

Empowered by the Spirit Teachers Guide

God's Gift to Strengthen His People and Transform the World

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The church of Christ on McDermott Road

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Contents

Summary and Objectives	V
1. Wind	1
2. Breath	7
3. Water	11
4. Fire	15
5. Anointing	21
6. Signs	25
7. Renewal	31
8. Truth	35
9. Fruit	41
10. Mission	45
11. Unity	49
12. Presence	53
13. Hope	57

Summary and Objectives

This series is intended to help take your students on a grand, unpredictable adventure, challenging them to leave behind their desire for a safe, comfortable life and yield to the mysterious leading of the Holy Spirit. Through this study, your class will discover that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force (or even a fuzzy feeling in their heart), but the personal, divine presence of God who brings life and motion to his people.

The key to this series is we do not want to get bogged down in speculation or debate about HOW the Spirit works or WHAT he is and is not allowed to do, but rather to focus on WHO he is and WHY he operates in the world. To put it simply, the Holy Spirit's primary goal is to open our eyes to the truth about King Jesus and empower us for loyal service in the kingdom. That is why he does what he does, to bring glory to King Jesus (John 16:12-15).

One implication of this truth is that some of our students may need to acknowledge they have mistakenly assigned some feelings, intuitions, or thoughts to the Holy Spirit; not because the Holy Spirit isn't allowed to operate in certain ways, but because their experiences had nothing to do with the actual mission of the Holy Spirit. If a person is being "drawn" towards choices that are unwise, or not in keeping with the character of Jesus, then it is not the Holy Spirit who is drawing them towards those choices. The Holy Spirit can work through whatever means he chooses, but he will never abandon his mission.

On the other hand, some of our students will believe they have never experienced the Holy Spirit calling, nudging, moving, or empowering them. Some might not even believe the Holy Spirit does these things anymore. They may think that after empowering the biblical authors to write the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit retired. Other students will desire an experience from the Spirit, but feel disappointed they have never had such an experience. All of these folks will need to understand that if they are living a life of genuine faithfulness to Jesus, they have already experienced the work of the Holy Spirit.

No one can proclaim Jesus as King (1 Corinthians 12:3) or participate in the kingdom (John 3:5-8) unless the Holy Spirit is working in their lives. We don't have to understand how the

Spirit does this. In fact, we cannot understand how the Holy Spirit does this. The Bible does not break down the mechanics of how the Holy Spirit works, because the Holy Spirit is not a machine. He is God. Therefore, we simply give him credit for working in our lives, even when his work is imperceptible to us. The result of becoming more like our King is what really matters, not the countless ways the Spirit chooses to accomplish that result.

The Spirit of God brings unity, not division or dissension. He helps us be bold and courageous, fearless and faithful. His presence within us personally—and within the body of Christ as a whole—guarantees our victory. So let's not allow the enemy to distract us from our Spirit-led mission.

Who is the Spirit?

To deepen the class's understanding, the upcoming lessons unpack biblical metaphors for the Spirit and his work. As **Wind**, the Spirit acts mysteriously and powerfully to bring about the new birth that is essential for entering God's kingdom. Described as **Breath**, the Spirit animates a previously spiritually dead humanity, recreating believers to serve as God's royal partners in a new creation. As **Water**, the Spirit is poured out on a dry, barren world, bringing deep regeneration, cleansing, and spiritual flourishing to those who pledge their loyalty to Jesus. Through the metaphor of **Fire**, the Spirit provides the undeniable power to burn through barriers, empowering the church to overcome obstacles and boldly accomplish its mission.

Throughout this series, students will learn that Jesus was empowered by this same Spirit, enabling him to perform signs that served as snapshots of God's future kingdom. Today, this identical Spirit dwells within the collective body of believers, making the church the new temple of God. Because the Spirit resides within us, every place becomes a sacred space, and your students will be challenged to honor God by offering their bodies as living sacrifices in their everyday routines.

The curriculum also explores the Spirit's primary internal work: transforming the human heart. The Spirit produces in us his fruit—traits like love, joy, and peace—so that the very character of Jesus is completely formed within us. Equipped with this new character, Christians share a single, collective mission to be and make loyal disciples of Jesus. You will guide your students to see how this shared mission creates a beautiful, diverse unity that transcends worldly uniformity.

Finally, the series highlights how the Holy Spirit acts as the Spirit of Truth, exposing the devil's worldly illusions of power and pleasure, and guiding believers to live out permanent

kingdom realities. By serving as a guaranteed down payment on the Christian's future inheritance, the Spirit fills believers with a profound, unshakeable hope. This confident expectation enables Christians to face suffering, rejection, and everyday challenges with steadfast meekness and joy, fully trusting that they will one day inherit the world to come.

Objectives for the Series

These are the main ideas we want the students to learn in each lesson:

Lesson 1 – Wind: Embracing the Mystery of the Holy Spirit

Recognize the Holy Spirit as the personal, divine presence of God who challenges believers to leave behind a safe, predictable life and embrace a transformative, unpredictable adventure of spiritual rebirth and motion.

