



RESOURCES

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS...



CONTENTS



This series is all about the Holy Spirit. Among other questions we will explore: Who is the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit work? Why is it important to pursue the Holy Spirit's activity in my life? Throughout this series we will discuss, reflect and experience the Holy Spirit in new ways.

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WEEK 1

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE LOVE OF GOD

NOTE: It is essential we explore this area of Christian faith with the utmost care and consideration for all types of experience and knowledge and allow for people to make steps towards an increase of the Holy Spirit's impact on their everyday christian living.

Whilst it may be tempting to convince everyone that your way of experiencing the Holy Spirit is the best way, please be aware that the Holy Spirit is a person who relates to each person individually and uniquely and so do make sure to create a safe and encouraging atmosphere in the discussions.

ICE-BREAKER

Gather into small groups with a page of A4 paper between each group and some pens. Write 'HOLY SPIRIT' in the middle of the page.

Ask the groups to write as many words as possible they associate with the Holy Spirit.

Ask the groups to share each of their words. As each word is mentioned, ask the other groups to cross that word out if they share the word in common. As words are finally mentioned that no other group has said, explore those words further.

Why do those words make you think of the Holy Spirit?

Where in the bible have you seen that word in action?

Does anyone have any experience of that word in their own life that they would equate to the Holy Spirit at work?

WEEK 1

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE LOVE OF GOD

REFLECT

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

Galatians 5:22-23

As we begin to approach who the Holy Spirit is, it is important to know the impact the Holy Spirit has. Like a person you are interviewing for a job, you can know lots about them based on their C.V but until we know the impact that person has, there is an unknown element as to that person's suitability for the role.

Paul, the writer of most of the letters in the new testament, is contrasting the Holy Spirit with primal instincts of humans. See how he starts this passage 'But, the fruit of the Spirit...' The Holy Spirit is a like a multi-faceted diamond that displays all of these qualities at once. Often, we like to separate them and ask questions such as 'which of the fruits of the Spirit do you struggle with?' However, Paul leaves us no option to ask such a question. The Holy Spirit shows all its fruit at once and the more we ask the Holy Spirit to change us, the more that fruit, which looks like all these things, will be displayed in our own hearts.

As a group discuss: Why do you think Paul suggests that against any of these things 'there is no law'?

RESPOND In groups discuss these questions:

Which part of the fruit of the Spirit do you find most challenging?

What part do you think others see in you?

What part is your work/home/social groups in need of most?

What can you do in the next week to allow that part of the fruit to grow in those areas?

RECEIVE Take time to sit and reflect on which fruits of the Holy Spirit highlights to you personally.

Have everyone share what fruit God has highlighted to them. Have people who have chosen a fruit of the Spirit congregate together. For instance, if three people choose joy have those people as one group. Once you've broken into teams take the time to pray for each other. That you'd also see that fruit grow in your life - pray specifically.

For smaller groups. Break off into groups of three (irrelevant of which fruit has been highlighted to you) and pray for one another.

WEEK 2

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE POWER OF GOD

Last week we opened our 'Holy Spirit Is' series by looking at the fruits of the Spirit as described in Galatians. We discussed the ways in which we can know the Holy Spirit, reflected on how we are transformed by the Holy Spirit and what fruits of the Spirit others may see in us.

During last session's ice-breaker some in the group might have described the Holy Spirit as the power of God (Luke 24:49), which will be today's focus.

ICE-BREAKER

Break into groups of twos and threes to start a discussion on thoughts and feelings we associate with POWER.

What is the most powerful natural event you've ever witnessed? A lightning storm, waves breaking on a beach, a freak hailstorm. What did it make you feel?

What is the most powerful human event you've ever witnessed? A large crowd at a festival or protest, standing in a stadium for a sporting event. What did it make you feel?

Throughout the Bible we see stories about the power of God being displayed in great ways: Creation, Moses and the Red Sea or Elijah versus the prophets of Baal. The miracles of Jesus showed the power of God in unprecedented ways and we still see those miracles happening around the world today.

REFLECT

'Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.' Acts 2:2

This week we're going to look at Acts 2 following on from the events of Pentecost. Acts 2 records the birth of the early church; the disciples had been waiting for the Holy Spirit since Jesus had ascended into heaven, some of his final words being 'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you' (Acts 1:8). The followers of Jesus were together in the early hours of the morning when a violent wind thunders through the house and tongues of fire land on each person's head (just as John the Baptist had prophesied in Matthew 3:11).

The followers begin to move in the gift of tongues - which Paul describes 1 Corinthians 12. Read through the list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12.

WEEK 2

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE POWER OF GOD

Have you seen any of these gifts apparent in your life or those around you?
Are there any of the gifts that you'd like to ask God for?

