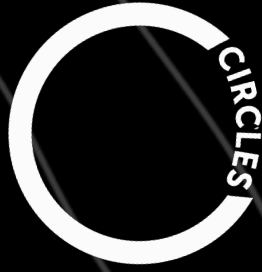


**THE HOLY
SPIRIT**



CIRCLE 01/04: **THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE PERSONAL PRESENCE OF GOD**

My mother has a massive china cabinet full of dishes that we hardly use. There is a set of Christmas dishes that only come out on December 24th. There is a set of apple-themed flatware that we only use when my Aunt comes to town. (They must have been a gift from her.) There is a pristine set of fine china with gold trim that we dust off for extremely special occasions. Within the locked walls of her cabinet, there are dishes, cups, and crystal that have never been used in my entire life. For 363 days of the year, my mom's cabinet dishes sit there forgotten and forsaken. The whole collection collects dust, locked away in the corner of her dining room.

Sometimes I worry that we treat the Holy Spirit like my mom treats her china. We imagine the Spirit just sits on a shelf in our hearts, ready for us to dust Him off when we need Him. Sure, we have read about the Holy Spirit, but that doesn't change our daily routines very much. It's sad, but often our awareness doesn't alter our actions.

Irish theologian Alister McGrath echoed the same concern. He described the Spirit as "the Cinderella of the Trinity. The other two sisters may have gone to the theological ball; the Holy Spirit got left behind." The Holy Spirit is the most misunderstood and forgotten member of the Trinity. So, let's explore the glory hiding within the mystery.

First, we should tackle this. **Who is the Holy Spirit?** Let's start by saying what the Holy Spirit is not. The Holy Spirit is not a force nor a vibe. The Holy Spirit is not reserved for certain types of Christians, nor does it only show up as goosebumps during worship. The Holy Spirit is God, part of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Spirit Is Supernatural

We are throwing around some complicated words, so we should explore one of the most complex pieces of theology in any textbook. **What is the Trinity?** This is a question that many scholars spend their whole lives trying to answer. People a million times smarter than me still grapple with this question, but that doesn't mean it's a topic worth ignoring. Confusion shouldn't lead to exclusion.

We can break the Trinity down into three core truths. First, there is only one God (Isaiah 44:6). Second, God is One within Himself (Deuteronomy 6:4). Third, our One God exists as three distinct persons — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16; Matthew 28:19). This means that God is one in essence and three in person. They're all divine and distinct while also operating in perfect unity.

Many people explain that the Trinity is like water or an egg. Water can exist as both ice, liquid, and steam while remaining H₂O. Eggs have three parts that all make up the egg's essence — shell, white, and yolk. Sorry Sunday School teachers, while these are clever, they are flawed. These illustrations suggest too much separation and distinction between the parts. No analogy, metaphor, or illustration perfectly captures the Trinity.

That's a good thing.

Confused? Of course, you are. At the core, the Trinity is complex. Why? Because God is complex. God is supernatural, so He's way beyond our human understanding. We can find hope and comfort in that. If God could be perfectly understood with clear definitions and perfectly straight lines, then would we really be dealing with God? I don't think so.

He's beyond our comprehension. He's beyond space and time. His identity contains some mystery. You could spend every hour of every day trying to understand the mysteries of God better, yet you would still only scratch the surface. My invitation to you is simple. Never stop exploring the deep waters of God's wonder. The more you discover, the bigger God reveals Himself to be. The bigger God reveals Himself to be, the greater your wonder and worship become.

READ: 1 Corinthians 3:16

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?

The Holy Spirit Is Personal

Did you know that you are a temple? Paul uses a reoccurring metaphor where he says, "you are a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). He's teaching that we are walking churches. Sure, you have green eyes instead of stained glass windows or a mohawk instead of a steeple, but you are still the living Temple of God. Why? Because the Holy Spirit dwells within us. God set up shop in your soul. When you become a Christian, God's presence becomes personal. The God of the cosmos moves into your body to minister to you and work through you. The Holy Spirit is God's presence made personal.

