

THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS

+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. The Holy Spirit convicts the world (John 16:7-11).
2. The Holy Spirit guides toward truth (John 16:12-14; 1 Cor. 2:14).
3. The Holy Spirit leads God's people (Rom. 8:12-17).

Background Passages: John 16; Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 2

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

The Holy Spirit begins the work of salvation through the ministry of conviction and then continues by guiding the person toward truth and leading those who trust in Christ.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

After Jesus completed His work of paying for sin on the cross, He returned to be with the Father, but sent the Holy Spirit. The Spirit convicts people of sin and guides them to truth so that they might trust in Christ and be saved. The Spirit then continues ministering to the believer by leading them and attesting to their newfound life through Jesus.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we have been saved by God, we seek to fulfill our mission of sharing the gospel—trusting not in our own power, but in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to change lives.

GROUP TIME

Group content found in the Daily Discipleship Guide is included in the shaded areas throughout the session.



SCRIPTURE HANDOUT

Scan this QR code for a reproducible handout of this session's Scripture passages.

INTRODUCTION

ASK: As participants arrive, ask: **If you could have a superpower, what would it be?** (expect answers that may be serious, “The ability to get all my work done in a day,” as well as silly, “I would like to fly”; you can follow up the question and ask how that power would help them in life)

TRANSITION: When Christ sent the Holy Spirit to empower His disciples, He gave them a supernatural ability to live for Him and to fulfill His purposes in their lives. The Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers of their need to follow Jesus and leads believers to become more like Christ.

SUMMARIZE: Help your group understand the **setting** for this session.

- The Old Testament prophets promised a day when the Spirit of God would dwell in God's people (Isa. 44:1-5; Ezek. 36:22-32; Joel 2:28-32), and Jesus modeled a life with the Spirit's presence and power (Luke 4:1,18; Matt. 12:28). Jesus promised that the Spirit would come (John 14:16-17,26; 16:7) and the church experienced this arrival at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Today, the Holy Spirit works through all believers, empowering them to live for Christ and assisting them as they proclaim the gospel to all nations.



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POINT 1

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS THE WORLD (JOHN 16:7-11).

INTRODUCE: What would it have been like to be one of Jesus's disciples, spending each day with Him, hearing His teachings, and witnessing the miracles He performed before their very eyes? The experience would have been truly extraordinary. Even with all of those incredible experiences, Jesus said that we are better off having the Holy Spirit with us. This is an amazing statement that invites us to explore the unique gift of the Holy Spirit.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 16:7-11** from his or her Bible.

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. **8** And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; **10** concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; **11** concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

HIGHLIGHT: In **verse 7**, discuss (Daily Discipleship Guide [DDG] p. 82):

Christ sent the Holy Spirit as a helping presence to His disciples in His physical absence.

- John's use of the word "Helper" must be understood both as a role of comforting as well as a forensic term as a witness advocate who testifies to Christ. Any understanding of one of these aspects without the other falls short of the usage John intended.
- During Jesus's day, trials were not conducted by lawyers representing the prosecution and defense. Instead, a judge would question witnesses who presented evidence in order to establish the truth. The role of an advocate or defense counsel for the accused was not that of a skilled professional, but rather someone who would speak the truth and defend the accused. In this historical context, the Holy Spirit is particularly well-suited to be the primary witness for Christ, given that He has been Jesus's constant companion from before the world began.
- Both Christ and the Holy Spirit are counselors to the believer. In John 14:16, Jesus stated, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever." Just as Jesus had been a helping presence to the disciples, the Holy Spirit would fulfill the same role as Jesus departed. To have the Spirit is to have Christ; to have Christ is to have the Spirit.

THE HELPER

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the Helper. This title is derived from a Greek word that can also be translated as "Advocate" or "Comforter." The word literally means "one who is called alongside," implying that the Holy Spirit comes alongside believers to offer help, support, and guidance.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Where there is no conviction by the Holy Spirit of sin, there is no saving faith in Christ. The Spirit of God so thoroughly convinces a man of his sinfulness that he gladly takes his place with the publican and cries, 'God be merciful to me; I am the sinner.'"¹

—Don Fortner
(1950–2020)

ASK: (DDG p. 82)

How is the Holy Spirit a counselor, helper, comforter, and advocate in our everyday life? (He reminds us of God's presence in our lives; He empowers us to live righteously; He guides us on good paths in life; He convicts us of sin; He gives us peace)

EXAMINE: In groups of 2-3, ask: "The Holy Spirit serves as a helping presence to believers, but what does He do in the world based on **verses 8-11** and your understanding?"