Lesson 2 – Breath: The Spirit's Role in Creation and New Life

Comprehend the Holy Spirit as the breath of life that animates a previously spiritually dead humanity, recreating believers to serve as royal partners with him in a new creation.

Lesson 3 – Water: The Promise and Pouring Out of the Holy Spirit

Visualize the Holy Spirit as living water poured out on a dry, barren world, bringing deep regeneration, cleansing, and spiritual flourishing to those who pledge their loyalty to Jesus.

Lesson 4 – Fire: The Kingdom Comes with Power

Respect the Holy Spirit as an empowering fire that effortlessly burns through barriers, providing the undeniable power needed to overcome obstacles and build up the church.

Lesson 5 – Anointed: Jesus is Anointed with the Spirit

Understand that Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish his ministry, and that the exact same Spirit now fills and empowers the collective body of believers to accomplish the good works God has prepared for them.

Lesson 6 – Signs: The Meaning and Purpose of Miracles

Interpret the miraculous signs of the Holy Spirit as snapshots of God's restored kingdom, pointing believers toward permanent kingdom realities rather than serving as mere spectacles.

Lesson 7 – Renewal: The Spirit’s Role in Conversion and Transformation

Celebrate the Holy Spirit’s role in opening human hearts to the gospel, recognizing that true spiritual renewal and faith are gifts driven by his invisible work rather than the results of mere human logic.

Lesson 8 – Truth: The Spirit’s Role in Revealing the Will of God

Recognize truth and *renounce* lies, as the Spirit of Truth exposes the devil’s worldly illusions of power and pleasure, guiding believers to walk by faith and live in obedience to the permanent reality of God’s kingdom.

Lesson 9 – Fruit: Growing Christlike Character by the Spirit

Participate with the Holy Spirit as he transforms our hearts and creates fruit, so the very character of Jesus is fully formed within us.

Lesson 10 – Mission: Our Spirit-Empowered Witness in the World

Embrace the single, collective mission to be and make loyal disciples of Jesus, recognizing that the Holy Spirit equips and empowers the church entirely for this specific purpose.

Lesson 11 – Unity: The Spirit’s Work in Building Community

Eagerly maintain the unity the Holy Spirit has created among believers, which transcends worldly uniformity and binds different people together through a common loyalty and love.

Lesson 12 – Presence: The Spirit in Worship, Prayer, and Holy Living

Submit your whole self to the Lord, recognizing that he has made us the new temple of God and calls us to honor him by offering our bodies as living sacrifices.

Lesson 13 – Hope: The Spirit’s Promise for Our Future

Rely on the Holy Spirit as a guaranteed down payment on a future inheritance, allowing this profound hope to produce steadfast meekness and joy when facing suffering, rejection, and everyday challenges.

Learning Model

In order to help participants retain, internalize, and apply the information from this series, each lesson should include these five practices:

- **Review** - Challenge participants to recall what was covered in previous lessons.
- **Reveal** - Introduce new material and concepts.
- **Record** - Encourage students to take notes or write down at least one key idea.
- **Relate** - Ask questions to help participants think through the practical applications.
- **Rehearse** - Give participants a task to repeatedly practice throughout the week.

NOTE: You do NOT need to go in order through these practices or try to spend an equal amount of class time on each. You will have to determine the outline and structure that works best for your class and your teaching style. We simply ask that you try to include elements of each practice in every lesson.

Wind

This lesson invites participants to rethink their expectations about the Holy Spirit—from a safe, predictable “idea” to a living Person who leads us into a God-directed adventure that reshapes our entire life. We will explore how Scripture uses the image of *wind* to describe the Spirit’s mysterious, sovereign work in new birth and new creation. By the end of the lesson, students should see that being “born of the Spirit” means letting God hit *reset* on our lives and learning to trust the Spirit’s leading even when we cannot fully control or predict him.

Primary Scriptures:

- John 3:1–10
- Genesis 1:1–2

REVIEW

Since this is the first lesson in the series, there is no previous content to review. You can use this section to set the tone and expectations for the study:

- Emphasize that we are not just studying a doctrine about the Spirit, but learning to walk with the Spirit as a living, personal presence.
- Clarify that we will pay close attention to biblical images (like wind) and stories, not just technical vocabulary.
- Encourage your students to come ready not only to learn, but to be changed and led.

You might say: “Throughout this series, we are going to keep asking, not only ‘What does Scripture say about the Spirit?’ but ‘How is the Spirit at work in us and in our church right now?’”

REVEAL

You might want to begin by using Bilbo Baggins, from *The Hobbit*, as an illustration. He lives a simple, comfortable, predictable life. He avoids wild adventures and anything that might disturb his routine. People consider his family respectable precisely because they never do anything unexpected. When asked about adventures, Bilbo says, “We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!”

Many of us, and many of our students, will resonate with that. We may love routine, predictability, and structure. We want our Christian life to be neat and understandable. Mystery and adventure make us nervous. We want our life to operate with certainty and efficiency.

