

SESSION 1: THE HOLY SPIRIT, THEN AND NOW

Watch the video or read the script together as a group; then discuss the following questions. Keep in mind the questions are meant to prompt conversation, so don't feel the need to use or discuss every question.

BIBLE REFERENCES

John 2:19-22; John 20:9; John 16:1-15; Mark 8:22-26

QUESTIONS

1. How do you experience the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?
2. The Chief Apostle said to “*trust in the power of the Holy Spirit.*” Discuss what this means to you. How have you applied this to your life since you heard it on Pentecost?
3. Share some thoughts on how the power of the Holy Spirit can strengthen the fellowship in the congregation.
4. It is interesting how Jesus explained to His disciples the upcoming “work of the Holy Spirit”. Please read John 16: 1-15 and discuss.
5. Can you share some **personal** examples of “inner growth” over the past years, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit?
6. What new insights and spiritual developments have you noticed in **the church** over the past years?
7. **NAC Catechism excerpt:** “*The revealed side of the church of Christ, like the Man Jesus, shares in the general history of mankind. In contrast to Him, however, the human beings at work within the church are subject to sin. Hence the errors, aberrations, and lapses inherent in mankind are also to be found in the church. However, the deficiencies of the visible church can neither damage nor destroy the invisible and perfect church, namely the church to which the true believers and elect belong. This interconnection and simultaneous distinction between the visible and invisible church can only be grasped in faith.*”

[illegible]

After reading this, we can see how the weight of imperfection and their own humanness must weigh on our ministers and leaders as they try to lead the church of Christ. When we see glimpses of these imperfections in our leaders and in our brothers and sisters, it can lead us to judge and complain. What would happen if, instead of complaining, we prayed instead? We can pray for our leadership and congregations in a number of ways: for spiritual protection, for protection from moral failure, for preaching the Word of God, for their families, for encouragement, for physical strength, for courage, for discernment, for wisdom in leadership.

Take a moment and either as a group, or in silence individually, pray for the leadership of our church. Discuss this perspective.

8. What is required from us to allow ourselves to be led onward and to accept what the Spirit reveals to us as truth?

[illegible]

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

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In this session, we'll talk about how the Holy Spirit brought the disciples understanding, and how He brings understanding to us today.

The Holy Spirit served to enlighten the disciples as they gradually came to understand what Jesus had taught them during his life on earth. Even though they'd spent 3 ½ years with him, they still didn't get many of Jesus' teachings until He'd resurrected. Take, for example:

- In John 2: 19-22 when Jesus speaks about the destruction of the temple and how, in 3 days, He would build it up again. The disciples only got the real meaning after He'd risen as you can read in verse 22.
- Also, in John 20:9 the disciples see the empty tomb and finally understand Jesus' words from before when He said He would rise from the dead.

Jesus had explained to his disciples that it would be to their advantage that He "go away", otherwise the "Helper" would not come. This Holy Spirit would reveal new things to them, after Jesus had returned to His Father, and would disclose what had previously been hidden from them and that they couldn't understand at that point in time.

"When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into ALL truth," Jesus says in John 16:13. As we can see in the earlier examples with the disciples, divine truth has a temporal dimension to it. The Spirit helps us to understand each phase of salvation history. God grants, over time, much more insight and knowledge of what is important for our salvation. This process brings changes and new insights with it.

So what does that mean for us in today's world?

Our Chief Apostle mentioned the following: *"Many of us have grown up in the New Apostolic faith and have made the experience that we have a different understanding about many things today than previous generations did. Here one might be tempted to ask, 'Were the things we were taught in the past wrong? Did the insights we received at that time not likewise come from the Holy Spirit? Did the Apostles of bygone days not allow themselves to be led by the Spirit?'"*

Let's take an example from Scripture to answer this important question. In Bethsaida, the people brought a blind man to Jesus and asked the Lord to touch him and heal him. Jesus

led the blind man outside of the village, placed His hands upon him, applied saliva to his eyes and asked him if he could see anything. His answer was, *"I see men like trees, walking."* After Jesus laid hands upon him a second time, the blind man was able to see everything clearly.

The special thing about this event was that the miracle of healing didn't occur in a single act, but in stages. Figuratively speaking, we also go from being blind to vaguely recognizing the truth, before we come to a final state where everything is clear. This requires time. So the work of the Holy Spirit leads us, step by step, into all truth.

In the Catechism we can read: *"The revealed side of the church of Christ, like the Man Jesus, shares in the general history of mankind. In contrast to Him, however, the human beings at work within the church are subject to sin. Hence the errors, aberrations, and lapses inherent in mankind are also to be found in the church. However, the deficiencies of the visible church can neither damage nor destroy the invisible and perfect church, namely the church to which the true believers and elect belong. This interconnection and simultaneous distinction between the visible and invisible church can only be grasped in faith."*

Many things have changed in the USA district over the past 25 years, including some clarifications on doctrinal understandings. Apostle Paul compared the congregation with the temple, saying that God builds it. When you build a house, you don't use the same workers for building the foundation as you would for the electrical work. Every builder of the church is different, but also necessary. God established a plan for the church, and through the methods of the Holy Spirit, He leads us to greater insight. This is a continuous process that started at Pentecost and will only end when Jesus returns. The better question, then, is not whether things were right or wrong in the past, but rather, *"Am I prepared to allow myself to be led further by the Holy Spirit?"*

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

NAC CATECHISM

1.3 Present-day revelations of the Holy Spirit (excerpts)

Fundamental evidence that the Holy Spirit would, after Jesus' return to His Father, reveal new things, and thus disclose that which had been previously hidden, can be found in John 16:12-14. With these words, Jesus Christ promised His Apostles that they would receive further explanations about God's nature and plan of salvation through the Holy Spirit.

3.5.2 The Holy Spirit as a power – the gift of the Holy Spirit (excerpt)

In the course of salvation history, the Spirit of God manifests Himself as the power which takes hold of human beings and enables them to become instruments of God. This power can influence, fill and even renew a human being [Titus 3:5] It is important to differentiate between the Holy Spirit as a gift of God and the Holy Spirit as a person of the Godhead. The gift of the Holy Spirit is imparted by God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

3.5.4.2 The Spirit of truth

Jesus Christ also described the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of truth” [John 15:26]. This Spirit makes clear what is pleasing to God and what is contrary to His will: “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” [John 16:8]. The Holy Spirit clearly distinguishes between truth and falsehood [Acts 13: 9-10]. Everything the Spirit of truth reveals is closely linked to Christ’s nature and work. Thus He testifies of the sovereignty of the Son of God [1 Corinthians 12:3]

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