



Session Objective

This session explores questions concerning the identity of the Holy Spirit: Who is the Holy Spirit? What is the difference between the Holy Spirit and God? Who came first, the Holy Spirit or God? There are hints to the answers of such questions in the Bible, but there are also inconsistencies and gaps. Even though mysteries remain about the Holy Spirit, the Bible still gives us insights about who the Holy Spirit is and what the Holy Spirit does. This session will help participants begin to develop a better understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Faith Statement

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

—*Nicene Creed* (1.3)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- Who is the Holy Spirit, and what, in your view, can we know about the identity of the Holy Spirit?
- The Holy Spirit is sometimes depicted in the Bible as wind. What images do you have of the Holy Spirit?
- How important is the Holy Spirit in your faith and your daily life as a Christian?



Explore

Read Genesis 1:1–2 and explore these questions:

- What do you picture in your mind when you read the words of Genesis 1:1–2? What does “a formless void” look like? What impression does the phrase “wind from God” make on you? Can you see it, hear it, and/or feel it? Describe.
- Your Bible’s wording may be different from the NRSV’s “wind from God” (v. 2). What wording do you prefer? Why?
- What does this passage tell us about the identity of the Holy Spirit? What does it not tell us?



Express

Use the following questions to help the participants express what they’ve learned.

- Genesis 1:1–2 very poetically describes the involvement of God’s Spirit in creation, but it offers very little concrete data about the Spirit. Are you comfortable with mystery and the possibility that there are some questions about God that we simply can’t answer? Why or why not?
- What other questions come to mind when you try to wrap your mind around the Holy Spirit?

Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the biblical passage.



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for the time that you have had together and asking God to continue to give you and the participants a hunger for truth and learning.





Session Objective

How do we sense God around us? How do we know that God is speaking to us and leading us? These are questions about the Holy Spirit, and Jesus actually gives some fairly concrete answers to such questions. This session examines Jesus' teachings about the coming of the Holy Spirit, or the Advocate, in John's Gospel and, through a look at the church's faith traditions, points participants toward everyday-life application of Jesus' words.

Faith Statement

[The Holy Spirit] is the Lord and Giver of life, everywhere present, and is the source of all good thoughts, pure desires, and holy counsels in [people]. By [the Spirit] the prophets were moved to speak the Word of God, and all the writers of the Holy Scriptures inspired to record infallibly the mind and will of God. The dispensation of the gospel is especially committed to [the Holy Spirit]. [The Spirit] prepares the way for it, accompanies it with . . . persuasive power, and urges its message upon the reason and conscience of [people], so that they who reject its merciful offer are not only without excuse, but are also guilty of resisting the Holy Spirit.

—Westminster Confession of Faith (6.052)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- Describe a time when you were faced with a moral dilemma—a question of right or wrong, perhaps, but also with no easy way out. How did you decide what to do?
- Do you think a conscience is something that all people have, or are our moral actions directed by God? Explain.
- How do we sense God around us, and how do we know that God is leading and guiding us?



Explore

Read John 14:15-26 and explore these discussion points:

- This passage is part of a long talk by Jesus with his disciples, as he tries to prepare them for his leaving them. Based on what Jesus is saying, what do you think the disciples were thinking and feeling during this time?
- What difference does it make that Jesus is speaking to a community of people, his disciples, rather than to an individual?
- According to Jesus, who is the Advocate and what will the Advocate do for the disciples? (If your Bible is not the NRSV, the passage might use a word such as *counselor*, *comforter*, or *Paraclete*.)
- What does John 14:15-26 tell us about who the Holy Spirit is and where the Spirit comes from?



Express

Use the following discussion points to help the participants express what they've learned.

- We, obviously, are living in the future time of which Jesus speaks in the biblical passage. Do you consider yourself among those who "know" and have received the Holy Spirit? (See v. 17.) Why or why not? And if so, do you feel that you have received the benefits of the Spirit that Jesus describes? (See vv. 17, 19, and 26.) In what ways do these gifts influence your life?
- What might you do to become more responsive to the guidance of the Spirit?
- What other questions come to mind when you discuss the ways in which God's Spirit guides and directs us?

Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the biblical passage.



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for the time that you have had together to talk about God's Word and to seek the guidance of the Spirit in your life and the lives of the participants.





Session Objective

Much mystery surrounds various aspects of the Holy Spirit. However, the Bible is much more expansive when it comes to the *effects* of the Spirit on believers, and there's much more we can know about how the Spirit works in us. This is the concern of both this session and Session 4: This session explores what the Holy Spirit does *for* us, and Session 4 deals with what the Spirit does *through* us, for the benefit of the church and the world.

Faith Statement

We trust in God the Holy Spirit, everywhere the giver and renewer of life. The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith, sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor, and binds us together with all believers in the one body of Christ, the Church. The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church. . . .
—A Brief Statement of Faith (10.4)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- What is your greatest gift or talent?
- What talent do you have that no one else knows about?
- What is the gift or talent that you most wish you had?
- In your view, do your gifts and talents come from God or are they yours alone? What are the sorts of gifts from God that we can expect and witness and experience?



Explore

Read Acts 19:1-7 and explore these discussion points:

- In verse 2, Paul's conversation partners say they haven't heard of the Holy Spirit. You've obviously heard of the Holy Spirit, but can you identify with their confusion? How so?
- What is the importance of baptism in this passage, and how does that compare with the importance and function of baptism in the church today?
- After Paul baptized these disciples, "the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied." What is your understanding of spiritual gifts? In your view, what is the purpose of such gifts?
- What does Acts 19:1-7 tell us about who the Holy Spirit is and where the Spirit comes from? What does the passage *not* tell us about these questions?



Express

Use the following discussion points to help the young people express what they've learned.

- In the Bible passage, Paul functions as a mentor, teacher, and pastor for the unnamed disciples. Who in your life functions in those ways? In whose life do you function in those ways?
- What gifts have you discovered in yourself through the course of this discussion? How might you put them to use?
- What other questions come to mind when you discuss the gifts of the Spirit?

Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the biblical passage.



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for the time that you have had together talking about God's Word and praying for the gift of discernment for yourself and for the participants in your group.





What Does the Holy Spirit Do Through Us?



Session Objective

This session is concerned with what the Spirit does *through us*, for the benefit of the church and the world. The Bible is quite explicit about spiritual gifts; Paul lists them in considerable detail. But the important point is that “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:4), and this session aims to help participants begin or continue the process of discerning the gifts that God has given them “for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Faith Statement

... In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.
—A Brief Statement of Faith (10.4)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- What is a cause or situation in the world—whether nearby or far away—that you particularly care about? Why?
- What particular gifts, interests, or abilities do you have that can help you work for that cause?
- How does your involvement in the church help (or not help) your work for that cause?



Explore

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 and explore these discussion points:

- A couple of recurring phrases in this passage are *the same Spirit* and *the one Spirit*. Paul clearly means to emphasize that there is only one Spirit. Why does this matter?
- List the spiritual gifts that Paul describes in this passage. Do some of them seem more important than others? If so, what makes them more important?
- According to this passage, how are the gifts of the Spirit distributed to people?
- According to this passage, why are spiritual gifts given at all?
- What does 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 tell us about who the Holy Spirit is and where the Spirit comes from? What does the passage *not* tell us about these questions?



Express

Use the following discussion points to help the participants express what they've learned.

- The Faith Statement for this session lists some big jobs! What does each of these Spirit-empowered actions mean? (For example, what does it mean to “unmask idolatries”?) How do we do these things? (For example, how might we realistically “pray without ceasing”?) What would these actions look like in our community?
- How does the Faith Statement help you express your own desire to work for a particular cause in the world?

Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has any new perspectives after exploring the biblical passage.



Exit

Close in prayer, thanking God for the time that you have had together and asking that God's Spirit move through you and the others in your group as you go out into the world to serve.

