

Session 10



EMPOWERED

Session 10: Empowered to Worship at Midnight

Primary Scripture

Acts 16:16–34

Introduction — When Faithfulness Becomes Difficult

Most people find it easier to trust God when life feels:

- stable
- hopeful
- and under control

But suffering changes things.

Pain often raises difficult questions:

- Where is God now?
- Why is this happening?
- Why didn't God prevent this?
- How do I remain faithful when life feels heavy or unfair?

Acts 16 tells the story of Paul and Silas being:

- falsely accused
- beaten
- imprisoned
- and placed in chains

And yet, in the middle of suffering, something remarkable happens.

At midnight:

they begin praying and singing hymns to God.

This story matters because it reveals something essential about Spirit-led living:

The Holy Spirit does not only empower believers in moments of victory and strength.

The Spirit also sustains believers in seasons of pain, uncertainty, exhaustion, and suffering.

This session explores an important question:

How does the Holy Spirit sustain believers when life becomes difficult?

Because dependence on the Holy Spirit becomes most visible not only in moments of power, but also in moments of endurance.

Movement 1 — Spirit-Led Living Does Not Eliminate Suffering

Paul and Silas were following God faithfully.

And yet they still experienced:

- opposition
- injustice
- suffering
- and imprisonment

Read Scripture: Acts 16:16–24

This is important because many people unconsciously assume faithfulness should produce:

- comfort
- ease
- or protection from hardship

But Acts repeatedly shows faithful believers facing difficulty.

The presence of suffering does not mean:

- God has abandoned His people
- the Holy Spirit is absent
- or faith has failed

Sometimes the Holy Spirit leads believers directly into difficult places.

Read Scripture: John 16:33

Read Scripture: Romans 8:35–39

This matters deeply because disappointment can easily distort faith.

When life becomes painful, people are often tempted toward:

- bitterness
- fear
- cynicism
- despair

- or spiritual withdrawal

But the Book of Acts reminds believers:

the Holy Spirit remains present even in prisons, suffering, uncertainty, and hardship.

Spirit-led living does not guarantee an easy life.

It produces faithful endurance within real life.

Reflection

How has suffering or disappointment affected your relationship with God?

Why do people often assume hardship means God is distant or absent?

Movement 2 — The Holy Spirit Sustains Worship in Difficult Seasons

Acts says:

“Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God...”

Read Scripture: Acts 16:25

This moment is extraordinary not because Paul and Silas felt emotionally positive.

But because the Holy Spirit sustained their faithfulness in suffering.

This is important because worship is not only for good seasons.

Worship becomes especially powerful when circumstances feel painful or uncertain.

The Holy Spirit helps believers remain rooted in God even when:

- emotions fluctuate
- answers feel delayed
- or circumstances remain unresolved

Read Scripture: Psalm 42:5–11

Read Scripture: Habakkuk 3:17–19

This does not mean Christians deny pain or pretend everything is fine.

Biblical worship includes:

- lament
- honesty
- grief
- and dependence

But the Holy Spirit helps believers continue turning toward God rather than away from Him.

This is one of the clearest signs of spiritual maturity:

not emotional perfection,

but ongoing dependence on God through every season of life.

And importantly:

Paul and Silas worshiped publicly.

The other prisoners were listening.

Spirit-led endurance becomes a witness to others.

People notice when believers remain:

- hopeful
- steady
- compassionate
- and faithful

even in difficult seasons.

Reflection

What usually happens to your spiritual life during difficult seasons?

What is the difference between denying pain and worshiping through pain?

Movement 3 — The Holy Spirit Produces Peace That Circumstances Cannot Control

As Paul and Silas worship, an earthquake shakes the prison.

Read Scripture: Acts 16:26–28

The prison doors open.

Chains fall off.

And yet Paul and Silas do not run.

This matters because the Holy Spirit produces a kind of inner steadiness that circumstances alone cannot explain.

The jailer expects chaos.

Instead, he encounters peace and integrity.

Read Scripture: Philippians 4:6–7

Read Scripture: Isaiah 26:3

The peace of the Holy Spirit is not:

- emotional numbness
- denial
- or pretending suffering does not hurt

It is confidence that God remains present and faithful even when life feels uncertain.

