

FACILITATOR / TEACHER GUIDE

EMPOWERED

Session 10 – Empowered to Worship at Midnight

Acts 16:16–34

SESSION PURPOSE

This session explores how the Holy Spirit sustains believers during suffering, disappointment, uncertainty, and difficult seasons of life. Participants will examine the story of Paul and Silas in prison and reflect on how Spirit-led living produces endurance, worship, peace, and faithfulness even when circumstances remain painful or unresolved.

The goal of this session is not to minimize suffering or encourage emotional denial.

Instead, participants should begin understanding that the Holy Spirit remains present:

- in hardship,
- in waiting,
- in uncertainty,
- and in seasons where life feels heavy or unfinished.

This session also helps participants reflect honestly on:

- disappointment,
- endurance,
- fear,
- anxiety,
- and the difference between avoiding pain and remaining faithful within it.

Acts 16 reminds believers that the Holy Spirit does not only empower people during moments of visible victory.

The Spirit also sustains believers in the middle of difficult nights.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Understand that Spirit-led living does not eliminate suffering
- Reflect honestly on how hardship affects spiritual life

- Recognize worship as dependence rather than denial
 - Explore how the Holy Spirit produces peace and endurance
 - Understand how faithful presence becomes witness to others
 - Identify ways the Holy Spirit sustains believers during difficult seasons
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KEY PASSAGES

Primary Passage:

- Acts 16:16–34

Supporting Passages:

- John 16:33
 - Romans 8:35–39
 - Psalm 42:5–11
 - Habakkuk 3:17–19
 - Philippians 4:6–7
 - Isaiah 26:3
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9–10
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SESSION LENGTH

60–75 minutes

(Adaptable depending on group size and discussion depth.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bible (print or digital)
 - Participant Study Guide
 - Pen or journal
 - Comfortable discussion environment
 - Optional whiteboard or notepad for themes
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FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Before leading this session:

- Read Acts 16:16–34 slowly several times
- Reflect honestly on difficult seasons in your own spiritual journey
- Prepare for participants carrying:
 - grief
 - exhaustion
 - disappointment
 - anxiety
 - suffering
 - unanswered questions
 - or spiritual discouragement

Important:

This session should NOT feel:

- emotionally manipulative,
- triumphalistic,
- dismissive of pain,
- or pressure-filled.

The focus is:

- endurance,
- honesty,
- worship,
- peace,
- and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Allow participants space to acknowledge pain honestly without rushing toward shallow positivity.

SESSION FLOW (60–75 MINUTES)

1. WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants and reconnect briefly to the previous session.

Suggested transition:

“Last week we explored how the Holy Spirit sends believers outward into God’s mission. This week we explore how the Holy Spirit sustains believers during suffering, uncertainty, and difficult seasons.”

Open with prayer.

Suggested prayer focus:

- peace
- endurance
- honesty
- comfort
- and awareness of God’s presence.

2. OPENING REFLECTION: SUFFERING & FAITH (10 MINUTES)

Invite thoughtful and honest discussion.

Discussion prompts:

- Why do difficult seasons often affect people spiritually?
- What kinds of suffering or uncertainty most challenge faith?
- How do people usually respond emotionally during hardship?
- Why is endurance often difficult?

Facilitator Guidance:

This conversation may become emotional.

Allow honesty without trying to “solve” people’s pain too quickly.

Avoid simplistic statements like:

“Everything happens for a reason.”

The goal is helping participants reflect honestly about suffering and spiritual life.

3. READING THE PRIMARY PASSAGE (5 MINUTES)

Read Acts 16:16–34 aloud slowly together.

Encourage participants to notice:

- the emotional movement of the story

- how Paul and Silas respond to suffering
- and how the Holy Spirit works throughout the situation.

Optional Reflection Prompt:

“What part of this story stands out most strongly to you?”

4. MOVEMENT 1 – THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES NOT ELIMINATE SUFFERING (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

Faithfulness does not guarantee comfort or ease.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 16:16–24
- John 16:33
- Romans 8:35–39

Key Truths:

- Paul and Silas were faithfully following God
- They still experienced suffering and injustice
- The Holy Spirit remained present in difficulty

Key Emphasis:

Spirit-led living is not protection from every painful experience.

The Holy Spirit sustains believers within real life.

Facilitator Insight:

Many Christians quietly assume:

- suffering means failure,
- unanswered prayer means God is absent,
- or hardship means something is spiritually wrong.