The Bible describes God's super-close proximity to you with the Hebrew word "paniyim." It's loosely translated to presence, but it goes so much deeper than that. It refers to the exact moment and the exact place you find yourself right now. No one else can experience "paniyim" with you. Not a friend, sibling, or even parent. Only God can be that close.

He's beside you, behind you, and present within you. Through the Spirit, God's not just in the same room as you. He's in the same moment as you. He's closer than the air around you. He's as close as your skin.

The Spirit is how our supernatural God gets personal with us. Why does God go to such great lengths to be close to us? It's because God wants to do things in you and through you that are far beyond your best ability and wildest dreams. That's why He's given you the gift of the Holy Spirit.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share this week's highs and lows (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What did you think about the Holy Spirit before this message?

Q2: What's one thing you learned about the Holy Spirit from this message?

Q3: Why do you think the Holy Spirit is discussed less than God or Jesus?

Q4: Why do you think God gives Christians the Holy Spirit to live inside of them?

Q5: What questions do you have about the Holy Spirit being present and personal?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Psalm 51:10

Jeremiah 24:7

Ezekiel 18:31

Romans 8:9

Titus 3:4-7

2 Peter 1:19-21

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

CIRCLE 02/04: **THE POWER OF GOD IN YOU**

The evolution of televisions has been fascinating to watch unfold. Have you ever seen a TV from the 70s or 80s? They were bulky, heavy, and only had like seven channels. As technology has advanced, our home televisions have gone from the size of refrigerators to being as thin as razors. They haven't just changed in size. They've also received new features that would have blown the mind of a TV salesman in the 80s.

The year was 2014. I remember walking into one of those big box stores to see a sign promoting something called a "smart tv." It was the holidays, so they were promoting the hot gifts of the season. Instantly, I thought to myself, "Smart TVs, huh? This means that I have a dumb tv." I couldn't let that happen. Within an hour, I was carrying the shockingly lightweight box of a new smart television into my living room. Talk about innovation. This thing could stream thousands of shows without a cable provider or HDMI connection. "Welcome to the space age," I announced to my pets.

I ripped open the box and got to work. There was virtually no setup required. I peeled off the plastic, plugged in the internet cable, plugged the power cable into a surge protector, and mounted it to my wall. I plopped on my couch with the remote in my hand, excited to experience my new gadget in all its glory. I clicked the power button with anticipation. The screen did nothing. I clicked it again, nothing. I pressed the button on the television itself, nothing. I shouted at it, still nothing.

After five minutes of frustration, it became personal. I changed the batteries, smacked it a few times, and pressed every button on the remote. Still nothing. I triple-checked the power cable to realize that the little red light on the surge protector was off. I traced the wire to notice that my power strip had no, well, power. There's the problem. It turns out Noodle, my cat, had pulled the cord from the wall while playing with the wires.

The potential of my smart tv was useless without proper power. It's true for electronics, and it's also true for you. You are packed full of potential, but you need a power source. We all need power, but many of us walk through life feeling as powerless as a lamp without a lightbulb.

Here is the good news. There is something more powerful than your mood swings; there is something more powerful than addiction; there is something more powerful than the doubt you face. There is something more powerful than all your problems, pain, and pitfalls. That power is found in a person, and His name is Jesus. You can have a real-life connection to the most powerful being in human history. How do you plug into that power? Through the Holy Spirit.

READ: Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

When Jesus was on earth, the disciples trusted him for everything. He was their mentor, leader, closest confidant, and possibly their cook. They learned that He always

knew what was best, that he always had their best interest in mind, and that He always kept His promises. This is why they felt directionless when their dear friend was pronounced dead. Roman soldiers buried Jesus in a tomb on the outskirts of town, and the disciples ran away to mourn. Heartbreaking, right?

