

PLANT Lesson 5: The Holy Spirit



Q: How would you describe the Holy Spirit? An energy or force? How would you convince someone that the Holy Spirit is real and at work in your life? Though it is very prevalent in other parts of the world, the spiritual realm is a foreign idea in American culture. The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, a person and not a force, who carries out the will of God. He is a Comforter and a Counselor, a guide that shows us the way to live a life that pleases God. We feel the Spirit at work in us and we see the evidence of His transforming power in our lives. As we grow and mature and bear fruit for the kingdom of God, it is a testimony to the power of God's Holy Spirit at work in us.

Q: Read Acts 4:31. The Holy Spirit wasn't as accessible to people under the Old Covenant as He is today. Who is the Holy Spirit available to and under what conditions? Though the Holy Spirit came upon people that God called to carry out His will, the Spirit would leave people when God's will had been completed. When we receive Jesus into our lives, we are promised that the Holy Spirit will reside in our hearts and never leave us. We can choose to ignore the Holy Spirit and we can limit the Spirit's ability to work through us, but the Holy Spirit is accessible to anyone who comes to God through Jesus Christ. To abide in the Spirit, we must live in obedience to God's will.

Q: Read John 14:17-18. In what ways has the Holy Spirit been a guide for you? What does this look like in our daily lives? The Holy Spirit shows us good and evil, right and wrong. He convicts us of our sin and reveals to us God's will. When we need to make decisions, He will direct us if we listen. When we don't know which way to go, He may give us peace in our hearts about what God wants us to do. We may see things more clearly or completely different from others who operate by the world's perspective. Peace, a lack of peace, understanding, clarity, etc. God can use people, circumstances, or His Word to make His will known to us through the work of His Holy Spirit in us.

Q: Consider the passage in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13. Being completely honest, can you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit? Do you hear Him speak to you? How do you know when it's the Holy Spirit or just our own minds at work? Some people hear the Holy Spirit speaking to them. Some people feel His presence. Some people might struggle to recognize or discern the Spirit's voice and leading. Discerning whether or not we are following the Spirit or our own hearts can be difficult. If our hearts are contrite and our motives pure, we will be in a good place to hear from the Spirit of God. This is easier said than done since our hearts are so prone to seek gratification of the flesh. If we think we are hearing from the Holy Spirit, it is good to back it up with scripture and it may be helpful to seek the insight of another mature Christian or pastor.

Q: Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-14. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? If so, how are you using them? You may feel like you don't have any spiritual gifts, but when you invited Jesus into your life the Spirit of God came in and did an overhaul on your spirit! In addition to giving you a new life, God gives us each a gift (or a mix of gifts) to use in a way that glorifies God and builds up His Church.

The Bible has a lot to say about different spiritual gifts and how they have been used by God to demonstrate His power and glory. If you'd like to learn more about spiritual gifts, you might take a look at what the Bible says in Ephesians 4:11-12, Romans 12, and 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Q: Do you know anyone who has experienced speaking in tongues? How do you feel about the idea of the Spirit of God giving someone this ability? What do we learn about this topic from 1 Corinthians 14:1-12?

There are spiritual gifts that are more useful than speaking in tongues. Tongues can be beneficial for us personally, but in a group setting they can be a distraction. Some people might use the ability for self-righteous purposes, puffing themselves up and looking down upon others who don't speak in tongues - even suggesting that it is a requirement for salvation. In a corporate setting, unless an interpretation is given, then speaking in tongues is just noise that detracts from worship. Therefore, we should seek to excel in gifts that will build others up and not gifts that make us feel more righteous or holy than others.

Q: If all Christians have the same Spirit, why do you think that some people "feel" His presence more than others?

Some people may just be more in tune with the voice of God. Sometimes we might go through a time where we just don't hear from God for a while (this is not uncommon). Perhaps we have sin in our lives that we have not given up that prevents us from abiding in God's Spirit. There are many different reasons that we may not feel the presence of God at work in our lives, and that is normal and it is okay for a period of time. When we encounter seasons like this, as long as we are living in a way that is pleasing to Him, we just rest in His peace to know that He promises never to leave us or forsake us. He is at work even when it seems that there is silence.

Progress update on the Class Assignment: Write down your life purpose statement.

Everyone should have made a list of blessings that God has given to them that they can use to build God's kingdom and hopefully they have identified something about themselves that make them unique and interesting. Our goal is to write a one-page statement about God's plans for our lives - our purpose statement. Take some time to evaluate any rough drafts and encourage one another to polish up a final draft to share with the group next week.

Review Memory Verse:

Matthew 13:31-32 - *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*

PRAYER REQUESTS: