

The Story of EVERYTHING

Big Idea Discussion Guide / Session 4 - Holy Spirit

Big Idea

The Holy Spirit is God Himself taking up residence within us to empower us to follow Christ. He is Christ in us. He is the one who we listen to, follow, and daily rely on as we live in his power.

Icebreaker

If you could make a living doing anything at all, what would it be? How different would it be than what you are doing now?

Introduction

While many people have heard a lot about God the Father and Jesus the Son, the Holy Spirit often remains an unknown "entity" or "it." Different understandings of the Holy Spirit can often cause lots of confusion and even controversy. There is a tendency to go in one of two different directions: either people emphasize the miraculous outpourings of the Spirit to the exclusion of all else, treating Him like a genie in a bottle, or they act like the ministry of the Holy Spirit ended nearly 2,000 years ago and primarily view His work as a relic of the past, assuming nothing miraculous could ever happen today.

1. What has been your experience or thoughts about the Holy Spirit before now? Did He play much of a part in whatever spiritual upbringing you have had?

We have already heard about how the Holy Spirit was present at creation. In Genesis 1:2, He is described as "hovering over the waters." Throughout the Old Testament, we are told the Spirit came upon the great leaders of God, including (but not limited to) Moses, David, Samson, and Deborah. The Holy Spirit would give them the power they needed in a particular situation, and then He would leave them.

Further on in *The Story of Everything* the Holy Spirit is responsible for the conception of Jesus in Mary (Luke 2:35). He also shows up in the form of a dove at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:22). In Luke 4 Jesus reads from the book of Isaiah when he announces,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor..."

Jesus knew that He was the one whom the Holy Spirit was working through. Jesus taught His disciples about the Holy Spirit after they shared the last supper together,"

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - The Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you." -John 14:16-17

Jesus goes on to say that it will actually be better for the disciples for Him (Jesus) to leave the earth:

"I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." -John 16:7-8

This is a very important concept to grasp. We sometimes wish we could physically see, hear, and touch Jesus, but Jesus Himself taught us that we are better off when He is absent, because it is then that the Holy Spirit can come to live in us.

2. What do you think about the statement "You are better off without Jesus' physical presence on earth?" Do you really believe this is true? Why or why not?

After Jesus rose from the grave and ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit opened up a new chapter in *The Story of Everything*. Before Pentecost, the Spirit came and went a lot like the wind blows: here one minute, gone the next, and then back again. But after Pentecost, the Spirit, though still mysterious, came to live within us for good. This is a fulfillment of an old, but enormously significant prophecy:

"I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." -Joel 2:28-29

This is a new day, a new chapter in *The Story of Everything*! Robert Mullholland wrote in *A Roadmap for Spiritual Formation*, "As Christians we try to live FOR God IN the world, when we ought to live IN God FOR the world."

My answer to the question of where I believe God resides makes a profound difference in my spiritual life. We are often brought up to think, "I am here, but God is somewhere else." However, the Bible teaches us, "I am here and God is within me." When we come back to God, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives.

3. How do you feel about the idea of God living "in you?"

This can change my life—I came to realize that whatever I do, God does too. I make God participate in my actions. Now when tempted to sin, I can remember God is within me giving me the strength to do the right thing. I can constantly ask God what He thinks and look for prompting from Him when seeking guidance. As we continue on our spiritual journey, we learn to listen and recognize God's voice. Jesus said that the sheep know the shepherd's voice (John 10:4). Just as we recognize a friend's voice on the phone, we get to know the inner voice of God speaking to us.

4. Can you describe how you recognize God speaking to you? If you can't, what do you think it would look like to "hear" Him?

In Galatians 5 Paul tells us that if we live by the Spirit, then we should also walk by the Spirit. There is a distinction made here between living and walking. In the Scriptures "walking" suggests a relational, directional activity requiring power. Our daily walk is made in relationship with God, headed in His direction. It is possible to live and yet not walk with God.

In John 3:5 Jesus says,

"No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin. He shows us the true reality of our sins. We cannot come to God unless the Spirit draws us. The Holy Spirit plays a part in the regeneration process. He makes us truly alive. He gives us the power we need to maintain our close walk with God. Gene Edwards in *The Secret to the Christian Life* said, "Christian life is not difficult, it is impossible."

5. What are some of the biggest difficulties or obstacles you find in living a Christian life?

It is impossible to follow Christ without the Holy Spirit. We need the Spirit of God in our lives to live as true Christ-followers, and we are given this Holy Spirit when we first put our trust in Jesus. We are also given spiritual gifts to bless others, but it is up to us whether we will choose to unwrap these gifts of the spirit and use them for the good of the Church. With the Spirit IN US, we can do what Jesus did and more. Jesus said,

"He who believes in Me, the works that I do he shall also do; and greater works than these he shall do." -John 14:12

6. What do you think of Jesus' bold statement that with the Spirit in us, we can do even greater works than He did? Is that possible? What keeps us from experiencing that?

