

Further Steps – Week 6 – The Holy Spirit

Connect and review

Again, encourage – it's a lifelong journey – little gains are fine, and if they haven't managed to do anything, what would they like to do? Is there any way the group can help them?

Last week, we explored the significance of the Bible to our lives as Christians – how is that journey going? Have you had any new thoughts, or tried any new approaches to reading and studying?

This week, we are going to discover a bit more about who the Holy Spirit is. When we accept Jesus as Saviour, He sends the Holy Spirit to live within us and help us become like Jesus.

It is important to realise that the Holy Spirit is not just a force (like the 'force' in the *Star Wars* movies). He is actually God Himself. There is only one God, but He known as "God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit."

We shall look briefly at what the Bible reveals about these three 'persons' of God, which might throw some light on Who the Holy Spirit really is.

Inspire and engage

There is a lot of content and there will be a range of understanding in the room – so ensure that you spend time ironing out any misconceptions on this very important topic!

1. God, the Father.

Reading: [Matthew 11 verse 27](#).

Comment: 'God the Father' refers to God in heaven, ruling over all of His Creation. We have already seen (in Sessions 2 and 3) that, once we are *born again*, we can relate to God as our Father. Jesus always spoke of God as His Father, but His relationship was unique (as we shall see shortly).

Question 1: Read the [1st Letter of John, Chapter 3 verse 1](#). What characteristic of God the Father is spoken of here?

Thought: Those who, sadly, do not enjoy a good relationship with their human father may struggle to appreciate the loving nature of the Heavenly Father.

2. God, the Son.

Readings: [Hebrews 1 verses 1-3](#) and [John 10 verse 30](#).

Comment: 'God the Son' refers to God as we know Him on the human level. For a while God lived on earth as a man whom people could see and whom we can visualise. His name is Jesus. As Jesus was fully obedient to His Father in heaven, we can learn of God's character through what we read and know of the character of Jesus. As Jesus Himself told His disciple Philip "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14 verse 9).

Readings: [John 17 verse 5](#) and [John 16 verse 17](#).

Questions 2,3: Jesus is no longer here in the flesh, but He is still alive in the spirit. According to these two Scriptures, where was He before He came to earth, and where is He now?

Exercise: What characteristics of God do you think are most evident in the following actions of Jesus, selected from the list below? (There is no need to turn to the Bible verses unless you need to.)

- a) He forgave people's sins. (John 8 verse 11)
- b) He healed those who were suffering. (Matthew 14 verse 14)
- c) Sinless and truthful. (1st Peter 2 verse 22)
- d) Knowing who would betray Him. (John 6 verse 64)
- e) He died to save us. (John 15 verse 13)

Characteristics: All knowing Compassionate Loving
Merciful Perfect

3. God, the Holy Spirit.

Readings: [John 16 verse 7](#), [Acts 2 verses 1-4](#) and [Acts 2 verse 38](#).

Comment: The *Holy Spirit* refers to God's presence and activity everywhere. He is especially present in the lives of Christians and active in and through us to accomplish what we cannot do ourselves. Ten days after Jesus had left this earth and gone back to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to be with us in His place. (In John 16 He is called 'Counsellor,' 'Comforter' 'Helper' or 'Advocate', depending on the translation.)

Question 4: Jesus had said it would be of benefit if He were to go away so that He could send the Holy Spirit in His place. The Church expanded rapidly across many lands through the preaching of Spirit-filled Christians. Why do you think Christians could accomplish this faster than Jesus?

Explore and apply

Try and give examples of where the Holy Spirit has helped you with some of these things, and ask the group too! They may not even realise it was the Holy Spirit helping them until this discussion!

Explore

Comment: Just four of the many things that the Holy Spirit enables Christians to do are:

- (a) To learn and recall the teaching of Jesus. Read [John 14 verse 26](#).
- (b) To witness, i.e. to give evidence of the reality of the truth of the claims of Jesus. Read [Acts 1 verse 8](#).

Question: Witness is usually through testimony (telling others of what Jesus has done for you). But how will people know you are telling the truth?

- (c) To help the Church function and grow, by using abilities given by the Spirit. Read [1st Corinthians 12 verses 4-11](#).

Comment: These abilities are called *Gifts of the Spirit*: 'gifts,' because they are given by God, not the products of human intellect or skill. They can be used outside the Church, but they are primarily to help in worship and ministry.

- (d) To develop a Christlike character. The Bible calls these characteristics *Fruit of the Spirit*. Read [Galatians 5 verses 22-23](#).

Thought: Fruit on a tree takes time to grow and develop. So too might the Fruit of the Spirit.

Apply

Discussion: Read John 15 verses 5-8. How can we help the Fruit of the Spirit grow in our lives? Conversely, what might we do that could hinder its development?

Reflect and review

You could suggest something such as the 'Examen' prayer here to help with this reflection.

Personal reflection: Consider the fruits of the Spirit. What needs to grow? What could we submit/surrender/ask so that this can happen?

Suggested activity: be reflective this week. Reflect back and see how the Holy Spirit has helped you – and ask Him before the day starts! Consider and re-read the verses about the fruit of the Spirit. What is growing inside of you?



SCRIPTURES for Session 6

Matthew 11:27. "My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

1 John 3:1. See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him.

Hebrews 1:1-3. Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God.

John 10:30. "The Father and I are one."

John 17:5. "Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began."

John 16:17. Some of the disciples asked each other, "What does he mean when he says, 'In a little while you won't see me, but then you will see me,' and 'I am going to the Father'?"

John 16:7. "I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." (NIV)

Acts 2: 1-4. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (NIV)

Acts 2:38. "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (NIV)

John 14:26. "The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (NIV)

Acts 1:8. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere — in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

1st Corinthians 12:4-11. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

Galatians 5:22-23. The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

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