However, the story draws us into Bilbo’s adventure, because his journey not only accomplishes something important, it changes him for the better. When he returns home, he is not the same hobbit who left. He has been transformed by the journey.

In the same way, we can help our students see that the Holy Spirit intends to take us on a kingdom adventure. Life with the Spirit will sometimes turn our lives upside down and lead us into the unknown, but it will also awaken something in us and transform us.

We can reassure them: this does not mean the Spirit is random or chaotic. We may not know all the ups and downs of the journey, but we know the destination and the purpose. The Spirit leads us in paths of righteousness for the sake of God’s name. He helps us walk in the good works God has prepared for us. When there is a fork in the road, the Spirit urges us toward what is most beneficial in God’s eyes, not what is easiest or most comfortable.

At this point, some students may be thinking that the “map” of Scripture is all we need—that as long as we have our Bibles, we don’t need the personal guidance of the Spirit. We need to gently challenge this: Scripture itself tells us to be filled with the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit, and to keep in step with the Spirit. If we really want to follow the map, we also need the Guide.

If we claim we do not need the Spirit’s influence because we “just follow the Bible,” we tend to fall back on our own instincts and biases. We think we are seeing clearly, even

when our desires and opinions are actually clouding our judgment. When we ask, “What would Jesus do in a situation like this?” but are not open to the Spirit’s leading, we will often convince ourselves that Jesus would do exactly what we already wanted to do.

John 3:1–10

Nicodemus is a religious leader who has something in common with Bilbo. He is genuinely curious about Jesus, but he is also cautious and comfortable with his current life. He comes to Jesus at night and admits that no one can do the signs Jesus does unless God is with him. He knows something extraordinary is happening, but he likely wonders, “How is this going to interrupt and disrupt my routine, my certainty, my ordinary life?”

Jesus tells Nicodemus that in order to see and enter the kingdom of God, he must be born again (or born from above) by water and the Spirit. This certainly points to baptism, but it is more than a mere ritual. Jesus is telling him that he needs to start over completely. Everyone who wants to participate in God’s kingdom must allow the Holy Spirit to hit “reset” on their lives.

Nicodemus is confused and frustrated. So Jesus adds the image of wind: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

In Greek, “wind” and “Spirit” are the same word. When we and our students see the word “Spirit,” it is helpful to think of “wind” and “breath.” Jesus is saying that the Spirit of God operates like the natural wind. We cannot see the wind itself or trace its exact path, but we can see and feel its effects. The wind is mysterious; it cannot be caged or fully comprehended.

To be born of the Spirit, then, is to let that unseen wind of God reorder our lives. The Spirit remakes us so that we can see and enter the kingdom. This will disrupt our old routines, but it is a disruption for our good, and for God’s glory.

Genesis 1:1–2

On the first page of Scripture, we meet this same Spirit. The earth is formless and void, darkness is over the deep, and the Spirit of God is hovering over the waters. In Hebrew, too, “Spirit” can mean wind or breath.

The original creation comes about through God’s invisible breath moving like a healing breeze through the chaos, bringing order and life. In the ministry of Jesus, the Spirit is once again at work, bringing new creation. Jesus is announcing that the extraordinary work of

the Spirit is happening because God's kingdom has arrived. If anyone wants to be part of that kingdom, they must allow the Spirit to remake them.

At this point, some students will naturally ask, "How exactly does the Spirit do this?" It is fine to acknowledge that this is a common and understandable question. However, Christians have often tried to categorize and control this discussion—debating "miraculous" versus "providential," or different models of indwelling. Without dismissing those questions entirely, we can gently reframe the focus.

The more important questions are: **Who** is the Spirit and **why** is he at work in us? As we come to know who he is and why he is reshaping us, we will be more inclined to surrender to his leading and let him whisk us away on kingdom adventures.

RECORD

Encourage your students to write down at least one key idea to carry with them this week.

Suggested key takeaway: We cannot control the Spirit, but we can trust him.

RELATE

Use some of these questions to foster discussion:

1. In what ways do you identify with Nicodemus, wanting to know more about Jesus, but also wanting life to remain predictable and under our control?
2. When we picture the Spirit as wind, what does that suggest about our inability to control and predict him?
3. Where might the Spirit be inviting us to allow him to "hit reset" on some area of life (habits, priorities, or attitudes)?
4. How have you seen the Spirit "move like wind" in our congregation—quietly, invisibly, but powerfully—rearranging things for God's glory?
5. Even though it can be scary to follow the Spirit, why is it actually more dangerous to resist him?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to “pay attention to the wind” each day. At least once a day, step outside and feel the wind, and let that moment prompt a short prayer: “Spirit of God, move in me today as you wish.” When they face a decision, encourage them to pause and ask, “Am I choosing what is easiest, or am I open to where the Spirit may be leading?”

2

Breath

This lesson helps our students see the Holy Spirit as the breath of God, the divine presence who gives life, sustains life, and moves creation toward God's intended purpose. We will explore how Scripture presents the Spirit as God's life-giving breath and how sin is, at its core, a rejection of that breath and a choice to follow the desires of the flesh instead.

