

Session 1



POWER FOR A NEW BEGINNING

REAL PEOPLE | REAL GOD | REAL LIFE

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EMPOWERED

Session 1: Who Is the Holy Spirit?

Primary Scripture

Acts 2:1–21

How to Use This Study

This study is designed to help you engage Scripture deeply and grow in your understanding of the Holy Spirit and His work in the life of believers and the Church.

It can be used:

- for personal devotional study
- for one-on-one discipleship
- as part of a small group or larger group setting

Each session is meant to be worked through slowly and thoughtfully. The goal is not simply to gain information, but to allow God’s Word to shape how you think, how you pray, and how you live.

Using This Study Individually

If you are working through this study on your own:

- read each Scripture passage carefully
- reflect on the teaching
- write out your responses honestly
- revisit key verses throughout the week
- move slowly rather than rushing to complete the material

Spiritual formation rarely happens quickly. It happens through consistent attention to God’s presence and truth over time.

Using This Study in a Group

If you are using this study in a group setting, participants should complete the session individually during the week before gathering together.

The written portions are not intended to be completed during group discussion. Instead, they prepare participants for deeper conversation and meaningful reflection.

When gathering as a group:

- discuss what stood out from the teaching
 - share insights from Scripture
 - reflect on the application questions
 - encourage one another in spiritual growth and attentiveness to God
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Introduction — The God Many Christians Barely Know

Most Christians understand something about God the Father.

Many understand Jesus the Son:

- His teachings
- His death and resurrection
- His love and forgiveness

But when it comes to the Holy Spirit, many believers feel uncertain.

Some were taught very little about the Spirit at all.

Others experienced environments where the Holy Spirit was discussed almost entirely through dramatic emotional experiences or spiritual manifestations.

Still others became cautious or skeptical because they witnessed manipulation, confusion, or unhealthy teaching done in the Spirit's name.

As a result, many Christians quietly live as though the Holy Spirit is optional—important in doctrine, but largely absent from everyday life.

But the Book of Acts presents a very different picture.

The early Church did not merely believe in the Holy Spirit.

They depended on the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit:

- empowered them
- guided them
- convicted them
- comforted them
- gave courage
- formed community

- sent them into mission
- and continually pointed them toward Jesus

This first session begins with a foundational question:

Not:

“What spiritual experiences should I seek?”

But:

“Who is the Holy Spirit?”

Because until we understand who the Spirit is, we will struggle to understand what the Spirit does.

Movement 1 — The Holy Spirit Is a Person, Not a Force

Many people think of the Holy Spirit as:

- an emotion
- a feeling
- a spiritual atmosphere
- or simply “God’s power”

But Scripture consistently speaks of the Holy Spirit as personal.

Read Scripture: John 14:16–17

Jesus describes the Spirit as:

- a Helper
- One who teaches
- One who remains with believers

Read Scripture: Ephesians 4:30

Paul says believers can “grieve” the Holy Spirit.

An impersonal force cannot be grieved.

Only a person can.

This matters because Christianity is not merely about accessing spiritual power. It is about relationship with the living God.

The Holy Spirit is not:

- an “it”

- a spiritual energy
- or a religious feeling

The Holy Spirit is God present with His people.

This also helps correct two common misunderstandings.

Some people reduce the Spirit to emotion alone.

Others react so strongly against emotionalism that they functionally ignore the Spirit altogether.

Scripture presents neither extreme.

The Holy Spirit is personal, relational, active, and present.

Reflection

When you think about the Holy Spirit, what words or ideas immediately come to mind?

How has your past church experience shaped your understanding of the Holy Spirit?

Movement 2 — The Holy Spirit Has Always Been Present

The Holy Spirit did not suddenly appear in Acts 2.

From the opening verses of Scripture, the Spirit is active in creation and throughout God's work in history.

Read Scripture: Genesis 1:1–2

Read Scripture: Exodus 31:1–5

Read Scripture: Ezekiel 36:26–27

Throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit:

- brings life
- empowers people for service
- gives wisdom
- speaks through prophets

- and points toward God’s future restoration

But something changes dramatically in Acts 2.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit often came upon particular people for particular moments.

In Acts, the Spirit is poured out broadly upon ordinary believers.

Read Scripture: Acts 2:16–18

Pentecost is not merely a dramatic spiritual moment.

It is the fulfillment of God’s promise to dwell among His people in a new way.

The Spirit is no longer limited to kings, prophets, or priests.

The presence of God is now poured out upon the Church.

