



A COMMUNITY
STUDY ON SPIRIT
DEPENDENCE

How to Be Led by the Holy Spirit
for Life on Mission



SATURATE
RESOURCES

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A COMMUNITY STUDY ON SPIRIT DEPENDENCE:

How to Be Led by the Holy Spirit for Life on Mission

USING THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells His disciples they will receive power to be His witnesses. He promises them the Holy Spirit as the source, direction, comfort, and power for life and mission. However, we regularly rely on tactics, tools, and templates to do the work the Holy Spirit does. Many missional communities struggle in mission because they've neglected the Spirit. This dialogical exercise is designed to help a community learn the role, power, and practice of following the Holy Spirit.

Prepare for this discussion by reading the relevant texts and personally practicing the rhythm of asking, listening, and obeying. Facilitating a discussion based on personal practice creates a wonderful learning environment.

This discussion will take about an hour and a half to process in a community meal or meeting, so plan accordingly. To help you lead this discussion, we've put a few key thoughts or directions under several questions in italics. You will want to guide the discussion there or summaries before you move forward.

Give people space to think and answer the questions you pose. We've found it helpful to have a whiteboard to write people's thoughts, especially as you discover truths in Scripture.

There are also clear points where you will teach, clarify, or set up further discussion. These sections are marked as a "Leader's Note."

Be yourself, and pray for clarity as your community discusses this crucial aspect of discipleship.

SET-UP

Q: What do we know to be true about the Holy Spirit and His relationship or role in the Trinity? What comes to mind?

Q: In most evangelical churches, the Holy Spirit definitely seems like the "little brother" of the Trinity. Why do you think that is?

Q: What becomes true of people and churches when this happens (man-centered, proud, powerless, fruitless—lacking the fruit of the Spirit, sin, "flesh" problems, etc.)?

Q: When the Spirit plays such a prominent role in Jesus' life and ministry and then in that of the early church in Acts, why do you think many Christians and church leaders pay so little attention to the Holy Spirit?

Discuss extremes—cessationist/charismatic. What has been the predominant evangelical perspective: traditional, conservative, or cautious?

DISCOVER

Here's a quick study (discovery process) of what Jesus and Paul have to say about the role and work of the Spirit in our lives and ministries.

- John 14:15–20
- John 14:26
- John 15:26
- John 16:7–15
- Romans 8:5–17 (plus see Romans 5:5)
- 1 Corinthians 2:10–14
- Galatians 5:16–26

Q: What do we learn from these verses? What observations do you have?

Things the Holy Spirit does in us and for us: helps, reminds, convicts, teaches, leads, counsels, reveals, proclaims (the truth about Jesus).

The Holy Spirit is also often referred to as the Spirit of truth. His desire is to lead us toward consistent obedience to the truth of the Bible and the example of Jesus.

Q: How would you describe this “body of work” we see the Spirit doing all the time?

Leader's Note: Summarize your learning from the Scriptures. Consider leading the group to the following key points:

- From what we've seen in these verses and from what we know of the Spirit's work throughout Scripture, we can conclude the Spirit is the one who changes hearts and transforms lives.
- It's the Spirit who is the primary discipler and equipper of people. The disciples were called to “go and make disciples,” but not in their own power—only after they had received the Spirit (see Matthew 28:19–20 and Acts 1:4–5).
- The work of discipleship is the Spirit's work and must be done in submission to Him and in partnership with Him. We must move away from the belief and practice of man-centered discipleship—that we are the ones who control the growth and change in people's lives.

Q: Do you think Jesus did anything apart from the Holy Spirit? Explain.

The Gospels tell us Jesus was "full of the Spirit," "walked in the power of the Spirit," and did miracles "by the power of the Spirit." What are some examples?

Q: Do you think we're able to do anything apart from the Spirit?

Point the group to John 15:4–5. We can do nothing (of kingdom value) apart from the Spirit! As Christians and leaders, we must learn to live, lead, and make disciples fully dependent on the Spirit. If not, we are living and leading in the flesh and by our own strength.

Q: How do we see the church in the book of Acts relating to the Holy Spirit? What are some examples? What are some conclusions?