Primary Scriptures:

- Genesis 1:1–2
- Genesis 2:7
- Genesis 6:3
- James 2:26

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- Last week we talked about the Holy Spirit as the wind of God, the unseen Person who brings new birth and leads us on a kingdom adventure. What stood out to you from that lesson?
- Where did you notice 'the wind' of the Spirit in your life this week—any nudges, convictions, or small course corrections?
- How did it change your attitude to think of being 'born of the Spirit' rather than just trying harder on your own?

REVEAL

When we first buy a package of balloons, they are flat and lifeless. They do not look very exciting or useful. But once someone breathes into them, they are suddenly filled, animated, and able to bring beauty and joy to the room. A person's breath proceeds from deep within. It is not exactly a "part" of the person like a hand or foot, but it is still deeply personal. When someone gives breath to a balloon, the balloon is filled because someone has shared something of themselves with it.

That image helps us think about the Holy Spirit because, in Hebrew, the same word can mean spirit, wind, or breath. So when we meet the Spirit in Genesis 1, it is helpful to think of God's breath hovering over the face of the waters. God's invisible breath, full of his creativity, purpose, and energy, is brooding over the chaos of the world. Everywhere the Spirit moves, life, beauty, order, and transformation follow.

Genesis 1:1–2 and 2:7

Genesis 1 shows the Spirit of God present at creation, moving over the waters before the world is formed and filled. From the very beginning of the biblical story, the Spirit is bringing order to chaos and flourishing to emptiness. The Spirit is life.

Then Genesis 2 narrows the focus to humanity. The Lord forms man from the dust of the ground and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. Man becomes a living being because God shares his breath. That is the lesson we want our students to feel deeply: life is not self-generated. We are alive because God gives life.

This is why breath matters so much in Scripture. Animals and humans are living, breathing creatures. They move, act, and make choices because God's breath has brought them to life. The Spirit not only creates life, he sustains life. Genesis 6:3 reminds us that when God withdraws his life-giving presence, death follows. Every human being is alive only because the Spirit continues to uphold that life.

This is where the lesson turns to sin. If the Spirit is God's breath giving life to human beings, then sin is choosing to follow the will of our flesh rather than the will of the Spirit. Adam was formed from the dirt and Eve was taken from his side. They were creatures of the ground, alive only because of God's breath. But instead of listening to the voice of the One who gave them life, they chose to follow the desires of their bodies.

In that sense, rebellion against God is essentially asking for death. It is telling God we want life on our own terms. But life cannot be sustained on our own terms. When human beings

reject the Spirit's rule, they begin to die. Their bodies may still be breathing, but spiritually they are already moving back toward the dust from which they came.

This helps explain why sinful humanity can be described as dead even while still physically alive. The Spirit may still be sustaining bodily life for a time, but people who refuse his influence are spiritually lifeless. They are following the passions of the flesh rather than the will of God. That kind of existence is not true life. It is prolonged death.

James 2:26 helps make this clear: "The body apart from the spirit is dead." A living body moves. A dead body does not. In the Bible, the presence of spirit is recognized by movement, animation, and action.

This also helps us understand what God intended for humanity from the beginning. Adam and Eve were not merely created to exist. They were created to rule with God, work the ground, subdue the earth, and extend the flourishing of Eden into all creation. They were to be God's image-bearers and co-regents over the earth.

Sin disrupted that purpose. Humanity stopped listening to the Spirit and began following the desires of the flesh. As a result, corruption spread not only through human beings but throughout the world they were supposed to steward. The earth never reached the fullness God intended because the human rulers God created to govern it rebelled against his breath.

But God did not abandon his purpose. When we become Christians and receive the Holy Spirit, we are given new life. The Spirit brings new life. He moves people. He animates God's people for obedience, fruitfulness, and good works. If the Holy Spirit is present in us, then he is trying to move us from where we are to where we need to be. He is not content to leave us stagnant, lifeless, or resistant. He is always moving us toward life.

That means Christians who are truly alive with the Spirit should be moving. They should be animated. They should be doing good works and bearing fruit. If there is no movement, no obedience, no fruit, then a person is dead, devoid of the Spirit. The Spirit wants to move us, and chances are, he is already doing that. He is not finished with us. In many ways, he is just getting started.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts.

Suggested key takeaway: The Spirit gives life.

RELATE

Use some of these questions to foster discussion:

1. How does thinking of the Holy Spirit as God's breath deepen the way we think about life itself?
2. What do Genesis 1 and 2 teach us about where life comes from and what humanity was created to do?
3. How does this lesson help us understand why sin is more than rule-breaking and is actually a rejection of God's life-giving Spirit?
4. James says the body apart from the spirit is dead. What kinds of movement, obedience, or fruit should we expect to see if the Holy Spirit is active in someone's life?
5. Where do you sense the Spirit is trying to move you right now—from comfort to obedience, from apathy to action, from self-rule to surrender?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to become more aware of their breathing as a reminder that every breath is a gift from God and that true life is found in surrender to his Spirit.