Church history has seen the power of God demonstrated in numerous ways. In 1904-05, the Welsh Revival took place; it saw the presence of God sweep across Wales and thousands of people convert to Christ. Encounters with the Holy Spirit were commonplace with hundreds of healings being recorded. However, movements of witnessing God and His power often divide opinion. As the disciples spoke in tongues some people were 'bewildered' and others 'mocked them'. There will be soft-hearted and hard-hearted people in each of our lives, who will respond differently to the Spirit at work in our lives. As a group, discuss: Are there any receptive people in our lives, open to hearing about the power of God and Jesus?

RESPOND In groups discuss these questions:

Has anyone ever been left feeling 'bewildered' by the Holy Spirit?

What would it look like to see God's power active and moving in our society today?

What can you do to practice the gifts of the Spirit in your life?

RECEIVE Connect Groups are wonderful training grounds for us to practice the gifts of the Spirit. They give a safe space for us to step outside of our comfort zone in faith.

Give plenty of time at the end of your meeting for a time of prayer and listening.

Ask small groups to choose from the following areas to pray into further:

- Anyone who needs healing
- Seeking a prophetic word from God.

If you are praying for healing: Pray boldly. Check in with the individual once you've prayed with them. Ask them if praying has made a noticeable difference or if they feel anything happening in their body. Asking these questions can very quickly increase faith.

If you're prophesying: Start by NOT asking the person what they want prayer for. Ask the Lord what He thinks about that person. Offer what you think God has said. When you have finished praying, ask the person if anything that was said resonated. This is to help the people praying to hone their prophetic skills.

WEEK 3

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE PRESENCE OF GOD

In the past weeks we've reflected on the fruits of the Holy Spirit, the power of God in the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the ways in which we can share them. In today's concluding session we're going to look at the presence of God in the Holy Spirit, and how we approach the spirit in worship.

ICE-BREAKER Get into pairs to discuss the following points:

How do you like to make decisions? Are you more a 'thinker' or a 'feeler'? Do you have a preference for objective principles and impersonal facts or for personal concerns and people involved? How easy is it for you to do something because it's good or true, even if you don't feel like it?

Can you think of a time where you found it hard to worship? It could be a Sunday service where you didn't feel you could join in the songs, or a time when prayer felt trickier than before. What do you think was the cause?

REFLECT

'We live in a world that tells us to put ourselves first, but worship reminds us it's not just about us. We were made to magnify, amplify, and mirror our Creator.'

Matt & Beth Redman

The worship of God is both an invitation and a command (Matthew 4:8-10), a response and a prayer. It's a countercultural event; while the world says everything revolves around us, our needs, our frustrations, in worship we are able to offer a different story: everything revolves around God.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. - Acts 16:25

From the moment it is poured out in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit is active and powerful, leading characters into scenarios and situations that wouldn't leave many of us wanting to sing songs and give praise to God. The early church is challenged over and over again to put God and His plans first in the face of hardship and opposition, to rely upon the Spirit - God in us - to see His plans fulfilled and achieved.

WEEK 3

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE PRESENCE OF GOD

As a group or in threes, read Acts 16:16-40. A deeply unjust series of events leads to Paul and Silas being placed in prison: they're dragged before authorities, they're falsely accused of advocating 'unlawful' customs, they're stripped, beaten with rods and have their feet placed in stocks – and then they praise.

Reflect on the following questions together:

- How would you feel in Paul and Silas's position? Would worship come easily to you?
- Why do you think Paul and Silas worshiped in the prison?
- What impact do you think Paul and Silas's singing had on the jailer?

RESPOND

'The Holy Spirit is not just God for you, it's not just God with you - it's God in you.'

- Matt & Beth Redman

As we turn ourselves to worship we can often make it a moment that's about us; are we feeling in the mood to give praise to God? Are we more focused on life's frustrations rather than its opportunities? Do we like the words of the songs our church is using? Rather than giving God the glory, we can start to make the process about us, our feelings, our failings.

God invites us to come to Him as we are, in our brokenness and our weakness, in the good days and the bad. God longs to pour out His Spirit to all people, to transform us with His presence; in Acts 10:44-48, Gentiles are filled with the Holy Spirit in response to hearing Peter preach the Gospel for the first time, speaking in tongues and praising God in the very moment of their conversion.

Break into small groups to respond to the following:

- Where do you face hardship or frustration?
- What would it look like to be able to worship in that place as Paul and Silas did?
- What would it look like to seek the presence of God more actively in your day?
- How can worship play a part in that?

RECEIVE

Close this session with an extended time of worship, with either a worship leader / playlist or video.

Pray as a group before worshiping, to be led by the Holy Spirit in your praise and response.

Offer an opportunity for your group to receive prayer for anything that came up during the 'Respond' discussion: would anyone like prayer to help them worship with renewed freedom? Would anyone like to be filled with the Spirit as those in Acts 10, to give praise to God out of the overflow of His presence?