

CONNECTIONS

SMALL GROUP STUDIES

Life in the Spirit

Dear Small Group Leader,

Why did God send the Holy Spirit? What role does the Spirit play in our daily lives? And as believers why do we need to rely on the Spirit? Your group needs the Holy Spirit. Some may not even realize it, yet it's a fact. This unit, "Life in the Spirit," is designed to help small groups in their understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and how He helps us every day.

Through these lessons, we will learn that life in the Spirit is about growth. The Spirit changes us when we submit to Him, and spiritual maturity will begin to show in the things we say and do. We'll be better able to tell truth from deception. Our spiritual battles will turn into victories, and spiritual fruit will begin showing up in our lives. This is Christian life the way God intends it to be.

Whether your group needs to learn who the Spirit is or simply to grow stronger in their walk with God, this unit will lead them into a deeper life in the Spirit.

Blessings,

The Connections Team

CONNECTIONS

Life in the Spirit

Study 1

Notes

You Need the Holy Spirit

Objective: To understand the role the Holy Spirit plays in our lives and our relationship with God.



CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- ➔ Greet people as they come in. After a few minutes of social interaction, begin the discussion.

? Have you ever been in a situation when you desperately needed help from someone, and a friend came to your aid? Explain. (*Answers may include: being stuck on the side of the road with a flat tire, being unable to pay your bills, etc.*)

? What would have happened if you hadn't received help? (*Answers will vary with the situation; note that the consequences would not have been good.*)

? Why do you think that person helped you, and how did you respond to that help? (*Answers will vary with the situation.*)

Say: The Bible identifies the Holy Spirit as our Helper-Teacher, and He offers us much-needed strength and guidance.



CONNECT WITH GOD'S WORD

Say: If you've ever felt like you were completely alone, you know it can be a depressing and even a scary feeling. Sometimes we feel alone in our walk with God, but we're not. When Jesus left this earth, He promised to send Someone like himself, the Holy Spirit, to help His followers live strong and effective Christian lives.

Study 1 / You Need the Holy Spirit

Notes

F What role does God play in your everyday life? Is God's presence something you rely on regularly, or do you usually give little thought to God? Explain. *(Answers may include: God regularly speaks to me and guides my decisions, or I think about God only when I'm in church or a Bible study.)*

➔ Ask someone to read John 14:16,17.

Say: Jesus described the Holy Spirit as a Counselor and the Spirit of Truth. The name "Counselor" implies that we are to rely on the Holy Spirit's help for things like strength and guidance. "Spirit of Truth" tells us the Holy Spirit will function as a teacher, helping us avoid deception.

F How has the Holy Spirit been a helper to you or steered you away from error? *(Answers will vary.)*

➔ Ask someone to read 1 John 3:23,24.

Say: In addition to helping and guiding us, the Spirit gives all Christians assurance of salvation.

F Think about what the Holy Spirit brings into your life. How can His blessings, or gifts, help you remain sure of your relationship with Christ? *(Answers may include: I know I wouldn't have certain gifts without the Holy Spirit, I can recognize when the Word applies to me, etc.)*

Say: Sometimes it's easy to see why God makes a promise, yet difficult to understand how that promise fits into your life. You need the Holy Spirit at work in your life every day, and the following verses of Scripture give us reasons why.

➔ Ask someone to read Acts 1:8.

F Why do we need the power of the Holy Spirit to tell others about Jesus, rather than doing so in our own power? *(Answers may include: evangelism is a spiritual battle, the Holy Spirit can lead us to specific individuals, etc.)*

➔ Ask someone to read Romans 8:26,27.

F What are some specific situations when you might need the Spirit's help in your prayer life? *(Answers may include: difficult decisions, healing from an illness, etc.)*

2 Life in the Spirit

Study 1 / You Need the Holy Spirit

Notes

F Why would the Holy Spirit be helpful in these situations? (*Answers may include: because God knows the situation better than we do; He can give us insight into what specifically needs to be prayed about.*)

- ➔ Ask someone to read John 16:7–15.

Say: There are three things in this passage that Jesus says about the Spirit. The first is that the Spirit exposes sin and convicts humanity of the need to seek forgiveness and a relationship with Christ (verses 7–11). Second, the Spirit guides our lives, showing us the way God wants us to go (verse 13). Third, the Spirit reveals who Christ is to us (verses 14,15).