Encourage them to: Pause at least once each day, take a slow breath, and pray, Spirit of God, give me life and move me toward your will.

Pay attention to moments when they feel pulled by the flesh—toward selfishness, fear, lust, pride, anger, or laziness—and consciously ask the Spirit for help to choose obedience instead. At the end of each day, write down one sign of spiritual movement: one act of obedience, one resisted temptation, one moment of repentance, or one good work that reflects the Spirit's life in them.

3

Water

This lesson helps our students see the Holy Spirit as living water, poured out from God to cleanse, refresh, and renew his people and eventually the whole world. We will explore how the prophets anticipated a day when God would pour out his Spirit like water on the dry ground, how Jesus claimed to fulfill that promise, and how Pentecost shows the Spirit streaming out from God's presence to bring new life wherever he goes. We want the class to understand that those who belong to King Jesus have drunk deeply from this living water and are now part of the Spirit's ongoing work of regeneration.

Primary Scriptures:

- Isaiah 44:1–5
- Ezekiel 47:1–12
- John 7:37–39
- Acts 2:1–4, 16–21
- Titus 3:3–7

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- How has the image of the Spirit as wind and breath helped you think differently about who the Holy Spirit is and what he does?
- If the Spirit who gives life lives in us, what difference should that make in the way we live our lives?

- Where have you seen signs over the last few weeks that the Spirit is moving you away from fleshly patterns and toward obedience, faith, or new life?

Briefly restate the key idea from last week: The Spirit gives life.

REVEAL

In a dry land, nothing is more precious than water. When fields crack, wells run low, and everything begins to wither, people do not need better techniques or stronger willpower; they need rain. The biblical writers understood this, which is why they so often used water as an image of God's blessing, cleansing, and life. When they wanted to talk about what it would be like when God finally healed and restored his people, they often described it as God pouring out water on thirsty ground.

In the prophets, this promise becomes very specific. Isaiah pictures God's people as dry and exhausted, but he hears God say, "I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring (Isaiah 44:3)." The connection is not subtle. When God pours out water, he is pouring out his Spirit. The dry ground is not just soil; it is the spiritual condition of God's people.

Ezekiel 47:1–12

Ezekiel sees a stunning vision that helps us picture the Spirit's work. He sees water flowing out from the temple, starting as a trickle, then becoming a stream, then a river so deep no one can cross. Everywhere this river goes, it brings life. Salt water becomes fresh. Fish teem in places that were once dead. Trees grow on both banks, with fruit that never fails and leaves that bring healing.

The text does not keep repeating the word "Spirit," but the connection to other promises is clear. Earlier Ezekiel has spoken of God putting a new spirit within his people, removing hearts of stone, and giving hearts of flesh. Now he sees water flowing from God's presence and transforming the landscape. It is a picture of what happens when the Spirit of God is poured out: what was barren becomes fruitful, what was dead begins to live.

John 7:37–39

Centuries later, Jesus stands in Jerusalem during a feast that involved daily prayers for rain and water from the temple. On the last and greatest day of the feast, he cries out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." He promises that whoever believes in him, "out of

his heart will flow rivers of living water.” John tells us plainly that Jesus was speaking about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were about to receive.

This means that Jesus sees himself as the fountain from which Ezekiel’s river flows. He is the one through whom God pours out living water. Those who come to him in faith are not only refreshed themselves; they become channels. The Spirit does not simply touch them from the outside, like a passing shower. The Spirit fills them and flows out from within them toward others.

Acts 2:1–4, 16–21

About fifty days after Jesus’ death and resurrection, this promise breaks into history on the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit is poured out on the disciples like a rushing flood. There are sounds, signs, and bold proclamation. Peter explains what the crowd is seeing by quoting the prophet Joel: “In the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.” Sons and daughters, young and old, servants and free—all kinds of people are drenched in the Spirit.

This pouring out is not just for the apostles. It is for everyone who repents and pledges allegiance to King Jesus. As people are baptized in water, Jesus baptizes them in the Holy Spirit. Over time, the water of the Spirit flows out beyond Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Everywhere the gospel travels and people respond in faith, the river of the Spirit brings new life.

Titus 3:3–7

Paul reminds Titus that Christians themselves have experienced this outpouring. Once they were foolish, disobedient, and enslaved to various passions, but God saved them “by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” That language of washing, regeneration, and rich outpouring ties together baptism, new birth, and the Spirit’s cleansing work.

All of this means your students need a clear mental image: when they submitted to Jesus as King and were baptized, they did not just go through a ritual. They were washed, regenerated, and renewed by the Spirit, who God poured out like water. They are now meant to live as people who have drunk deeply from living water, not as those who are still wandering thirsty in the desert.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea that they can write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: Jesus pours out the Spirit.