Acts challenges those assumptions.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do people often assume suffering means God is distant?
 - How can hardship affect spiritual life?
 - What helps believers remain grounded during painful seasons?
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5. MOVEMENT 2 – THE HOLY SPIRIT SUSTAINS WORSHIP IN DIFFICULT SEASONS (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

Worship becomes an act of dependence and trust during hardship.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 16:25
- Psalm 42:5–11
- Habakkuk 3:17–19

Key Truths:

- Paul and Silas worship honestly within suffering
- Worship is not denial of pain
- The Holy Spirit helps believers continue turning toward God

Key Emphasis:

Biblical worship includes:

- lament,
- honesty,
- dependence,
- and trust.

Facilitator Guidance:

Avoid:

- emotional pressure,
- forced positivity,
- or minimizing suffering.

The goal is helping participants see worship as ongoing trust in God's presence.

Discussion Questions:

- What is the difference between worship and emotional denial?
- Why is worship difficult during painful seasons?
- How can worship reshape perspective during hardship?

6. MOVEMENT 3 – THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES PEACE & STEADINESS (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit produces inner peace that circumstances cannot fully control.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 16:26–28
- Philippians 4:6–7
- Isaiah 26:3

Key Truths:

- Paul and Silas remain remarkably steady
- Peace is not emotional numbness
- The Holy Spirit produces groundedness and trust

Key Emphasis:

Spirit-led peace is not pretending life is easy.

It is confidence that God remains present and faithful.

Facilitator Insight:

Modern culture often trains people toward:

- anxiety,
- panic,
- outrage,
- and emotional exhaustion.

The Holy Spirit forms believers who remain grounded and attentive.

Discussion Questions:

- What most often disrupts peace in people's lives?
- What is the difference between peace and avoidance?
- How does dependence on God affect anxiety and fear?

7. MOVEMENT 4 – THE HOLY SPIRIT CONTINUES WORKING THROUGH HARDSHIP (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

God continues working even in painful or unfinished situations.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 16:29–34

- 2 Corinthians 12:9–10

Key Truths:

- The jailer encounters transformation through the suffering of Paul and Silas
- God often works through endurance and faithful presence
- The mission of Jesus continues even in hardship

Key Emphasis:

The Holy Spirit does not only work through visible success or breakthrough.

The Spirit also works through:

- perseverance,
- faithfulness,
- compassion,
- and endurance.

Facilitator Guidance:

This section should feel hopeful but grounded.

Avoid:

- shallow triumphalism,
- simplistic answers,
- or pressure toward emotional intensity.

Discussion Questions:

- How can suffering shape spiritual maturity?
- Where have you seen God work through difficult situations?
- How can faithful endurance become witness to others?

8. SUMMARY & KEY INSIGHT (5 MINUTES)

Key Insight to Emphasize:

The Holy Spirit remains present:

- in suffering,
- in uncertainty,
- in waiting,

- and in difficult seasons.

Spirit-led living is not:

- emotional denial,
- instant escape,
- or avoidance of hardship.

It is ongoing dependence on God through every season of life.

Key Takeaway:

The Holy Spirit sustains believers with peace, endurance, and faithful presence even in difficult nights.

9. FINAL REFLECTION & PRACTICE (5 MINUTES)

Final Reflection Question:

Where do you most need the peace, endurance, or presence of the Holy Spirit right now?

Practice for the Week:

Encourage participants to:

- Read Acts 16:16–34 daily
- Practice honest prayer about one difficult situation
- Spend a few moments each day in worship, silence, or gratitude
- Pray:

“Holy Spirit, help me remain rooted in Your presence.”

Encourage attentiveness rather than pressure.

CLOSING PRAYER (FACILITATOR-LED)

Pray for:

- peace
- endurance
- comfort
- hope
- and awareness of God’s presence

Suggested emphasis:

Ask God to sustain participants through difficult seasons and deepen their trust in the Holy Spirit's presence.

FACILITATOR REMINDER

This session should feel:

- calm
- grounded
- hopeful
- and emotionally safe.

Do not allow the discussion to become:

- emotionally manipulative,
- dismissive of suffering,
- or triumphalistic.

The goal is helping participants recognize:

- suffering does not mean abandonment,
- worship can exist alongside pain,
- and the Holy Spirit remains faithful in difficult seasons.

If participants leave:

- feeling seen,
- more hopeful,
- and more aware of God's presence during hardship,

then the session has succeeded.

Keep the tone:

- pastoral
 - reflective
 - grace-filled
 - and centered on Spirit-dependent living.
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