F Why do we need the Holy Spirit to reveal sin, guide our lives, and show us who Christ is? Why can't we rely on ourselves in these situations? (*Answers may include: we have limited understanding on our own, we have a sinful nature that can manipulate situations or cause us not to see the truth clearly, etc.*)



To conclude this study, have members of the group share instances or testimonies of how the Holy Spirit worked in their lives in the ways discussed in the study. Then, discuss times when the Holy Spirit may have been prompting you to do something but you were too scared or uncertain about what to do. Finally, have the group brainstorm how they can be sensitive to the Spirit and when to seek His power.

- ➔ Conclude your time in prayer. Feel free to pray your own prayer or use the one below.

God, we thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit as the Helper in our lives here on earth. Please help us to be open and sensitive to the Spirit's voice so that we may do Your will. If there is anything in our lives that is keeping us from knowing You fully, we pray that You will reveal it to us. Lord, we love You and thank You for being a part of our daily lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

3 Life in the Spirit

CONNECTIONS

Life in the Spirit

Study 2

Notes

Be Baptized in the Holy Spirit

Objective: To understand the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and that it is God's will for every Christian to experience it.



CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- ➔ Greet people as they come in. After a few minutes of social interaction, begin the discussion.

F Who has a great deal of power in your life? What kind of power is it and how have you responded to it? (*Answers may include: parents that have power because they love us and have authority over us, a boss that is very strict and micromanages everything, we can submit or rebel to power, etc.*)

Say: In our last session, we talked about needing the Holy Spirit to help us and to empower us so that we can do what God calls us to do. Today, we will talk about what it means to fully submit to that power.



CONNECT WITH GOD'S WORD

Say: The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience God gives people after salvation. A normal experience of believers in New Testament times, God offers this experience to all believers today. With it comes empowerment for service and various gifts for ministry.

- ➔ Ask someone to read Acts 1:4,5,8.

F What kinds of hardships did Jesus' disciples face after His crucifixion and resurrection? Why did they need to receive power from God? (*Answers may include: they were being persecuted, they were intimidated about their witness, etc.*) Why do we need to receive power from God today? (*Answers may include: to help us face spiritual battles, to help us be confident in sharing the gospel, etc.*)

Study 2/Be Baptized in the Holy Spirit

Notes

➔ Ask someone to read Acts 2:1–4,17,18.

Say: These verses are the fulfillment of what Jesus promised in Acts 1 and the Old Testament prophecy repeated in Acts 2:18.

F What do verses 17 and 18 tell us about our personal walk with God and the baptism in the Holy Spirit? (*Answers may include: it's for everyone and believers should be experiencing supernatural/spiritual gifts, etc.*)

F Do you believe God wants us to experience the Holy Spirit in these ways? Why or why not? (*Answers will vary.*)

Say: On the Day of Pentecost, the people spoke in other languages, or tongues, after they were baptized in the Spirit. Other places in the New Testament indicate tongues was the initial physical evidence of Spirit baptism.

➔ Ask someone to read Acts 10:44–47 and Acts 19:6.

F How do you feel about the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit? If you have been baptized, how have you been affected? Recall life before you were baptized. Did you, or do you, have reservations? (*Answers will vary. Be sensitive to those who are new to this or who are expressing doubts.*)

F What is the purpose of speaking in tongues? (*Allow students to give answers, or read the list aloud.*)

1. Speaking in languages unknown to us—known as speaking in tongues—opens a new avenue of communication with God. When believers received the gift of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, they spoke directly to God, magnifying and worshipping His name (Acts 2:11; 1 Corinthians 14:2).
2. Speaking in tongues allows us to know with certainty that we've been baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44–46; 19:6).
3. Speaking in tongues builds us up spiritually (1 Corinthians 14:4).
4. Speaking in tongues can be intercession, prayer on behalf of others (Romans 8:26).
5. Speaking in tongues can serve as a sign to unbelievers of the reality and power of God (see Acts 2:8–12).

Say: Although speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Spirit, other effects also take place. The baptism in the Holy Spirit serves as an empowerment for our service of God.

2 Life in the Spirit

Study 2/Be Baptized in the Holy Spirit

➔ Ask someone to read Acts 4:31–35.

? What were the results of the believers being baptized in the Holy Spirit? (*They testified boldly and ministered to each other's needs, including material needs.*)

➔ Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 12:7–11 and Galatians 5:22,23.