EXPLAIN: After groups share their answers, explain the three convictions of the Holy Spirit that Jesus described. Discuss (DDG p. 82):

The Holy Spirit convicts the world by showing them their sin and need to repent, showing them the path toward righteousness in Christ, and showing them the consequences of judgment.

- The "world" in verse 8 describes the kingdom of the world that rejects Jesus and stands opposed to the kingdom of God. John often drew a distinction between Christ's kingdom and the world's sinfulness (see John 7:7; 14:7; 15:18; 16:33; 18:36).
- The Holy Spirit exposes the sinfulness of the world, revealing that the world's values and behaviors are contrary to God's standards. The Spirit also convicts the world of righteousness, making it clear that true righteousness can only be found in Christ. Finally, the Spirit convicts the world of judgment, warning that all will stand before God to give an account of their lives.
- The role of the Spirit is so vital that in a previous passage, Jesus taught that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (3:5).

DISCUSS: (DDG p. 82)

From Day 2 in the DDG: **In what ways have you seen the Holy Spirit drawing others to faith in Christ?** (changed life of someone who simply one day decided to go to church or go back to church; someone who hits rock bottom and calls out to the Lord; someone who after looking at other philosophies and religions realizes that Jesus is the only way; a broken spouse deciding to love their spouse like Jesus does)

TRANSITION: The Holy Spirit not only brings conviction of sin, but also reveals spiritual truth to believe in Jesus as Savior and follow Jesus as Lord.

POINT 2

THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES TOWARD TRUTH

(JOHN 16:12-14; 1 COR. 2:14)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 16:12-14** from his or her own Bible.

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. **13** When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. **14** He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

DISCUSS: Use the bullet points below to discuss this main idea from **John 16:12-14** (DDG p. 82):

The Holy Spirit is given to guide us to the truth of Christ's purposes and teachings.

- John 16:14 says the Holy Spirit seeks to glorify Christ. The whole passage focuses on the Spirit's emphasis in bringing understanding of the teaching and ministry of Christ to individuals, so that Jesus would be glorified.
- Several references to Christ's glorification in the Gospel of John (7:39; 12:23; 13:31) are directly related to His glorification and exaltation at the cross and ascension. The role of the Spirit is to glorify Christ by guiding individuals to understand the significance of Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection.
- John 16:14 teaches that the Holy Spirit's work in believers is not limited to instructing them about what Christ taught and did, but also about what is to come. This is evident in the Spirit's work among the disciples in the book of Acts and is part of the ongoing ministry of the Spirit in leading believers to live for Christ and be His witnesses to all people in all places.
- Just as the Son came to do the will of the Father (John 6:38), the Spirit is sent to guide in the truth that the Son has proclaimed (16:13). Throughout the Gospels, the intention of each person of the Trinity is to glorify the others.

ASK: (DDG p. 82)

How can we walk in step with the Spirit's guidance? (by daily walking with the Lord in repentance and faith to align yourself with the triune God; by obeying when we are prompted by the Spirit's guidance; by reading and studying the Bible to know God's will; by seeking the counsel of mature Christians to discern between one's own promptings and the Spirit's promptings)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **1 Corinthians 2:14** from his or her Bible.

14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

COMPARE: Divide a dry erase board and encourage your group to compare someone who is living in the Spirit and someone who is not. (acceptance vs. a rejection of Jesus as Lord and Savior; acceptance vs. a rejection of truth; wisdom vs. folly; living for God and others vs. for self and flesh; a life of peace vs. without peace; a joyful life vs. a fearful and worrisome life)

HIGHLIGHT: Use **1 Corinthians 2:14** and the points below to highlight the following point (DDG p. 82):

Without the Holy Spirit's guidance, we cannot comprehend the things of God.