Can you imagine the joy they experienced when Jesus walked through their door after His resurrection? Not only did they see a miracle unfold, but they also had their friend back. They were overjoyed to be in the presence of Jesus again.

But, He left them — again. Jesus ascended into heaven shortly after showing up at their doorstep after his death. One minute He was there, the next He ascended into the clouds. He disappeared.

As He went into heaven, Jesus gave the disciples the promise of power. He preached that "you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:8). The disciples inevitably had flashbacks to when Jesus taught His followers that they would do even greater work than He did (John 14:12). Talk about a perplexing prediction. How can a group of smelly fishermen and social outcasts do greater work than God in the flesh? The secret to their success was simple — the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was saying, "I may be gone, but we are just getting started. It may seem daunting, but I have a plan to give you power beyond your wildest dreams." The same message that Jesus gave to the disciples is the same message he's giving to you as well. When you become a Christian, the power of God lives in you and flows through you. That's the power of the Holy Spirit.

Why did God do that? Because He wants to do things in you and through you that are far beyond your best abilities and wildest dreams. Here are three ways the Holy Spirit empowers you.

The Holy Spirit Empowers You to Help Others

The Holy Spirit is God's strategy for getting His work done in the world. He has called his people to offer salvation to the lost, carry comfort to the hurting, and bring hope to the hopeless. You cannot do that on your own; you need some divine help. To fulfill this big purpose, you need big power. That's why God has given you some gifts.

The Apostle Paul writes, "there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all" (1 Corinthians 12:4). Simply put, a spiritual gift is a special ability that God gives you to be used for His glory. Whether it's a talent, temperament, or skill, there is some special way God has blessed you to bless others.

The Holy Spirit Empowers You to Be More Like Jesus

The name says it all — the Holy Spirit. That means that a major part of the Spirit's job is to make you holy. The Spirit wants to cultivate Christ-like character within you. This is achieved through a process called "sanctification." It's a big word with a simple meaning — to make you more like Jesus.

You cannot be like Jesus on your own strength. You will inevitably mess up, give in to temptation, act on a sinful impulse, or put yourself before others. We cannot change by ourselves; we need a higher power.

That's what's so amazing about the Holy Spirit. He's not just high above us; He's right beside us. God, the higher power, brought himself low to help you change. We don't change our lives by mere imitation; it requires transformation. Authentic life change is an inside job. Strive to be more in step with the Spirit's work within you. It may seem subtle, but it's life-changing.

The Holy Spirit Empowers You to Conquer

You have the power of the living God working within you. Whether you are facing feelings of overstimulation or desperation, the power of God dwells within you. He will help you overcome whatever obstacle you face. He will help you conquer whatever conflict is in your way. He will help you break through any barrier that stands between you and the life God wants for you.

Paul echoed this sentiment in Romans when he taught, "The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you" (Romans 8:11). This passage gives me goosebumps. Paul is essentially teaching that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is active within you. There is literally death-defeating power pumping through your veins.

Whatever you are going through right now, you can be confident that you have access to the power you need to get through it. Notice that I didn't say that you have the power. That's not necessarily the case. If you tried to do it on your own, you would inevitably find yourself sore, exhausted, frustrated, and defeated. You will conquer when you surrender.

Stop trying to do everything on your own. Ask for God to fill you with the power you need. Allow for God's power to move. God will do things in you and through you that are far beyond your best abilities and wildest dreams.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share this week's highs and lows (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What's one thing you learned about the Holy Spirit from this message?

Q2: Why did God give us the Holy Spirit to live inside us?

Q3: How can the Holy Spirit empower us to change and be more like Jesus?

Q4: How can the holy spirit help you to live a holier life?

