

FACILITATOR / TEACHER GUIDE

EMPOWERED

Session 1 – Who Is the Holy Spirit?

Acts 2:1–21

SESSION PURPOSE

This opening session establishes the theological and spiritual foundation for the entire Empowered study. Participants will explore who the Holy Spirit is, why the Holy Spirit matters, and how the Spirit empowers believers for everyday Christian living.

Rather than beginning with spiritual gifts, dramatic experiences, or theological debate, this session intentionally begins with relationship and dependence. The goal is to help participants move beyond confusion, fear, skepticism, or performance-driven spirituality and toward a healthier understanding of the Holy Spirit as the active presence of God among His people.

This session sets the tone for the entire study:

- spiritually open
 - deeply grounded in Scripture
 - thoughtful and reflective
 - centered on Jesus
 - and focused on Spirit-dependent living rather than spiritual performance.
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the Holy Spirit as a Person rather than merely a force or feeling
 - Recognize the Holy Spirit's ongoing role throughout Scripture
 - Explain how the Holy Spirit points believers toward Jesus
 - Reflect honestly on past assumptions or experiences regarding the Holy Spirit
 - Begin developing a framework for Spirit-dependent Christian living
 - Understand that the Christian life was never meant to be lived apart from the Holy Spirit
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KEY PASSAGES

Primary Passage:

- Acts 2:1–21

Supporting Passages:

- John 14:16–17
 - John 16:13–14
 - Genesis 1:1–2
 - Ezekiel 36:26–27
 - Romans 8:11–14
 - Galatians 5:22–25
 - Ephesians 4:30
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SESSION LENGTH

60–75 minutes

(Adaptable for smaller groups, larger classes, or extended discussion settings.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

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

Before leading this session:

- Read Acts 2:1–21 slowly and prayerfully
- Reflect honestly on your own experiences and assumptions regarding the Holy Spirit
- Prepare to model humility and openness rather than expertise
- Anticipate that participants may come from:
 - very different church backgrounds

- painful spiritual experiences
- skepticism
- emotional wounds
- or uncertainty about the Holy Spirit
- Resist the urge to “solve” every theological question immediately

This session works best when facilitators create:

- emotional safety
- openness
- curiosity
- and thoughtful discussion.

The goal is not to force agreement or emotional experience.

The goal is to help participants begin exploring what it means to live with awareness of and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

SESSION FLOW (60–75 MINUTES)

1. WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants warmly and briefly introduce the purpose of the study.

You may say something like:

“This study is not about creating pressure or emotional experiences. It is about learning who the Holy Spirit is, how the Spirit works, and what it means to live with deeper dependence on God in everyday life.”

Open with prayer.

Suggested prayer focus:

- openness
- humility
- discernment
- willingness to learn
- awareness of God’s presence

Encourage participants to approach the study with honesty rather than pressure to “perform spiritually.”

2. ORIENTING THE GROUP: WHY THIS STUDY MATTERS (5 MINUTES)

Briefly frame the importance of the topic.

Key ideas to emphasize:

- Many Christians understand God the Father and Jesus the Son more easily than the Holy Spirit
- Churches often either avoid the Holy Spirit or overemphasize experiences disconnected from formation
- Acts presents believers living with conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit
- The goal of this study is not spiritual spectacle, but Spirit-dependent living

Key Teaching Point:

The Holy Spirit is not optional to the Christian life.

3. OPENING DISCUSSION: EXPERIENCES & ASSUMPTIONS (10 MINUTES)

Invite gentle reflection.

Discussion prompts:

- When you hear the phrase “Holy Spirit,” what immediately comes to mind?
- What kinds of church experiences have shaped your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
- What emotions do people often associate with this topic?
- Why do you think many Christians feel uncertain discussing the Holy Spirit?

Facilitator Guidance:

- Avoid correcting responses too quickly
- Allow people to speak honestly
- Resist debate
- Normalize uncertainty and differing backgrounds

Important:

This conversation sets the emotional tone for the entire series.

4. MOVEMENT 1 – THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON, NOT A FORCE (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit is personal, relational, and active—not merely emotional energy or spiritual atmosphere.

