

THE HOLY SPIRIT

As a result of this study, we hope the participants will

[Learning Objectives]

- observe the remarkable frequency with which Luke refers to the arrival, filling and work of the Holy Spirit in ordinary people's lives
- discover the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit in several Old Testament examples
- recognize the difference between the Spirit showing up when needed and the Spirit coming to abide in the believer permanently
- be able to identify signs of the Spirit's presence and activity, including faith, joy, and commitment to God's will
- welcome the appearance and movement of the Holy Spirit in their personal lives
- feel caution and a need for "testing the Spirit" as they learn how to listen for the Spirit's input in their lives

[Process Objectives]

- develop skills in the inductive method of Bible study, by gleaning information from Scripture, piecing together clues from both OT and NT to develop a basic understanding of the Holy Spirit and gaining confidence in application to real life
- begin to think theologically about God's ongoing presence and activity in their lives
- desire to make the time commitment to prepare for the next lesson

[Relational Objectives]

- support one another in the discernment of the Spirit's guidance
- show a growing love and concern for each other

NOTES RELATED TO THE PERSONAL STUDY QUESTIONS (PAGES 10-13)

The Spirit's interaction with people in the time before Christ came is different from what has been possible since Jesus Christ's arrival. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit comes upon people (or fills them) when a particular task needs the Spirit's help or inspiration. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit comes to abide with a person, changing that person's character and shaping him or her spiritually. The OT Holy Spirit is a temporary help; the NT Holy Spirit is a permanent guest in one's heart. We get the impression from the data that the Holy Spirit is positive and joyful and enjoys celebrating God's work in the world. The Holy Spirit is available to all believers as this reassuring, abiding presence; and when necessary, the Holy Spirit can make us very uncomfortable until we confess sin, engage in a godly action, or obey a clear direction God has given.

PAGE 26 NOTES:

The Holy Spirit is very active in the first few chapters of Luke's gospel. As personal emissary of God to lowly people, the Holy Spirit fills, blesses, empowers, and informs those who are willing to be led by God's Spirit. Joy results, hymns abound, and God gets the credit!

PAGE 27 NOTES:

The Holy Spirit is also a key presence and power in the life of Jesus Christ. The Spirit is present at Jesus' baptism (bringing the Trinity—Father, Son, and Spirit—into one scene together). If it hadn't been for the Spirit, I doubt Jesus would make it out of the desert retreat alive; but with the Spirit, Jesus is strengthened and inspired to withstand the wiles of the devil. The Holy Spirit anoints Jesus for his mission, and provides delightful joy when the 70 disciples return from their mission trip with a great report. The Holy Spirit appears to be the critical and essential agent of God's knowledge, grace and power, for the people playing a part in God's salvation story and for Jesus himself accomplishing the mission assigned by his heavenly Father.

PAGE 28 NOTES:

The Old Testament evidence of the Spirit's work suggests that the Holy Spirit approaches for the purpose of empowering a particular task. He is present for the Creation, hovering over the void. He empowers the craftsmen who build the Tabernacle. He helps Gideon stand in strength against a mighty army and prevail. But once the task is over, the Holy Spirit takes off again. The most striking difference between the Spirit in the OT and in the NT is "duration of stay." In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit enters in and fills the person, and stays as the abiding presence of Jesus Christ inside us. In the NT and today, the Holy Spirit not only empowers action but changes hearts!

PAGE 29 NOTES:

The purpose of these questions is to give the learners an opportunity to observe the Holy Spirit in action and perhaps to recognize new ways the Spirit has been around all along. Qualities and characteristics produced in a person by the Spirit can include bringing order out of chaos (Gen 1), producing joy (Luke), increasing creativity (Exodus), giving strength and courage (Judges), and increase faith (Luke 1-Zechariah).

