the video?



Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



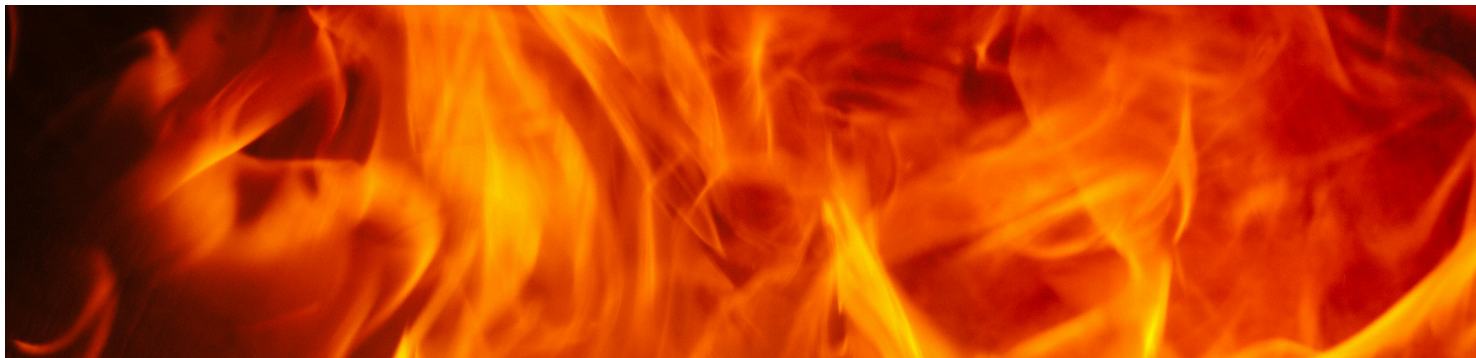
Group prayer (5 minutes)

Living God, present in all things and all places.
Help me to know that wherever I may go today
You will always be with me.
May Your Spirit rest within me
making me more like you
so that wherever I am present
people may sense that You are present.
Though You are everywhere
be in the world today through me.
May my actions be a demonstration of Your love;
My words the vehicle of Your counsel;
My attitude an expression of Your nature;
My concerns a reflection of Your heart.
And help me Lord not to pray
that I may be kept from hostile places
but rather that in their darkness
Your light may shine through me.
Amen.





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