Q5: What questions do you have about the Holy Spirit empowering us with God's power?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Acts 8:38-40

Romans 8:26-27

1 Corinthians 2:12-14

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

Ephesians 1:13-14

Ephesians 6:16-17

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

CIRCLE 03/04: **OUR PRAYER PARTNER**

"So that's what Oprah is up to," I thought while flipping through magazines in a poorly lit room. The smell of cleaning products made my head throb, but I appreciated the distraction. My headache was more enjoyable than my heartache.

Everyone in this room looked as though they had just fought a monster. Their faces were distorted by a combination of defeat and fear. All of us had family members going up against one of the biggest monsters one can face — cancer. Here I was, sitting in the waiting room of a chemotherapy lab designed to fight severe stages of cancer.

My mother was on the other side of a large locked door. She was receiving her first round of chemo after being diagnosed with stage three cancer. Earlier that week, she picked out a wig, put a pink ribbon on her car, and embarked on a journey that would change our family forever. While her spirits remained high, her bones weakened, her skin changed color, her voice grew weak, and she found herself painfully sick. My mother's health was fading, and it was difficult to watch.

I flinched when someone touched my shoulder. I looked up to see my mother smiling above me, looking drained after her treatment. We walked to the car, I drove home, and my mother went right to bed. It was shocking to see her so weak. She used to have the ferocious energy of a rocket, but now she was struggling like I've never seen anyone struggle before. It was tough to watch.

That night, I sat in silence for hours. The next day, I did the same thing. I went almost an entire weekend without words. I didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to pray. All I could do was groan, sigh, and cry.

As we discussed, the Holy Spirit is God's presence made personal. This means that God was with me as I sat in silence, so what was He doing? Let's look at some wisdom from the Apostle Paul. While writing to the persecuted church in Rome, Paul explains two powerful ministries of the Holy Spirit. The truth that resonated with ancient believers in Rome also resonated with me while sitting silently in my room. It will resonate with you too.

READ: Romans 8:26

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God"

The Holy Spirit Turns Your Groans Into Prayers

Have you ever just sighed in disbelief? Through the Holy Spirit, God hears your cries, translates them, then brings them to the throne room of heaven. God transforms your groans, sighs, tears, and unspoken pain into prayers. You read that right. How amazing is that?

Next time you're feeling overwhelmed, and you don't even know what to say, I encourage you to pray. Don't even try to come up with the words. Just cry out while reflecting on the reality of God's presence within you. Even without words, the Holy Spirit will work.

Your ability to pray is not limited to your own words. God is not looking for complex explanations or clever phrases. He just wants you to posture your heart towards Him. The Holy Spirit will do the rest. When you don't know what to say — pray. Even when you don't have the words, The Holy Spirit hears your heart and presents them to our Father in Heaven.

The Holy Spirit Helps You

Watching my mother grow weak during her battle with cancer was difficult, but do you know what would have been worse? Doing nothing. Sure, she may have kept her hair and avoided daily nausea. The chemotherapy was hard, but it ultimately led to a report that said "remission." Without the pain, suffering, and weakness, she would not be with us today. Her recovery required adversity. Her long-term healing depended on short-term hurt.

Paul opens up this passage by saying, "the Holy spirit helps us in our weakness." Notice he doesn't say that God removes our weakness. It would be fantastic, but that's certainly not realistic. These verses reveal how God is our helper in times of weakness. In order to be helped through weakness, we have to experience it in the first place. Through the Spirit, God joins us in our weakness to help us grow through it as we go through it.

We all need help. Whether it's help finding the words to pray, facing a terrifying medical diagnosis, making it through a difficult semester, or scaling an obstacle the size of Everest, we all need a partner in this journey called life. That's why God, through the Spirit, stepped out of heaven and into your heart. The help you need is right inside you.

I am sorry to say this, but your life won't always be smooth sailing. Waves will rock you. Leaks will try to sink you. Storms will attempt to overpower you. Trials will attempt to overwhelm you, but they will never overcome you. Why? Because you have the Holy Spirit -- the perfect helper, the presence of the living God, and power that raised Jesus from the dead -- working on your behalf.