RELATE

1. How does it change the way you think about the Holy Spirit to picture him as water flowing from God's presence into a dry and dead world?
2. Looking at Ezekiel's vision, what details stand out to you most about the way the river changes everything it touches?
3. When Jesus says that those who believe in him will have "rivers of living water" flowing from their hearts, what do you think that should look like in the life of a Christian?
4. As you think about Acts 2 and Titus 3, how does it affect your view of baptism and conversion to realize that the Spirit was "poured out on us richly"?
5. If someone watched your life this week, what evidence would they see that you have drunk deeply from the living water of the Spirit, rather than still living in a spiritual desert?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to pay attention to water as a way of remembering and responding to the Spirit's work.

Each day when they drink a glass of water, pause for a moment and quietly pray, Spirit of God, refresh and renew me again today. At some point during the week, spend a few minutes by a stream, fountain, sink, or shower, and reflect on Ezekiel's vision—imagining the Spirit bringing life wherever he flows.

Look for one situation each day where they can "flow outward" in a Spirit-led way, bringing refreshment to someone else through encouragement, forgiveness, generosity, or service.

4

Fire

This lesson helps our students see the Holy Spirit as an unstoppable, barrier-burning fire, a consuming and empowering presence that God has given to his church to overcome every obstacle standing between his people and their mission. We will explore how fire appears at the defining moments of Israel's history, how it returns dramatically at Pentecost, and how the Spirit still empowers the church today with gifts perfectly suited for the work God has prepared. We want the class to understand that the Spirit is not a manageable flame they can turn on and off, but a wild and glorious fire that burns effortlessly through whatever stands in the way of God's kingdom.

Primary Scriptures:

- Exodus 3:1–6
- Exodus 19:16–18
- Acts 2:1–4
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–7
- 1 Thessalonians 5:19

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- As we think back over our last few lessons, how has each image of the Spirit—wind, breath, and water—shaped the way you think about who the Spirit is and what he does?
- From the water lesson, we talked about the Spirit being poured out at Pentecost and

continuing to flow out from the hearts of believers. Where have you experienced that outward flow in your own life this past week?

- If the Spirit is God's breath giving life, and living water poured out on a dry world, what do those images say to you about areas of your life that still feel dry, lifeless, or stuck?

REVEAL

Few things are as fascinating as fire. Sitting around a campfire or relaxing in front of a fireplace, it is easy to be captivated by the dancing flames. Like wind, breath, and water, fire is formless and shapeless, without structure. It spreads with remarkable fluidity, moving over, through, and around everything in its path. It is also unbelievably powerful. In the ancient world, nothing rivaled the power of fire. It brought light and heat to dark and cold places. It transformed raw food into nourishing meals. It also held the power to melt, consume, level, devastate, and destroy. Once a fire began to rage, there was very little anyone could do to stop it. Many lives were sustained, and many lives were ended, by fire.

That combination—beauty, usefulness, and terrifying power—makes fire a fitting image for the Holy Spirit.

Exodus 3 and 19

God's fire appears at some of the most pivotal moments in Israel's story. When Moses was hiding in the wilderness, running from the consequences of his conflict in Egypt, God visited him through a bush that burned without being consumed. The fire did not destroy the bush. It simply burned within it, blazing with God's presence. That fire was an invitation. God was calling Moses to go back to Egypt, face Pharaoh, and liberate his people from slavery. Moses had every reason to say no. He was afraid, he had a speech problem, and he felt deeply inadequate. But God was not asking whether Moses felt ready. He was offering to empower Moses to accomplish the mission.

Then, after God liberated his people from Egypt and led them through the wilderness, he descended on Mount Sinai in fire. The whole mountain trembled and was wrapped in smoke. The people stood at a safe distance and trembled. God was demonstrating that the obstacles Moses feared—Pharaoh's armies, Egypt's gods, Israel's rebellion—were no match for the God who burns without being consumed.

Acts 2:1–4

At Pentecost, all of these images and memories converge. On that day, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the expectant disciples, and his arrival was accompanied by a sound like a mighty rushing wind and divided tongues as of fire resting on each person in the room. The Spirit's presence is described using the word tongue, which is fitting in more than one way. A tongue and a flame share the same shape. They both make noise. And they both lick and consume whatever they touch.

That day, the streets of Jerusalem were filled with Jewish pilgrims from all over the Diaspora. There would have been a tremendous language barrier under ordinary circumstances. But the Spirit burned effortlessly through that barrier. People heard the mighty works of God proclaimed in their own native languages. The Lord burned through that obstacle like it wasn't even there. That is what fire does. Fire empowers such strength that obstacles and barriers melt.

The story of Pentecost is not a new image. It is a flashback to the pillar of fire that led Israel through the wilderness. In each case, God's fire was not merely impressive. It was purposeful. It was leading his people somewhere, sustaining them on the journey, and burning through everything that stood in their way.

At Pentecost, God was once again liberating his people. A new tabernacle had been established, not one made of fabric and gold, but a human one. The Spirit had come to permanently dwell within God's people. The fire of the Lord had appeared again, not on a mountaintop, but on the heads of his servants. Throughout the book of Acts, we see this fire burn through every obstacle, language barriers, persecution, religious opposition, storms, disease, armies, judges, governors, kings, and even emperors. None of them are any match for the fiery power of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:4–7

After Pentecost, the Spirit continued to empower God's people with gifts suited for each unique situation and need. Paul writes that there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. The point is not that every Christian gets the same gift, but that every Christian gets the gift they need for their part of the mission.

