

Small Group Guide

The Lord, the Giver of Life | What's a Christian Anyway? Pt. 5

Before You Begin

Take a few moments to open your time together in prayer. You might use the breath prayer practice introduced in the sermon: breathe slowly, and invite the Holy Spirit to be present in your conversation.

Brief Overview

This week's sermon explored what the Nicene Creed teaches about the Holy Spirit -- the Lord, the giver of life -- and what it means for the church to live in step with the Spirit. The sermon identified three ways the Spirit gives life to the church: through encounter, through formation, and through mission. Each of these was paired with a practice to help us more fully receive what the Spirit is offering.

Key Takeaways

- The Holy Spirit is not an element, a force, or a feeling. He is the third person of the Trinity -- a person to be worshiped and glorified alongside the Father and the Son.
- Where one person of the Trinity is at work, all are at work. The Spirit cannot be separated from the Father and the Son.
- The Spirit and the church belong together. You cannot genuinely pursue the Spirit while dismissing the church, and you cannot have a living church without the Spirit.
- The Spirit gives life through encounter, formation, and mission -- and all three are available to us continually, not just in dramatic or unusual moments.
- The Spirit often works within our ordinary thoughts, emotions, and circumstances. Missing him is often a matter of misaligned expectations.
- The Holy Spirit speaks through what he spoke. Scripture and the Spirit work together to form us.
- We are not flashlights to be recharged. We are lamps meant to remain connected to the source.

Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Before this sermon, how would you have described the Holy Spirit to someone unfamiliar with Christianity? How has your understanding shifted or deepened?
2. The sermon mentioned that it is common today to be interested in the Spirit but dismissive of the church. Have you ever felt that tension yourself? What do you think is behind it?

Encounter

3. The sermon described Jacob waking up and saying, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it." Can you think of a time when you later recognized that God had been present in a moment you initially considered ordinary?
4. Pastor Shawn shared a personal story about receiving an interpretation of tongues in a surprisingly quiet, ordinary way -- a thought during Bible reading at a coffee shop. He said he could have easily dismissed it. What kinds of things cause you to dismiss or talk yourself out of what might be the Spirit's prompting?
5. The sermon suggested that our struggle with encounter is often rooted in misaligned expectations -- looking for God in the dramatic and missing him in the quiet. Do you relate to this? What expectations might you need to release?

Formation

6. Galatians 5 describes the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Which of these feels most alive in your life right now? Which feels most underdeveloped?
 7. The sermon used the image of a crayon box to describe how steeping ourselves in Scripture can increase the storehouse of our hearts and give the Lord more colours to draw out. How would you describe your current relationship with Scripture? Is it more like a small box or a large one -- and what would it look like to add more color?
 8. The quote from Brad East suggested that we are never truly reading Scripture alone -- we read with the community of saints across history, and the Creed helps us stay on the right path. How does that idea change the way you think about personal Bible reading?
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Mission

9. Acts 1:8 says that the Spirit's power is given so that we will be witnesses. The sermon described the difference between a flashlight and a lamp -- one runs on stored energy, the other stays connected to the source. Which image better describes your current experience of following Jesus? What would it look like to stay more consistently connected?
10. Pastor Shawn was honest in sharing about spending much of his life in what he called "a half-life with God" - holding back out of fear of vulnerability, disappointment, or looking foolish. Can you relate to any of those fears? How have they limited your openness to the Spirit?
11. The sermon closed with the image of a sailboat: you cannot control the wind, but you can hoist the sail. In which area -- encounter, formation, or mission -- do you most need to put up your sail right now? What would that practically look like this week?

Practical Applications

This Week, Try One or More of the Following:

- **Breath Prayer:** When you feel overwhelmed, anxious, or simply distracted, let it be a trigger. Pause, take a slow breath, and pray simply: "Come, Holy Spirit, I need you." Practice this throughout the day and notice what shifts.
 - **Read Scripture with Someone:** Reach out to one person -- a friend, a family member, someone from this group -- and commit to reading a passage of Scripture together this week. It does not have to be long. Even a single chapter read and briefly discussed can be a meaningful point of connection with both each other and the Spirit.
 - **Identify a Spiritual Gift to Pursue:** Spend some time this week reflecting on how God might be calling you to serve the church or be a witness in your community. Consider what gifts you may have been given but have not fully stepped into. If you are unsure, ask someone who knows you well what they observe in you.
 - **Practice Expectation at the Table:** When you next take communion -- whether at church or in a smaller gathering -- approach it with the expectation that the Lord will meet you there. Come prepared to receive, not just to remember.
 - **Pray the Creed:** Read through the section of the Nicene Creed about the Holy Spirit slowly and prayerfully, treating each line as an invitation rather than just a statement. Let it become a conversation with God rather than a recitation.
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Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying for one another in the specific areas where each person wants to put up their sail -- whether encounter, formation, or mission. If your group is comfortable with it, consider praying aloud for each person individually, laying hands on them as a tangible expression of the Spirit's presence and the community's support.

This guide is based on the sermon series "What's a Christian Anyway?" and draws on the Nicene Creed as its theological framework, with supplementary material from Glenn Packiam's book of the same name.