Ask God to show you that powerful presence. Even if you don't know the words, just pray. Help is on the way.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share this week's highs and lows (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What did you learn about the Holy Spirit from this message?

Q2: Why does God gift us with the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts?

Q3: How can the Holy Spirit help you through challenging moments?

Q4: What questions do you have about the Holy Spirit helping us communicate with God?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Acts 2:1-47

Joel 2:28-32

Psalms 16:8-11

Psalms 139:7-10

John 14:17

John 14:26

John 20:22

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

CIRCLE 04/04: **OUR PERFECT GUIDE**

I spent an amazing summer teaching English in South China. The experience was exciting, and the travel was exhausting. After a 36 hour journey through fourteen different time zones, I was ready for sleep. I was so tired that the back of the cab felt like a luxury hotel room. My taxi-nap was interrupted by a smiling Chinese student saying, "here is your new home."

He flung open the door to reveal a cute apartment one block away from the school. With excitement in his voice and exhaustion in my eyes, he gave me the tour. "This is your kitchen. This is how you turn on the air conditioning. And your bedroom is just through this hallway." I was so excited that I squealed. We exchanged a rushed goodbye before I stumbled towards my bed for a quick nap.

Seventeen hours later, I woke up to the midday sun beaming into my window. I temporarily forgot where I was as I felt around the nightstand in search of my glasses. Sleeping for an entire day makes you hungry, so I ventured into the neighborhood for some food. This proved to be a problem since I could not read or speak any Mandarin. A little food stall near my apartment had a big picture on the entrance that looked like chicken noodle soup. Craving some comfort food, I ordered a bowl by pointing and repeating "this." After an awkward exchange with the cashier, I sat on a little plastic stool while taking in all the sights, sounds, and smells of my home for the summer.

"Hopefully, some soup will calm me down," I muttered while adding neon red chili sauce to the steaming hot bowl. The soup hit the spot. Every slurp made me feel more at ease. "I could get used to this," I thought. Things took a turn, though. A little bird beak poked its way through the pile of noodles at the bottom of the bowl. I poked it with my chopsticks before picking up an entire bird head. "This looks nothing like a chicken," I examined. "What is this," I texted one of my hosts a picture. He replied, "pigeon head soup."

The next morning, I asked my guide to give me a tour of the town. He wrote down recommended menu items at his favorite spots. He showed me what to try and what to avoid. "This place has good American coffee." This shop sells medicine and peanuts. "Oh! This place is good for stomach!" "Oh, like it makes your stomach happy?" I asked. "No, no. They make stews from the stomachs and intestines of animals." I crossed that place off my list.

Working with an expert guide helped to put me at ease. The information was invigorating. I actually began to feel like this wasn't just going to be manageable, but it would be enjoyable too. That would be impossible without someone to walk through the experience with me. The same is true for your life. Some of our experiences will inevitably be confusing and overwhelming. You need an expert guide to put your heart at ease. Here is the good news. God has given you an expert guide for your life -- the Holy Spirit.

READ: John 16:7

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

Why did Jesus ascend into heaven in the first place? Besides the fact that it sounds like fun, imagine what He could have accomplished if he stayed. After the resurrection, Jesus could have easily stuck around. He could have built a dozen temples in the first century, written some books in the tenth century, and live-streamed services in the twenty-first century. He didn't do any of that. The Apostle John explains that Jesus thought it was better for Him to leave. Why? Because an Advocate was coming.

The word "advocate" translates to several different meanings in different translations of the Bible. In Greek, the word is *parakletos* which means, "one who is called for assistance." Some translations say "counselor." Others say "helper." Some say "Intercessor." Regardless of the English word used, this term is referring to the Holy Spirit's role as our guide.

How on earth can Jesus confidently say that "it's good that I am going away?" Because Jesus, in his flesh, stayed in one place at a time. When Jesus was physically walking the earth, He could not be in both Jerusalem and Nazareth at the same time. However, the Holy Spirit can be everywhere all the time. The Spirit moves and ministers every second of every day in the lives of every believer on the face of the earth.