Jesus has entrusted the ministry of "Helping People Find Their Way Back To God" to his followers. We can only be faithful to this mission, however, when we live in the power of the Holy Spirit, stepping out in faith as we follow his lead. The greatest miracle we can know is when someone who is far from God experiences salvation. The Holy Spirit plays an incredible part in *The Story of Everything*.

What's Next

In his book *Too Busy Not to Pray*, Bill Hybels wrote, "People who make opportunities for the Holy Spirit to speak to them know that the Christian life is a continual adventure. It is full of surprises, thrills, challenges and mysteries. If you open your mind and heart to God's leadings, you will be amazed at what He will do. He is attempting to communicate with you more often than you know." God wants to guide and lead you as you walk in the Holy Spirit. When you wake up each day this week, declare, "I want to walk with You today. Lead me where You want me to go." When you are in a situation that is more than you can handle on your own say, "Holy Spirit, do what only You can do." As you ask, be ready to receive all God wants to give you. Journal the ways you feel the Holy Spirit at work in your life as you seek to live with Him. Be ready to share your experiences with others in your Christian community so that the whole body will be built up and encouraged.

"I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe Him. This is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms." -Ephesians 1:19-20

As you lead the discussion about the Holy Spirit, ask God for the Holy Spirit to be present in your group! Remember that you don't have to have all the answers. Do your best to lead a group discussion where people can journey together. And, don't be surprised if you experience God helping you lead! That's the Holy Spirit at work!

Take time to pray this verse as you prepare for your group:
"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." -2 Corinthians 13:14

1. Notice that we refer to the Holy Spirit as "He" and not "it." God the spirit is personal and relational, and that is why we refer to the Holy Spirit in personal terms.
2. Imagine what a great day when Jesus reproduced his mission in others by pouring out the Holy Spirit into his disciples. Now, instead of just influencing them when he was around, he could influence their heart, their mind and their soul! The kingdom of darkness must have shuddered that day when the power of Christ grew exponentially!
3. Hopefully the Christ-follower will be encouraged that God unites with us by taking up residence in us. It is comforting to know that we can't scare off the Spirit. Help people understand that though we can grieve the Spirit by our actions, He does not leave. This is the fulfillment of what the prophets in the Old Testament looked forward to!
4. Whenever someone in the Bible was spoken to by God, it was very clear and people knew God was speaking to them. Encourage people that we can learn to discern when God is speaking and that small groups are a great place to share with others what they think God may be saying to them through the Holy Spirit. Encourage your group members that they may use phrases like, "I'm not sure if God is saying this or not... Maybe he is, but I would love your insight. What do you think?" This is usually better than saying things like, "God told me that _____." Or "God revealed to me that _____." Instances like that can certainly happen, but might raise an eyebrow or two. As people get better at discerning God's voice, they will grow in their confidence to step out in faith which is coupled with humility and trust in the Holy Spirit.
5. Answers should vary here. Encourage people to share what keeps them from being as faithful as they would want to be. Also help them understand that God is present and longs to help them fulfill all the plans he has for them. Land on grace in this discussion!
6. There will probably be those in your group that are thinking, "Yeah right!" Give them permission to feel that way and speak up. Also encourage those to who really do believe that God will do anything to speak up. Pray about how to utilize their great gift of faith as you pray for your small group. Ask them to pray throughout the week and watch how God shows up!

Community Christian Church

Written by John Wentz, Dave Allendorph, Chris Chrisman and Angela Born

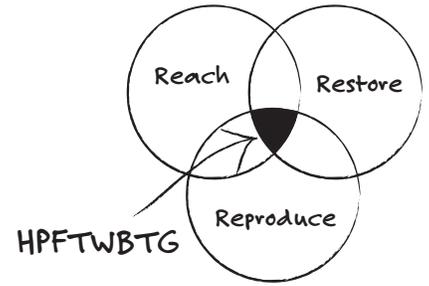
Small Group Mission

Helping People Find Their Way Back to God



Missional Practices: B.L.E.S.S.

- B - Begin with prayer:** We will pray for the people or place to which we are sent.
- L - Listen:** We will listen to the people or place to which we are sent.
- E - Eat:** We will share meals with those to whom we are sent.
- S - Serve:** We will respond to the needs we discover among those to whom we are sent.
- S - Story:** We will share the story of Jesus and what he is doing in our lives with those to whom we are sent.



Type of Small Group On Mission

- One Mission:** The entire small group commits to going after the same mission. This can be a new idea originating from the group, or it can involve plugging into an existing ministry or program in the community.

The place or people our group has been sent to is:

- Multiple Missions:** Each member of the group has a specific mission they are following God in. The group provides a place to celebrate individual stories, wrestle through questions and challenges and provide support and encouragement.

The place or people our group members have been sent to is:

Name: _____ Sent to: _____

Group Dynamics

- Confidentiality:** Everything shared in group stays in the group.
- Participation:** Everyone participates in our discussions and our mission.
- Empty Chair:** We always keep an "empty chair" as a sign of our openness to new people joining us.

Group Leadership

Coach _____

Leader _____

Apprentice Leader _____

Host _____