Reflection

Why do you think many Christians think of the Holy Spirit as distant or mysterious rather than present and active?

How does Acts 2 change the way you think about God’s presence with believers today?

Movement 3 — The Holy Spirit Always Points Toward Jesus

One of the clearest ways to understand the work of the Holy Spirit is this:

The Holy Spirit consistently points people toward Jesus.

Read Scripture: John 16:13–14

Jesus says the Spirit:

- guides believers into truth
- glorifies Christ
- and reminds believers of what Jesus taught

This is extremely important.

Many unhealthy ideas about the Holy Spirit develop when people become more fascinated with spiritual experiences than with Jesus Himself.

In Scripture, the Spirit never becomes the center of attention apart from Christ.

The Spirit:

- magnifies Jesus
- forms Christlike character
- empowers Christlike mission
- and leads believers deeper into truth, love, holiness, and obedience

This also helps us practice discernment.

Not every emotional moment is automatically the Holy Spirit.

Not every dramatic claim is evidence of God’s activity.

The question is not simply:

“Was this powerful?”

But:

“Does this lead people toward Jesus, truth, humility, love, and faithful obedience?”

That is one of the primary ways Scripture teaches us to discern spiritual things.

Reflection

Why do you think people are often drawn more toward dramatic spiritual experiences than toward slow spiritual formation?

What does it mean for the Holy Spirit to point people toward Jesus rather than toward spiritual performance?

Movement 4 — Why We Need the Holy Spirit

Many Christians try to live the Christian life primarily through:

- discipline
- personality
- effort
- or willpower

But the New Testament consistently teaches that the Christian life was never meant to be lived apart from the Spirit.

Read Scripture: Romans 8:11–14

Read Scripture: Galatians 5:22–25

The Spirit:

- convicts
- transforms
- empowers
- comforts
- produces spiritual fruit
- and helps believers become more like Christ

This means spiritual maturity is not simply self-improvement.

It is participation with the ongoing work of God.

The fruit of the Spirit is not manufactured through pressure.

It is formed through abiding relationship with God.

This is why dependence on the Holy Spirit matters.

Without the Spirit:

- Christianity becomes performance
- prayer becomes routine
- obedience becomes pressure
- and faith becomes exhausting

The Spirit does not remove effort from the Christian life.

But the Spirit transforms how we live it.

Reflection

Where do you most often rely on your own strength instead of depending on God?

Which fruit of the Spirit do you most long to see grow in your life right now?

A Note on Discernment

Christians throughout history have understood the work of the Holy Spirit differently.

Some traditions became cautious because they witnessed emotional manipulation or unhealthy teaching.

Others became so focused on spiritual experiences that discernment and spiritual maturity were neglected.

Scripture calls believers to neither fear the Spirit nor follow uncritically.

Instead:

- remain open to God's work
- stay grounded in Scripture
- practice discernment
- and remember that the Spirit's primary work is always to glorify Jesus and form healthy, faithful disciples.

The goal is not spiritual spectacle.

The goal is transformation.

Formation Practice (This Week)

Practice: Becoming More Aware of God's Presence

Each day this week:

Step 1 — Begin with Silence

Spend two minutes in quiet before praying.

Do not rush.

Become aware that God is present.

Step 2 — Read Slowly

Read Acts 2:1–21 slowly each day.

Notice:

- repeated words
- emotions
- actions
- and what the Spirit empowers believers to do

Step 3 — Ask One Simple Question

Pray:

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

Step 4 — Pay Attention

Throughout the day, notice:

- conviction
- encouragement
- opportunities to love others
- moments of courage
- or nudges toward prayer, kindness, generosity, or truthfulness

Do not force experiences.

Simply become attentive.

Living It Out

This week, intentionally reflect on one area of your life where:

- you feel spiritually exhausted
- disconnected
- fearful
- or dependent entirely on your own strength

Write it here:

Now write:

What might it look like to invite the Holy Spirit into this area instead of trying to carry it alone?

Return to this same reflection throughout the week.

Final Reflection

The Holy Spirit is not an optional part of Christian belief.

The Spirit is:

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

The question is not whether the Holy Spirit is active.

The question is whether we are learning to live with awareness, openness, discernment, and dependence upon His presence.

Weekly Prayer

Holy Spirit,

Teach me to recognize Your presence,
trust Your leading,
and remain open to the ways You are working in my life.

Give me wisdom where I need discernment,
courage where I feel afraid,
and humility where I rely too heavily on myself.

Form my life around Jesus,
and help me become more attentive to Your voice and Your work each day.

Amen.
