

SESSION 1: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES

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 14:16-17, 25-26

QUESTIONS

1. What are some characteristics of a strong relationship? How can you exercise these to strengthen your relationship with the Holy Spirit?
2. Do you recognize when the Holy Spirit is acting in your life? What signs help you to see His activity? Has He been a Comforter or Helper in your life? How so?
3. In John 16:7-8, Jesus says to the disciples, *"It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you."* Why did Jesus say that this was an advantage?
4. Why did God send the Holy Spirit to earth?
5. The video mentions that the Holy Spirit strengthens and empowers us to live the life that Christ has called us to live. What is the life that Christ has called you to? How does the Holy Spirit help you to live that life?
6. Why is it important to engage with the Holy Spirit when listening to a divine service and when reading the Bible?
7. Read John 14:25-26. Share an occasion when you felt reassured by remembering Jesus' words.

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SESSION 2: THE HOLY SPIRIT & THE SACRAMENTS

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 20:21-23, Luke 24:48, Romans 5:5

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the uniqueness of the Holy Spirit's function in relation to that of God the Father and God the Son.
2. The Holy Spirit is present and active in the sacraments. How is He active in each of them?
3. How does the power of the Holy Spirit work in the occupied apostle ministry today?
4. In Holy Sealing, we receive God's power, His life, and His spirit. How does receiving His power, His life, and the gift of His spirit impact a person's life?
5. What does it mean to "kill off our old nature and transform into the nature of Christ"? How does the Holy Spirit as the Giver of Life help us do this?
6. Why was it important for Jesus' disciples to be given "power from on high"? As His disciples, what are we to do with this power today?
7. What is one new thing that you learned about the Holy Spirit from the small group sessions this month?

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SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 1: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES

Welcome! In this series, we'll explore the Holy Spirit as a Person of God, and develop a better understanding of how He acts in our lives and in the church.

As Christians, we recognize that Jesus' mission on earth was to reconcile our relationship with God, the Father. No longer does the Father have to be distant to us; through Christ's sacrifice, we can have a personal relationship with Him. We're also invited to have a close connection with Jesus Christ. He is a Friend of sinners; He is both true God and true Man, and understands what we go through in life. Just as we pursue a relationship with the Father and Son, we also want to build and strengthen our relationship with the Holy Spirit, who was sent by God. He is not a concept or theoretical. He is the third Person of the Trinity.

Let's look at the relationship that we can have with the Holy Spirit.

In John 14, Jesus promised that the Father would send a Helper to be with His disciples forever after His ascension (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit is the promised Helper and Comforter. He stands alongside us in life, and strengthens us so that we can endure struggles and be victorious. It is with this strength and empowerment that we can live the life that Christ has called us to.

Continuing in John 14, Jesus reveals another characteristic of the Spirit that is important for us to understand. After teaching the disciples about His relationship with God, the Father, Jesus says, *"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you"* (John 14:25-26).

The Holy Spirit was sent to continue Jesus' work. Just as Jesus taught His disciples, the Spirit would also teach disciples of Jesus. In this role as Teacher, the Holy Spirit does not proclaim a new gospel, but rather reminds us of what Jesus taught. The Spirit sheds light on things we do not yet see, and continually reveals to us new divine understandings (John 16:13). He helps us to both learn, and teach others about God, so that the work of Christ remains alive in all believers.

Our relationship with the Holy Spirit is necessary, not only because He teaches and guides us, but because He gives us life. To understand this better, let's first look at Jesus' life. We can see that the Holy Spirit gave life to Jesus in both His

conception (Matthew 1:18) and His resurrection (1 Peter 3:18). Let's focus on how the Spirit acted in Jesus' resurrection because it connects to how we receive life from the Holy Spirit. In Peter's first letter to the early Christians, he writes, *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit...* (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus paid the price for our sins with His life. He suffered and died, but was then raised to life by the Holy Spirit.

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead also raises us to life. Paul writes to the Romans, *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you* (Romans 8:9-11). Because of sin, we were spiritually dead. But Jesus' sacrifice opened the way for us to experience life, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives us new life. God brings life out of death – He is the only One with the power to do this.

So the question we want to ask ourselves is, what do we set our minds on? Jesus points us in the right direction in John 6 – *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing* (John 6:63). When our mind is set on the ways of this world, we're on a path that separates us from God. When we focus on the condition of our soul, what pleases God, and eternity with Him, then we set our minds on things of the Spirit, because He brings eternal life and peace. This is our relationship with the Holy Spirit – one that gives, nourishes, and protects life.