? After the baptism in the Holy Spirit, how might your life change (or how did it)? (*Answers may include: a freer witness, a greater awareness of God, etc.*)

Notes



Option 1: If group members have not been baptized in the Spirit and would like to be, offer to pray with them. Here are some steps to help guide you and them:

1. Tell them that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, just like salvation. We have to choose to receive it.
2. Pray over them, and encourage them to pray and worship God aloud.
3. Tell them that they may hear a syllable in their head. Encourage them to speak it. Even though God baptizes us, we have control of our tongues.
4. If nothing seems to happen, don't let them (or yourself) get discouraged. Encourage them to keep seeking the Holy Spirit. Many times people are baptized when praying alone at home or worshipping in a church. Let them know that they aren't alone in their experience.
5. If they do begin uttering something in tongues, encourage them to continue praying! They may pray the same syllable over and over, but that's okay.
6. Encourage them to pray in the Spirit daily. As they do, they will grow in their prayer language and in their personal walk with God.

Option 2: Allow group members to share ways they would like to grow spiritually, whether in spiritual gifts or fruit. Pray for each other that the Holy Spirit will manifest himself in those areas of their lives.

➔ Conclude your time in prayer, praying your own prayer or the one below.

God, we thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Continue to fill us daily so that we may be bold and effective witnesses for Your kingdom. Let us not take this gift for granted, so that we may glorify You in all we do and in all we are. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

3 Life in the Spirit

CONNECTIONS

Life in the Spirit

Study 3

Notes

Bear Spiritual Fruit

Objective: To understand why the fruit of the Spirit is important and to cultivate spiritual fruit in our lives.



CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- Greet people as they come in. After a few minutes of social interaction, begin the discussion.

? What relative do you most resemble, either in appearance or personality? How so? (*Answers will vary.*)

? What are some ways we have a “family resemblance” to God? (*Answers may include: we can love the unlovable, we can be patient with difficult people, etc.*)

Say: Have you ever felt frustrated by a lack of progress in your walk with God? You prepare to grow spiritually, only to encounter roadblocks. Conflict seems to flare up without warning. The reason is simple: you are in a battle against temptation and sinful desires. But the good news is that as you win those battles, you will grow spiritually. You are on your way to maturity.



CONNECT WITH GOD'S WORD

Say: We're all involved in a struggle with our sinful desires. The fallen nature in us humans is drawn to sin; but as new creations in Christ, we are given power and wisdom to pursue God's will.

- Ask someone to read Galatians 5:16–18.

? What do you think it means to “live by the Spirit”? How have you experienced the conflict between flesh and Spirit in your life? (*Answers will vary.*)

Study 3/Bear Spiritual Fruit

Notes

➔ Ask someone to read Romans 8:5–8.

Say: There is a clear connection between who you are and what interests you. As you yield to Christ and follow the Spirit's lead, your mind will be naturally drawn more toward spiritual priorities and values.

F In what ways is your life affected by rejecting the sinful nature? What rewards and challenges will such a decision bring? (*Answers will vary.*)

Say: It is God's will for every one of us to become more like His Son. Because obeying God's will means turning from sinful desires, it's helpful to recognize those desires as well as how they appeal to us.

➔ Ask someone to read Galatians 5:19–21.

F What makes something an “act of the sinful nature,” and how can you identify and avoid such acts? (*Answers may include: it goes against God's Word, it doesn't glorify God, it's self-oriented, we can choose to ask the Holy Spirit to help us act in a godly way, etc.*)

➔ Ask someone to read 1 John 2:15–17.

Say: Love for God is opposed to love for the sins of this world. You can't expect to walk by the Spirit while enjoying a sinful lifestyle. Don't allow yourself to retain a love for the sins Jesus died to save you from. Instead, nurture God's love in your life.

F What is your motivation for serving the Lord, and how does it compare with the motivation of eternal life? (*Answers will vary.*)

➔ Ask someone to read Galatians 5:22–26

Say: When we live by the Spirit, we will develop spiritual qualities, or fruit, that come out in many good ways. We get out of step when we start to follow our sinful desires. Although we continue to have sinful desires, we can overcome them because we now belong to Christ.

F Why is it important to remember that spiritual fruit originates in your life because of your relationship with Christ and not as a result of your own efforts? (*Answers may include: so that God gets the glory, so we don't get caught up in pride, etc.*)

2 Life in the Spirit

Study 3/Bear Spiritual Fruit

Notes

➔ Ask someone to read Colossians 3:12–14.

F Think about your relationships with other Christians. Are any of them strained? If so, what would lessen the strain? If not, what advice would you give to someone who has such relationships? (*Answers may include: forgive or ask for forgiveness, ask God for patience with that person, etc.*)



Option 1: Read the following situations aloud and have group members share how they would respond in each case. Note whether the response is more like a fruit of the Spirit or an act of the flesh.