We are careful here to realize that the Holy Spirit is not in the business of leading people to do things that are contrary to God's revealed will. Jesus' encounter with Satan in the desert (Luke 4) demonstrates this beautifully. If a person in your group attributes to the Spirit's leading something identified in the Scripture as sin, the error must be pointed out in as loving a way as possible. You can say, "I know you feel that the decision you made was a good one, but it is possible to believe it was good for you without suggesting that the Holy Spirit led you in that direction." This may seem like a fine point, but it becomes relevant in the last small group question on page 30.

NOTES RELATED TO THE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (PAGES 30)

Open your meeting with a short prayer of thanks for what Christ is doing in you and the members of your group, and ask for the Holy Spirit to be your teacher today.

PAGE 30 NOTES:

The first question regarding the Holy Spirit's activities should lead your people to list actions of the Spirit discovered in their Scripture digging on pages 26 and 27. "Fill," "increase faith," "work a miracle," "overshadow," "make joyful," etc. are all ideas. The question of whether the Spirit still does these things is a good one—don't overlook it. The obvious dilemma is, if one has not seen evidence of this activity, is this because the Spirit has withdrawn or because one is not receptive to the Spirit's presence?

The speculation about what would have happened if Jesus had not enjoyed the constant presence of the Spirit is intended to get people thinking about the inextricable and intimate relationship the Triune God has. The discussion should ask the questions about what it would have been life if the Spirit wasn't there at Jesus' baptism, wasn't there in the desert temptation, wasn't there when Jesus spoke in the synagogue. What would have happened? What difference did the Spirit make? The application question to follow is meant to help you imagine what could happen if the Holy Spirit invaded *your* life too. Or, if the learner has been a Christian for many years to see where the Spirit has been at work all along.

The questions on the bottom of page 30 are critically important for the church today. Gordon T. Smith wrote a book called *The Voice of Jesus*. In its introduction, he observes that there are two questions every Christian needs to be able to answer: 1) what is Jesus saying to you? and, 2) How do you know it's Jesus?

The bottom line is that the Spirit speaks consistently in a life-giving, even surgically clean way to instruct, convict of sin, correct, guide, and define godliness. The devil seeks to destroy, to deceive, to discourage, and to confuse. The world tries to entice our thoughts and affections away from God and onto things, power, or feelings. Any one of these dynamics can produce guilt: the world can make you feel guilty for not conforming to its pleasures; the devil can make you feel guilty by heaping on blame and causing hopelessness and shame; the Holy Spirit can make you feel guilty, too, but always in a way that points to the hope of forgiveness and transformation in Jesus Christ. If feelings of guilt can't really be pinned down to anything specific and only succeed in making you feel bad, the devil is trying to paralyze you. But if feelings of guilt go to a particular action or habit, with hope for release and God's forgiveness, confess the sin you have become aware of, repent (turn away from it and purpose to do something else that is pleasing to God) and receive the Spirit's power to prevail over it!

4 — *Understanding Jesus in the World of Luke*

The Holy Spirit's work is "new" in the sense that he is active every day in every way dealing with the new situations we create. [Illustration: A teacher may teach the same course every quarter, but the class is a new experience each time because the students are new.] The Holy Spirit's work is unchanging in that the Spirit does not add to the revelation already embodied in Jesus Christ and given witness in the Scripture. The Holy Spirit is not writing a new book or developing new doctrine, nor is he disembodied from the other two persons of the Trinity to act independently. What God has said, the Spirit seals to our hearts. What Jesus has done is applied to us, "because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:5).

CLOSING PRAYER TIME

Try a new structure your prayer time by using the "ACTS" outline:

A—Adoration: give praise to God for the obvious and the subtle things he has done for you

C—Confess: admit your need for the Spirit's deep reach into your life

T—Thank: express gratitude to your Savior Jesus Christ for sending his Spirit to empower you and change your character.

S—Supplicate: Ask God for the instruction, inspiration, empowerment and equipping of the Holy Spirit in specific situations that need divine enablement.