In the book of Acts again and again are examples of the apostles and those in the church living life in partnership with the Holy Spirit. (More than fifty times the Spirit is specifically mentioned. See Acts 15:28—they refer to the Spirit as if He was one of the elder team!)

Q: How does the Apostle Paul say about the Holy Spirit in his letters? (See Romans 5:5, Romans 8:5–17, 1 Corinthians 2:10–14, Galatians 5:16–26, or other passages people can recall.)

- Walk in the Spirit
- Live by the Spirit
- Keep in step with the Spirit
- Be filled with the Spirit
- Live in accordance with the Spirit
- Let your mind be controlled by the Spirit

NATURE

Q: In light of everything we've read and seen so far, what thoughts, questions, or applications are coming to mind?

Q: What are the implications you're seeing in all of this for yourself and for your gospel community or those you're discipling?

The **primary calling** on the life of every follower of Jesus—every person in every church—is to help make disciples. The Holy Spirit is the **primary discipler** and equipper of people. For life and mission—to make disciples—we must live in total dependence on the Holy Spirit.

ACT

Q: What would our lives and the lives of those in our community look like if we were living in a rhythm of Spirit dependence?

- Full of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. (Galatians 5)
- Clarity rather than confusion, doubt, fear, etc.
- Clear direction about our future and how we should be stewarding our lives
 - Where we should live and work
 - How we spend our time and money
 - How and with whom we spend our time
- Lives oriented around the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Holy Spirit, making disciples
- Boldness and effectiveness in demonstrating and proclaiming the gospel
- Our lives and the lives of those around us being transformed and becoming more like Jesus

Q: What does this mean practically for our lives, our leadership, our disciple-making?

Leader's Note: At this point you will move to a direct teaching time using the following outline. Make it your own, but the simple "ask, listen, obey" process is a great tool for people to begin walking in the Spirit.

Throughout the day in the moment, we need to be asking the Spirit for help, ideas, wisdom, discernment, words to speak, etc.—basically how to think, act, and speak ALL day. That's the role the Holy Spirit is supposed to play and wants to play in our lives. Throughout the day, we need to:

ASK the Spirit for help.

LISTEN for the Spirit's direction.

OBEY what the Spirit tells us to do.

We should be **ASKING** the Spirit for help with the details of our lives, such as:

- People we're caring for and discipling
- Leaders we're developing
- Hard conversations we're having—that our words would be filled with truth and grace
- People we're counseling
- Non-Christians we're spending time with
- Gospel conversations we're having

- Decisions we're making
- Things we're struggling with
- How we're spending our time and money

We can **LISTEN** to the Spirit through:

- Quiet
- People/community
- Scripture
- Circumstances

Lastly, we must learn to **OBEY** what the Spirit has said. Obeying the Spirit will often involve us dying to self. He will call us to die . . . often! He will call us to go to hard, uncomfortable places. He will call us to do hard, sacrificial things. He will call us to love difficult people and people very different from us.

The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in us! Let the "helper," whom Jesus gave as a gift for this purpose, help us live every area of life with His power and for His purposes.

PRAY

Spend time listening and praying as a group.

First, spend time in silence. Ask the Spirit to bring to your mind situations, opportunities, and circumstances you need to ask the Spirit to direct you in.

Second, pray these questions. It could be as simple as, "Holy Spirit, what do I do with my children?" "Holy Spirit, I need your power and direction at work." "Holy Spirit, how do I love my neighbor?"

Third, spend more time listening.

Lastly, be open to others praying over those situations and giving direction from the Holy Spirit. Also ask the Holy Spirit for help in becoming a community dependent on the Holy Spirit.

We like to pray this prayer often:

"Holy Spirit, help us to learn more and more to live in a rhythm of dependence upon you!"

Asking, Listening, Obeying

*We call our small groups "missional communities," but you may know them as "gospel communities," "community groups," etc. . . . For clarity's sake, what distinguishes a community on mission from a small group is that it includes these three crucial elements: a group of people who have committed to live like family, serve one another and their community like Jesus, and are on mission together in the everyday stuff of life.