1. The guy in the car in front of you just cut you off, and then had the nerve to honk like it was your fault.
2. You just won the \$1,000 Christmas drawing at work.
3. You just lost your job, and your rent is due in two weeks.
4. The woman who works next to you—who has spent the last six months driving you crazy by bragging about her accomplishments and putting down church—was just fired because of a bad work attitude.
5. Some in your church have proposed starting a ministry to those in the community who have AIDS. Others argue that the church should be careful not to look like they condone the sinful behavior that led to many of the infections. A friend has asked your opinion and wants you to become involved in the ministry.

Option 2: Discuss ways your group can put their spiritual fruit into action. Examples include organizing a work crew to help needy families with home repairs, or taking an afternoon to visit the elderly in a long-term care facility. Formulate a plan to make one of your ideas a reality.

➔ Conclude your time in prayer, praying your own prayer or the one below.

God, we thank You that You equip us with the fruit of the Spirit. Help us to choose to walk by the Spirit daily and to set aside the things of our flesh. When others look at our lives, let them see qualities that reflect You and draw them closer to You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

3 Life in the Spirit

CONNECTIONS

Life in the Spirit

Study 4

Notes

It's Time to Grow Up

Objective: To understand the importance of spiritual growth and to allow the Spirit to use you as you grow.



CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- ➔ Greet people as they come in. After a few minutes of social interaction, begin the discussion.

- ❓ What does it mean to grow up? (*Answers will vary.*)
- ❓ What are some signs a person hasn't grown up? (*Answers will vary.*)
- ❓ Do you think you'll ever reach a point of spiritual maturity when you no longer need to grow? (*Answers will vary.*)
- ❓ Why is it important for you to mature spiritually? What will happen if you don't mature? (*Answers will vary.*)

Say: We all like to think of ourselves as mature and complete. But the fact is, we always need to grow and mature in some area of our lives—including spiritually.



CONNECT WITH GOD'S WORD

Say: An important part of spiritual maturity is realizing that we need other Christians. Unity is central to Christianity.

- ➔ Ask someone to read Ephesians 4:1–6.

F What does it mean to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (verse 1) as a Christian? What are some specific signs that you are living this way? (*Answers may include: it means not denying Christ in word or deed, giving time to help others, etc.*)

F What is the basis for our unity with other Christians? (*We are all united by the “one God and Father of all.”*) What are some specific things we can do to help develop unity within our group or within our church? (*Answers may include: pray with each other, do service projects together, etc.*)

Say: As we begin to realize where we fit in God’s kingdom, we must accept and appreciate what others have to offer. As we mature spiritually, we stop trying to rank the importance of our gifts and start seeking God to learn how our gifts can function most effectively.

➔ Ask someone to read Romans 12:3–8.

F Why is it so important that we recognize and respect the importance of other Christians in our lives? (*Answers may include: to counter the value of individualism and support the Bible’s value of community, as an admission that we can’t do everything by ourselves, to position ourselves to bless each other through our talents, to prepare ourselves to together bless those outside the faith, etc.*)

F What gifts has God given you? What are some ways you can use those gifts to be a blessing to others and to glorify God? (*Answers will vary.*)

Say: People who are spiritually immature are easily misled by false teachings, usually a distortion of God’s Word. They may get caught up in movements and personalities that divide the church and exalt people. Mature Christians, however, know the difference between what’s truth and what’s not.

➔ Ask someone to read Hebrews 5:12–14.

F What is the key to consistently being able to distinguish good from evil? (*Answers may include: reading the Bible; spending time in God’s presence, listening to trustworthy teachers, etc.*)

F Why is knowing God’s Word an important part of spiritual growth? (*Answers may include: our own ideas can get in the way, it’s hard to follow God when you’re not listening for Him, etc.*)



Option 1:

Discuss the following questions:

1. What will happen if you never make spiritual maturity a priority in your life? (*Answers may include: could fall into a life-controlling sin, could become complacent about your faith, might remain a baby Christian who burdens other believers, etc.*) Now contrast this with what will happen if you do make spiritual maturity a priority. (*Answers may include: attract people to Christ, support your local church, help bear burdens of the weak and needy, etc.*)
2. What are some ways your local church, neighborhood, and community are affected when you and the rest of the church practice spiritual maturity? (*Answers may include: people get along, others are blessed by acts of service, Christ is exalted, etc.*)

Option 2:

Make a list of the gifts each person in the group possesses. Then think of ways you can use your gifts collectively in ministry at your church or in your community.

- ➡ Conclude your time in prayer. Feel free to pray your own prayer or use the one below.

God, we thank You that You equip us with the fruit of the Spirit. Help us to choose to walk by the Spirit daily and to set aside the things of our flesh. When others look at our lives, let them see qualities that reflect You and draw them closer to You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.