This kind of peace becomes deeply compelling in an anxious and fearful world.

And importantly:

the miracle in Acts 16 is not only the earthquake.

The deeper miracle is the transformation happening within the people involved.

The jailer moves:

- from fear to openness
- from despair to hope
- from violence to hospitality

The Holy Spirit transforms both:

- circumstances
and
 - hearts.
-

Reflection

Where do you most long for peace or steadiness in your life right now?

What would it look like to depend more deeply on God in that area?

Movement 4 — The Holy Spirit Uses Suffering to Continue the Mission

The jailer asks:

“What must I do to be saved?”

Read Scripture: Acts 16:29–34

This moment reveals something important:

God was still working even in the prison.

The Holy Spirit did not stop moving simply because circumstances became painful.

Acts repeatedly shows:

the mission of Jesus continues through both:

- triumph
and
- suffering

This is deeply important for Spirit-led living.

Many people assume God is working most clearly only during:

- success
- growth
- visible victories
- or emotionally powerful moments

But Acts reminds believers:

God often works powerfully through:

- hardship

- endurance
- weakness
- and faithful perseverance

Read Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:9–10

Read Scripture: James 1:2–4

The Holy Spirit continually forms believers who:

- remain faithful
- continue loving
- continue worshiping
- and continue trusting God

even when life feels unfinished or painful.

And often, those seasons become powerful witnesses to others.

Reflection

How have difficult seasons shaped your faith over time?

Where might God still be working in situations that currently feel painful or unresolved?

A Note on Suffering and the Holy Spirit

Some Christians assume the presence of the Holy Spirit should eliminate struggle or hardship.

Others become cynical and assume suffering means God is absent.

Scripture teaches something different.

The Holy Spirit:

- comforts
- strengthens

- sustains
- and remains present with believers through suffering

Sometimes the Spirit changes circumstances dramatically.

Sometimes the Spirit gives believers strength to endure faithfully within those circumstances.

The goal is not avoiding every difficulty.

The goal is remaining rooted in Christ through every season of life.

Formation Practice (This Week)

Practice: Remaining Attentive to God in Difficult Seasons

Each day this week:

Step 1 — Read Slowly

Read Acts 16:16–34 slowly each day.

Pay attention to:

- how Paul and Silas responded to suffering
- what the Holy Spirit produced in them
- and how others were affected by their faithfulness

Step 2 — Practice Honest Prayer

Bring one painful, frustrating, or unresolved situation honestly before God.

Do not edit your emotions.

Speak truthfully.

Step 3 — Practice Worship

Spend a few moments each day:

- listening to worship music
- reading a Psalm aloud
- praying slowly
- or simply thanking God for His presence

Not because circumstances are easy,
but because God remains faithful.

Step 4 — Encourage Someone Else

Pain often turns people inward.

This week:

- encourage someone
- send a message
- pray for someone
- or quietly support someone struggling

Pay attention to how the Holy Spirit works through compassion and encouragement.

Living It Out

What difficult situation currently requires the greatest endurance or trust from you?

How do you usually respond spiritually when life feels painful or uncertain?

What would deeper dependence on the Holy Spirit look like in this season?

Final Reflection

Acts 16 reminds believers that the Holy Spirit does not abandon people in suffering.

The Spirit remains present:

- in prisons
- in uncertainty
- in disappointment
- and in seasons where life feels heavy or unresolved

The Holy Spirit sustains believers with:

- peace

- courage
- endurance
- and ongoing awareness of God's presence

The question is not:

“Will difficult seasons come?”

The question is:

“Will we continue turning toward God in the middle of them?”

Weekly Prayer

Holy Spirit,

When life feels heavy or uncertain,
help me remain rooted in Your presence.

Give me peace where I feel anxious,
steadiness where I feel overwhelmed,
and endurance where I feel exhausted.

Teach me to worship not only in joyful seasons,
but also in difficult ones.

Help me trust that You are still at work,
even in situations that feel painful or unfinished.

Keep forming my life into the likeness of Jesus.

Amen.