- Scripture describes a person without the Spirit as being fleshly; and as such, men and women without spiritual transformation cannot experience or enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3,5,36; 8:51). First Corinthians 2:14 describes unbelievers as blind and insensitive to the realities of the Spirit-governed kingdom of God—failing to understand or accept the nature of spiritual reality.
- The world resists the things of God because the things of God are discerned only through the Spirit. This verse implies that the things of God cannot be understood merely through human wisdom or intellect.
- People who reject the gospel do not necessarily have a problem with understanding it intellectually, but rather there is a spiritual deficiency that causes them to reject Jesus. As believers share the gospel with others, they must be mindful of the need for a spiritual transformation to occur in order for individuals to accept the message. This is why prayer is so important. Believers should continually pray for the Spirit of God to work in people's hearts, bringing conviction of sin and faith in Jesus, as they share the gospel.

DISCUSS: Reflecting on the answers of the chart on the board, ask (DDG p. 82):

What are you thankful for in regards to the Spirit? (He leads me to truth; He keeps me from sin; He gives me wisdom; He is God with me; He reminds me of God's love and truths)

TRANSITION: Christ has given the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and help us know and apply the Scriptures. Moreover, the Holy Spirit also empowers us to live for Christ and endure all difficulties we may encounter in our lives.

POINT 3

THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS GOD'S PEOPLE (ROM. 8:12-17).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Romans 8:12-13** from his or her Bible.

12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. **13** For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

DISCUSS: In groups of 3-4, ask: "What is the struggle of the flesh and the Spirit in **Romans 8:12-13**?" (it is a conflict between two opposing forces within a believer; the flesh represents our sinful nature, while the Spirit represents the Holy Spirit who dwells in us; living in the flesh leads to death while living in the Spirit leads to life) Then come together to share answers.

HIGHLIGHT: Discuss the key doctrine below (DDG p. 82-83):

Key Doctrine #64: Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian:

The Spirit's work in the life of a Christian begins in the work of salvation in bringing a person to faith in Christ and is continued through the work of sanctification in helping the Christian to become progressively more like Christ throughout the course of his or her life. He also empowers and indwells believers, intercedes on their behalf, and equips them with special gifts for the service of God's kingdom. He is the Comforter to the believer and aids us in properly interpreting the Bible.

- In Romans 8:9, Paul teaches that if we have the Spirit of God in us, we are no longer to live according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Because of this, we have no obligation to live according to the flesh (v. 12). Instead, the opposite is true: we owe a debt to the Spirit to live according to Christ, who has redeemed us from sin.
- Verse 13 portrays a life and death situation. If we live according to the flesh, we will die, but if we die according to the Spirit, we will live. This passage encourages us to put to death the very acts, thoughts, and motivations that would lead to our spiritual deaths.

ASK: (DDG p. 83)

How do we put sins to death? (by confessing and repenting of sin; by not putting ourselves in places or situations where we are more prone to sin; by reflecting on our strongest sins and daily practicing with the Spirit's help the act of resistance)

READ: Ask your group to quietly read **Romans 8:14-17** from their Bibles.

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. **15** For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” **16** The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

REFLECT: Guide your group to reflect on their understanding of who they are in Christ, led by God’s Spirit, as seen in these verses. Lead your group in a time of prayer, praying through these verses, thanking God for the blessings listed.

EXPLAIN: After your time of prayer, explain the following idea (DDG p. 83):

The Holy Spirit leads believers as they are newly identified as children of God, heirs of God, and coheirs with Christ.

- It is important to practice interpretation before application when reading Romans 8:14-17. Although it describes a progression of spiritual experience unique to each believer, the primary point of the passage is to describe the common experience of faith. All Christians are led by the Spirit (v. 14), have received the Spirit of adoption (v. 15), cry out “Abba, Father” as the Spirit bears witness to them (v. 16), and are therefore heirs with Christ (v. 17).
- Our adoption through Christ allows us to “cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’” Crying out refers to a strong, loud, spontaneous, and emotional release, emphasizing that our familial status as God’s children allows us to approach Him with urgency to receive His attention.
- The latter part of verse 17 emphasizes the connection between suffering and glory. Christ’s suffering led to His glory, and the same is true for His disciples. Christians should view suffering for Christ as an opportunity to identify with Him, to grow in faith, and to remind us that we are not of this world and our true home is with Him in heaven. Suffering for Christ is a way to share in His mission of redemption, bringing God glory.

DISCUSS: (DDG p. 83)

How does the knowledge that we are heirs with Christ through adoption by the Holy Spirit give us hope for the future? (we will always be part of God’s family; with a Father like the Almighty God, we can feel safe and be at peace; knowing we can have a close relationship with the Sovereign Lord allows us to ask what we want; knowing as a Father He is always for us should help with any worry)

TRANSITION: The Holy Spirit helps us overcome our sin and assures us of our identity in Christ as children of God. Wherever He leads, we can boldly follow.