The Spirit empowered Bezalel in the wilderness because a craftsman was needed (Exodus 31:1-11). He empowered the disciples with languages on Pentecost because that was the power needed in that moment. He does not empower everyone in the same way. He

empowers every member of the church with unique abilities to serve the common good. If your students have surrendered their lives to Jesus in baptism, the Spirit of God burns within them and is giving them power. The question is not whether they have the Spirit. The question is whether they are aware of what the Spirit has equipped them to do, and whether they are doing it.

1 Thessalonians 5:19

Toward the end of his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul gives one of the most sobering and brief warnings in all of his writings: do not quench the Spirit. Fire can be quenched, smothered, or dampened. And though the Spirit of God is powerful enough to burn through empires, he can be resisted and suppressed in the heart of a believer who refuses to yield.

This means there is something the class needs to reckon with honestly. The Spirit's fire is available to them. He is burning within them. But the way they live—whether they are walking in obedience, using their gifts, showing up for the mission of the church, or yielding to the flesh—determines whether the Spirit's fire blazes in their life or smolders quietly in the corner. Do not quench the Spirit.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea to write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: Don't quench the Spirit.

RELATE

1. How does the image of God appearing in fire at the burning bush and on Mount Sinai prepare us to understand what happened at Pentecost?
2. Looking at the Day of Pentecost, what does it tell us about the Spirit that the very first barrier he burned through was a language barrier, a barrier between people of different nations and tongues?
3. Paul says the Spirit gives different gifts to different people for the common good. How does that truth challenge the tendency to compare our gifts or feel like our contribution to the church doesn't matter?

4. In what ways might we personally be quenching the Spirit's fire (through fear, disobedience, spiritual laziness, or simply being too comfortable)?
5. If the same Spirit who burned through language barriers, persecution, storms, and emperors lives in us, what barriers to the church's mission or our personal discipleship do we need to stop treating as if they are immovable?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to pay attention to fire this week—a candle, a fireplace, a campfire, or even the flame on a stove—as a prompt to think about the Spirit's empowering presence within them.

Each time they see fire this week, pause and pray, Spirit of God, burn in me. Don't let me quench what you are doing.

Identify one barrier—a fear, a habit, an obstacle, or a relationship—that they have been treating as too big to overcome, and ask the Spirit to burn through it.

5

Anointing

This lesson helps our students see that “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name but his royal title: the Anointed King. We will explore how the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus with power to do the Father’s will and how that same Spirit now empowers the body of Christ to share in his mission.

Primary Scriptures:

- Luke 3:21–22
- Luke 4:1–21
- Acts 10:34–38

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to the previous lessons:

- In our last lesson, we talked about the Holy Spirit as fire. Where did you see the Spirit’s fire this past week, either burning in you or burning through a barrier in your life?
- We have now worked through five images of the Spirit: wind, breath, water, fire, and anointing. Which of those images has stayed with you the most, and why do you think it has?
- One thing that has come up again and again in this series is that the Spirit is trying to move us. Are there ways you have been resisting that movement, and what would it look like this week to cooperate instead of resist?

REVEAL

Many of our students instinctively say “Jesus Christ” as if “Christ” were a last name. Help them see that “Christ” (Greek) and “Messiah” (Hebrew) both mean “Anointed One.”

In the ancient world, kings, priests, and sometimes prophets were anointed with oil as a sign that God had chosen them and was empowering them by his Spirit. When we call Jesus “Christ,” we are confessing that he is the King whom God has chosen and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

Whenever we say “Jesus Christ,” we are really saying “King Jesus, God’s Anointed One.” In fact, that is the core truth of the gospel: Jesus is the King.

Luke 3–4

At Jesus’ baptism, the heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends on him in bodily form like a dove, and the Father declares, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” This is Jesus’ public anointing. God is marking him out as the Messiah, the Spirit-anointed King.

Luke says that Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. Then, after resisting temptation, he returns “in the power of the Spirit” to Galilee.

In the synagogue at Nazareth he reads Isaiah’s prophecy: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...”

Draw out the key point: Jesus carried out his earthly mission in the power of the Spirit. He was, is, and always will be fully God, but as a human he shared our limitations. He grew, learned, became tired, and was tempted. The extraordinary works he did are explained with phrases like “God was with him” and “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me.”

Acts 10:34–38 (especially verse 38)

Peter summarizes Jesus’ ministry this way: “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”

That one verse gives your students a simple way to think about Jesus’ life: God anointed him with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowered him to do good, heal, and liberate. All of this showed that God was with him.

We want the class to see that the Spirit is not just connected to dramatic miracles; the Spirit empowered Jesus to “go about doing good.” The Spirit’s anointing is about a life of faithful obedience and fruitful ministry.

Then, we can gently draw the connection to our lives: Jesus embraced his anointing and stayed fully aligned with the Spirit and the Father’s will. Now the risen Christ has poured out the same Spirit on his body, the church. None of us is “the Christ,” but together, as the body of Christ, we are anointed to continue his work.