This is why Jesus was able to say, "whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these" (John 14:12). He doesn't mean "greater" in the context of quality. He's saying it in the context of quantity. You are part of that quantity. You are in the group of people who will do greater things than Jesus. So, how do we do it?

Read The Guidebook (The Bible)

You know those guidebooks that tell you about the city you're visiting? As you flip through the pages, you're told where to go, what to say, and what to avoid. Most people would never visit a new place without a little planning. Failure to do so would set you up for frustration. Why do we try to navigate life without direction? God wrote you a guidebook that shows you how to work with people, avoid hurt, and grow in your faith. The Spirit, as your guide, will illuminate the word of God whenever you read it -- showing you exactly what you need to see.

Trying to thrive in life without reading the Bible is like traveling to a foreign nation without doing any research ahead of time. Sure it's possible, but you might end up stranded or arrested. You need to be ready for the twists and turns of travel. You also need to be prepared for all the twists and turns of life. Read your Bible every day. Study it with your friends. Study books to help you understand it better. God's word is one of the primary ways God guides. That's why scripture is called a lamp for your feet (Psalm 119:10). Let it light the way for you.

Stay Close to Your Guide

I am sure you played follow-the-leader as a kid. Well, the disciples embodied this game centuries before it became schoolyard entertainment. We tend to limit our context of disciples to the twelve men who partnered with Jesus on His journeys. Yes, they're an example of disciples, but the phenomenon of devotees closely following their Rabbi was quite common in the first century. Whenever a Jewish man wanted to become a rabbi's disciple, they would leave their families and follow their new leader. Every move was mirrored. They spent all their time together -- traveling down dirt paths, walking dozens of miles a day, hanging onto every word, and studying every teaching. Intense, right?

Early Jewish writing described the mission of a disciple as "to cover themselves in the dust of the rabbi's feet." Basically, it was their goal to be so close to their guide that they were getting dirty by the dust they kicked up. Eventually, their cloaks and feet all looked the same — dusty. If you're a neat freak, the idea of mutually dusty feet may make you a little uneasy. I get it, but let the wonder of this metaphor sink into your soul. When you closely follow someone, you start to look like them. When you closely follow Jesus, you should start to look like Him.

You can't pick up the dust of your Rabbi when you're distant; it requires closeness. Intimacy is a necessity when following Jesus. How do we closely follow someone who hasn't walked the earth in two thousand years? That's where the Holy Spirit shows up.

John was intentional when he called the Spirit our *Parakletos*. On the quest of life, you need a good guide. Fortunately, we have the best One imaginable. Through the closer-than-close presence of the Holy Spirit, you can follow God more intimately than the original twelve disciples. Every day, spend intentional time experiencing God's closeness. Worship wherever you are. Meditate on His Word. Be still. Listen for God. Pray for whatever is on your mind. As you walk in step with the Spirit, just like ancient disciples, you will start to look more like your Rabbi.

God wants to do things in you and through you that are far beyond your best abilities and wildest dreams. It all starts with surrender to the Spirit's role as your guide. When you became a Christian, God installed an advocate, leader, counselor, and *parakletos* into your heart. Your only responsibility is to listen to His leadership, remain close, and enjoy the journey along the way.

TALK IT OUT

Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.

Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share this week's highs and lows (the best part of your week and the lowest part of your week).

Q1: What did you learn about the Holy Spirit from this message?

Q2: How is the Holy Spirit like a guide?

Q3: How does the Spirit help us read the Bible?

Q4: How can you begin to rely on the Holy Spirit in your life?

READING PLAN

READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY

Matthew 28:19

Mark 1:8

John 3:6

Ezekiel 36:26-27

Mark 13:9-11

Matthew 28:19-20

Luke 4:1

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.