How do we know if we have this relationship with the Holy Spirit? Let's look back at John 14. In verse 17, Jesus says to the disciples that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit because the world does not know Him. But He assures the disciples that *they* know Him. We, too, know the Spirit because He dwells with us. Jesus, the One sent by the Father to save us, assures us of the presence of the Holy Spirit, who was sent to continue His work. Let's embrace this promise and welcome the presence of the Spirit to guide and teach us in life, and grow in our relationship with Him by following Christ's example and spending time in Scripture, worship, and prayer. In our next session we'll focus on the activity of the Holy Spirit in the church through sacrament and ministry.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

Catechism References

CNAC 3.5.4

CNAC 3.5.4.1

CNAC 3.5.4.2

SCRIPT & ADDITIONAL CONTEXT

SESSION 2: THE HOLY SPIRIT & THE SACRAMENTS

Last time we explored our relationship with the Holy Spirit. Today we'll discuss the Holy Spirit's activity in the church through sacrament and ministry. We'll also address the distinction between the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity, and the gift of the Holy Spirit we receive in the sacrament of Holy Sealing.

God is triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We can see in Scripture how the Persons of the Trinity work together, for example in the Creation narrative in Genesis (Genesis 1:2). Yet, each Person of the Trinity has a particular point of emphasis. Our Catechism states: God the Father is Creator, the Son is Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit is the Maker of the new creation. We accept that Jesus was both True Man and True God – the only Person of the Godhead to take on flesh and live as a human being on earth. Uniquely, only the Holy Spirit was poured out. The Holy Spirit is the power of God – a power that manifests itself within us as human beings, and within the church, as the Maker of the new creation. So, how does the Holy Spirit work to bring about the new creation?

Let's talk first about the Holy Spirit's involvement in the sacraments. A sacrament is a fundamental act of God's grace, a holy act performed upon a human being to *allow* him or her to attain salvation. In the New Apostolic Church we have three sacraments: Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, and Holy Sealing. When administering them the authorized minister acts in the name of the Trinity:

"I baptize you in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;"

"In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I consecrate these elements bread and wine for Holy Communion;"

"In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

In Holy Baptism, it is the Holy Spirit who consecrates the water, and calls the soul out of their state of remoteness from God, to come to Him and believe in Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that encourages the soul to enter the church of Christ and to become part of the body of Christ. He provides the Christian the strength needed to fight the battle against sin. This is why we want to have a strong relationship with the Holy Spirit!

For Holy Communion, when bread and wine are consecrated by an authorized minister, it is the power of the Holy Spirit who brings about the divine reality of the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus. It is that real presence that allows us to share in Jesus' nature – His perfect strength to overcome the world – allowing us to live in Christ.

In the sacrament of Holy Sealing, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. God's spirit makes His permanent abode in a human being; God Himself shares a part of His *nature* with us. The recipient of this sacrament does not receive the Holy Spirit as a Person of the Godhead. Rather, we receive God's power, His life, and His spirit. His love is poured out into our hearts, and that is what makes it *possible* for us to love in the manner in which God loves, because, as Romans 5: 5 states, *"... the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."*

The Spirit of God dwells in us so that the new creation within us, resulting from our rebirth of water and Spirit, can kill off our old nature and transform into the nature of Christ.

The power of the Holy Spirit is also manifest in the church and in ordained ministry. Jesus "ordained" the Apostles when He told them, *"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."* He then breathed on them and said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit"* (John 20: 21-23). We understand this to be their ordination. By this Jesus authorized, blessed, and sanctified them for their ministry. Before He ascended, the resurrected Jesus promised the Apostles: *"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high"* (Luke 24: 49). In this way Jesus promised the sending of the Holy Spirit.

That promise was fulfilled on Pentecost. This "power from on high" refers to the fulfilling, motivating, and strengthening activity of the Holy Spirit and points to the powerful intervention of God in the history of mankind. God revealed Himself in the activity of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the day the public activity of the Apostles began. The Holy Spirit strengthens the church of Christ in its endeavor to live in a way pleasing to God, and prepare for Christ's return. The power of the Holy Spirit works in the occupied Apostle ministry today the same as in the past: in the proper administration and dispensation of the sacraments, in the proper proclamation of the gospel inspired by the Holy Spirit, and in keeping the promise of Christ's return alive, thereby preparing the bride of Christ for His return.

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CNAC 3.5.4.3