Read Scripture:

- John 14:16–17
- Ephesians 4:30

Key Truths to Emphasize:

- The Spirit teaches, guides, comforts, and convicts
- The Spirit can be grieved
- Christianity is relationship with the living God, not access to impersonal spiritual power

Facilitator Insight:

Many people either:

- reduce the Spirit to emotion
or
- avoid the Spirit entirely because of emotional excess they have witnessed.

Help participants see the biblical middle ground.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do people sometimes think of the Holy Spirit more as a force than a Person?
 - How does seeing the Spirit as relational change the way we think about faith?
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5. MOVEMENT 2 – THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ACTIVE (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit did not begin in Acts 2. The Spirit has always been active throughout Scripture.

Read Scripture:

- Genesis 1:1–2
- Ezekiel 36:26–27
- Acts 2:16–18

Key Truths:

- The Spirit was active in creation
- The Spirit empowered people throughout the Old Testament
- Pentecost marks the Spirit being poured out broadly upon ordinary believers

Key Emphasis:

Acts 2 is not the beginning of the Holy Spirit—it is the beginning of a new chapter in God’s relationship with His people.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Pentecost was such a significant moment in Acts?
 - How does Acts 2 change the way believers understand God’s presence today?
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6. MOVEMENT 3 – THE HOLY SPIRIT ALWAYS POINTS TOWARD JESUS (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit’s primary role is not self-promotion, but pointing people toward Jesus.

Read Scripture:

- John 16:13–14

Key Truths:

- The Spirit glorifies Christ
- The Spirit leads believers into truth
- Healthy spirituality remains centered on Jesus

Facilitator Insight:

This is one of the most important discernment principles in the entire study.

Not every emotional experience or dramatic moment automatically reflects the Holy Spirit.

The question becomes:

“Does this move people toward Jesus, truth, humility, and love?”

Discussion Questions:

- Why do people sometimes become more fascinated with experiences than with Jesus?
 - How does this help Christians practice discernment?
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7. MOVEMENT 4 – WHY WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Christian life was never meant to be lived through willpower alone.

Read Scripture:

- Romans 8:11–14

- Galatians 5:22–25

Key Truths:

- The Spirit transforms believers from the inside out
- Spiritual maturity is participation with God’s work
- The Spirit produces fruit and transformation over time

Facilitator Guidance:

Avoid turning this into “try harder Christianity.”

The emphasis should remain:

- dependence
- participation
- and relationship.

Discussion Questions:

- Where do people most often rely on themselves instead of depending on God?
 - What fruit of the Spirit do you most long to see grow in your life?
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8. SUMMARY & KEY INSIGHT (5 MINUTES)

Key Insight to Emphasize:

The Holy Spirit is not:

- optional
- merely emotional
- or disconnected from everyday life.

The Holy Spirit is:

- God present with His people
- the One who empowers believers
- and the One who continues the work Jesus began.

Key Takeaway:

Spirit-led living is not about spiritual performance.

It is about growing in awareness of and dependence upon the presence of God.

9. FINAL REFLECTION & PRACTICE (5 MINUTES)

Final Reflection Question:

What would it look like to become more aware of and dependent on the Holy Spirit in everyday life?

Practice for the Week:

Encourage participants to:

- Read Acts 2:1–21 slowly each day
- Spend a few moments in silence before praying
- Ask:

“Holy Spirit, help me become more aware of Your presence and work in my life.”

Encourage attentiveness rather than pressure.

CLOSING PRAYER (FACILITATOR-LED)

Pray for:

- openness
- wisdom
- discernment
- courage
- and deeper awareness of God’s presence

Suggested closing emphasis:

- gratitude for God’s nearness
 - willingness to learn
 - and openness to ongoing transformation.
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FACILITATOR REMINDER

This first session is foundational.

Do not rush toward:

- theological argument
- dramatic experiences
- or quick answers.

The goal is to create:

- safety
- openness
- humility
- and curiosity.

If participants leave:

- less fearful
- more thoughtful
- and more open to dependence on the Holy Spirit,

then the session has succeeded.

Let the tone remain:

- grounded
- relational
- reflective
- and centered on Jesus.

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