ABBA

An Aramaic term of endearment from a child for a father. By addressing God as Abba, believers express their status as adopted children of God and coheirs with Christ, the Son of God. This reflects a relationship of both intimacy and reverence. Jesus Himself practiced using this word and modeled it to the disciples (Mark 14:36).

MY RESPONSE

SAY: After Jesus completed His work of paying for sin on the cross, He returned to be with the Father, but sent the Holy Spirit. The Spirit convicts people of sin and guides them to truth so that they might trust in Christ and be saved. The Spirit then continues ministering to the believer by leading them and attesting to their newfound life through Jesus. Because we have been saved by God, we seek to fulfill our mission of sharing the gospel—trusting not in our own power, but in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to change lives.

SING: Pass out copies of **PACK ITEM 10: TRINITY HYMN** and sing it together to praise the Father, Son, and Spirit for their good works.

HEAD:

The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in our spiritual growth. Before we can fully embrace the truths of the gospel, the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin and helps us to recognize our need for a Savior. Once we place our trust in Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to work in our lives, leading our minds to spiritual truths and illuminating the teachings of Scripture. We are able then to deepen our understanding of God's Word and grow in knowledge of Him.

How can you cultivate a deeper reliance on the Holy Spirit in your life and grow in your relationship with Him?

HEART:

The Holy Spirit convicts the world—and us—of sin. We need Him to help us discern right from wrong and prompt us toward lives of service and mission. Many times though, we might choose to not listen or obey His promptings.

What can you confess that happened recently when you felt a prompting from the Spirit and chose to not act upon it?

HANDS:

The Spirit equips us with spiritual gifts, such as teaching, serving, and encouraging, which enable us to minister to others. We are empowered to resist temptation and live in obedience to God's commands, even in the face of adversity. As we walk in step with the Holy Spirit, we are able to boldly be Christ's witnesses to all people everywhere.

In what ways can you use your spiritual gifts to serve others around you this week?

PRAY: Father, thank You for giving us the Holy Spirit. May we seek to live guided by the Spirit, bringing glory to Your name. Help us be sensitive to the Spirit's leading, reflecting Your love and grace to those around us.



VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing. We are ships without wind, or chariots without steeds, like branches without sap, we are withered; like coals without fire, we are useless; as an offering without the sacrificial flame, we are unaccepted. . . . We are but the stones and he the sling, we are the arrows, and he the bow."²

—Charles H. Spurgeon (1843–1892)

EXTRA

POINT 1: THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS THE WORLD

(JOHN 16:7-11).

+ OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

Ask for volunteers to share how they sensed the Holy Spirit's conviction in their own personal salvation experience. After a few people have shared their testimony, open up the discussion to the group as a whole. Emphasizing the role of the Spirit to bring conviction that leads to salvation, ask questions such as: (1) What common themes or experiences did you notice among the different testimonies? (2) What did you learn about the Holy Spirit's role in conviction from these stories? (3) How can we apply what we've learned to our own lives and ministries?

POINT 2: THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES TOWARD TRUTH

(JOHN 16:12-14; 1 COR. 2:14)

+ ILLUSTRATION

Jigsaw puzzles are a relaxing and fulfilling activity for many people. Puzzles are available in varying levels of difficulty; however, one type of puzzle is particularly challenging: the mystery puzzle. Unlike other puzzles, a mystery puzzle does not come in a box with an image of what the puzzle is supposed to look like. Without the finished image, it is nearly impossible to complete and a frustrating process to endure.

The mystery puzzle is much like the disciples' situation before Jesus's resurrection and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They had Jesus's teachings but did not have a complete picture of God's plan. But the disciples were not left alone in their confusion. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth and to empower them to remain faithful and carry out His mission in the world. Through the Holy Spirit's indwelling, they were able to proclaim the gospel with clarity and conviction, and to live out their faith with purpose and power.

References

1. Donald S. Fortner, *Grace for Today: Daily Devotional Readings* (Danville, KY: Grace Baptist Church of Danville, 1986), 168.
2. Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons* (United Kingdom: Passmore & Alabaster, 1875), 16–17.