

Small Group Guide: Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Overview

This guide is based on a sermon exploring the person and work of the Holy Spirit, tracing his presence throughout Scripture and considering what it means for every believer to be filled and empowered by the Spirit for the common good.

Key Takeaways

1. The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force. He is an equal member of the Trinity who has existed before creation and dwells fully in every believer.
 2. The Holy Spirit has always been active. From hovering over the waters at creation, to resting on prophets and kings, to filling Jesus at his baptism, the same Spirit has now been poured out on all believers.
 3. Jesus is our model for a Spirit-led life. He laid aside the advantages of his divinity and lived a fully human life in the power of the Holy Spirit, showing us what Spirit-empowered living looks like.
 4. The Spirit's empowerment is never just a private blessing. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12, the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each believer for the common good, not for personal comfort alone.
 5. Every believer has a unique role to play. Each person has been given spiritual gifts, experiences, and a unique shape in God's kingdom. When those gifts go unused, the body of Christ misses something that no one else can provide.
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Discussion Questions

Opening

1. Before this sermon, how would you have described the Holy Spirit to someone who had never heard of him? Has anything shifted in how you think about him?
2. Pastor Joel described a moment in his own life when he stopped trying to copy the gifts of others and started discovering his own. Can you relate to that experience? What happened when you tried to be someone God did not design you to be?

Going Deeper

3. The sermon traces the Holy Spirit's presence across the whole story of Scripture, from creation through the Old Testament prophets, through Jesus, and finally poured out on all believers. What stands out to you most from that overview? Is there a part of that story you had not thought much about before?
4. The sermon makes the point that Jesus, though fully God, lived his earthly ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit rather than relying on his divine advantages. Why is that significant for how we understand our own need for the Spirit? What does it change about how you read the Gospels?
5. In Acts 6, the apostles recognize that for the church to grow, every person must do what only they are called and equipped to do. The people chosen to oversee the practical care ministry were specifically described as full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. What does that tell us about how God views so-called behind-the-scenes roles in the church?
6. The sermon suggests that when we neglect the Spirit's empowerment and our role in the body, it is, in some sense, a failure to follow the model Jesus set for us. Do you agree with that? Why or why not?
7. Pastor Joel says the Spirit's power is never given just as a private blessing, it is given for the common good. How does that challenge the way you have thought about your own spiritual experiences or growth?

Personal Reflection

8. The sermon offers a simple test for identifying a spiritual gift: you experience joy using it, there is noticeable power or effectiveness behind it, and the community affirms it in you. Using that framework, what gifts do you think you may have? Have others affirmed those gifts in you?
9. Are you currently in a season where you are able to serve, or are you in a season where you need to be served? How does the church's call to serve the common good apply differently depending on where you find yourself right now?
10. Pastor Joel closes by asking whether we are walking in step with the Spirit or living out of our own strength. Where in your life right now are you most tempted to rely on yourself rather than on the Spirit's empowerment?

Practical Applications

For those who want to grow in awareness of the Spirit: Set aside time this week to ask the Holy Spirit to make his presence known to you. This does not need to be a dramatic experience. It may be as simple as a quiet moment of prayer asking him to fill you and direct you.

For those who know their spiritual gifts: Identify one specific way you can use your gifts in the coming ministry season, whether within your church community, in your neighbourhood, or through intercession if you are not in a season to serve on a team.

For those who are still discovering their gifts: Take a step toward serving in an area of visible need. Pay attention to whether you experience joy and effectiveness in that area, and invite trusted people in your community to speak honestly about what they observe in you.

For those in a difficult season: Allow yourself to receive care from others without guilt. Communicate your needs to a leader, a small group, or a trusted friend. Receiving care from the body is not a failure. It is part of how the church functions as designed.

For the whole group: Consider praying together at the end of your gathering specifically for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, both individually and as a group, as you enter a new season together.

Closing Prayer Prompt

Close your time together by inviting group members to pray briefly and honestly, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal where each person is being called to step in, step up, or simply receive. You may also use this phrase from the sermon as a starting point for your prayer:

"Apart from you, we can do nothing. Whatever growth and goodness we are celebrating, we acknowledge that it is all you."