If students wonder, “If the same Spirit empowers us, why can’t we do everything Jesus did?” You can help them understand, we are not each the whole Christ; we are individual members of his body. But taken together, across time and space, the church has even done ‘greater works’ in extent and reach than Jesus. The Spirit-empowered body—of which we are all a part—bears witness to the Anointed King.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key takeaway that they can write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: The same Spirit who empowered Christ, empowers us.

RELATE

Use some of these questions to foster discussion:

1. How might it change the way we think about Jesus (and the way we live our lives) if we started saying, “King Jesus” more often?
2. As we read about Jesus’ baptism and the Spirit coming on him, what stands out to you most in that scene?
3. In Luke 4 and Acts 10:38, Jesus says and shows that the Spirit anointed him to “go about doing good.” What are some ways we see that in his ministry?
4. If Jesus relied on the Spirit’s power to do the Father’s will, what might it look like for us, as his body, to rely on that same Spirit instead of just relying on our own strength and plans?

5. How does it change your view of the church to think of us together as “the body of the Anointed One,” rather than just a collection of religious individuals?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to consciously confess Jesus as the Anointed King and to ask for the Spirit’s help to “go about doing good” in very ordinary ways. Encourage them to:

- Begin each day with a simple prayer: “King Jesus, you are the Anointed One. Fill me with your Spirit today so I can go about doing good.”
- Look for one concrete opportunity each day to do a Spirit-led good work—encouraging someone, serving quietly, showing mercy, or acting with integrity—and then thank God that his Spirit empowers those seemingly small acts.

6

Signs

This lesson helps our students understand that the miraculous signs of the Holy Spirit were never meant to be ends in themselves, but previews of God's coming kingdom. We will explore how the signs Jesus and the apostles performed were not random spectacles but carefully chosen glimpses of what life will be like when God's kingdom fully comes. We want the class to move past endless debate about signs and instead ask the more important question: what do these signs tell us about the King and the kingdom we are invited to enter?

Primary Scriptures:

- Isaiah 11:1–9
- Psalm 72:1–4
- John 6:26–35, 66–69
- Mark 16:15–20

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- In last week's lesson, we learned that "Christ" is not Jesus' last name but his royal title, meaning "Anointed One." How does understanding Jesus as the Spirit-anointed King change the way you think about what it means to call yourself a Christian, a member of his anointed body?
- Acts 10:38 tells us that Jesus "went about doing good" because God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power. Since the risen Christ has now poured out

that same Spirit on his church, what good works did you see the Spirit empowering this week?

- Over the past five lessons, we have explored the Holy Spirit through the images of wind, breath, water, fire, and anointing. Looking back across all of those images together, what do they collectively tell us about who the Spirit is and why we can trust him, even when his work feels unpredictable or costly?

REVEAL

Imagine you were driving with a loved one, who desperately needed medical attention, and you saw a blue sign with a large white “H.” The sign would fill you with a sense of relief and hope, *maybe everything is going to be okay*. You would not, of course, pull over to the side of the road and ask the sign itself for medical attention. You also would not expect doctors and nurses to be found inside, underneath, or behind the sign. You would know the sign itself is not your final destination, but it does mean you’re on the right track. It is not the hospital, but it is pointing you to the hospital.

A sign points to something outside of itself and communicates something important. We should pay attention to signs, of course, but not too much attention. In some ways, we should look through or beyond a sign. If we get caught up in the sign itself—rather than the object to which the sign is pointing—we are misunderstanding the purpose of the sign. A sign is only doing its job when we see beyond it.

In the ancient world, when Jewish people read the prophets, they were reading about a day when God would finally set the world right through his Anointed One. Through Isaiah, God described the coming Messiah’s kingdom as a place where the wolf would lie down with the lamb, the leopard with the goat, and a nursing child would play by the hole of a cobra without any danger. Nothing would hurt or destroy anywhere in God’s kingdom.

Isaiah 11 is a picture of total restoration: justice for the poor and needy, harmony in creation, and an end to all violence, disease, oppression, and death. Psalm 72 adds to this portrait, describing the Messiah as one who would defend the cause of the poor, deliver the needy, and crush every oppressor. For centuries, Jewish people had been holding these promises close, waiting for the Anointed One who would bring them to life.

Mark 16:15–20

When Jesus began his ministry, the promises God made through the prophets started breaking into the present. Jesus fed thousands, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind,

cast out demons, calmed storms, and raised the dead. John calls the first of these works “the first of his signs.” That word is important. These were not random acts of power. They were signs. And a sign always points somewhere.

Now think about what each sign was pointing to. Jesus fed thousands because in the Messiah’s kingdom, no one goes hungry. He healed the sick because in the Messiah’s kingdom, there is no disease. He raised the dead because death itself will one day be completely destroyed. He cast out demons because the demonic powers are the true oppressors, and the Anointed One came to crush them. He walked on water and calmed the storm because humanity was always meant to exercise dominion over creation, and someday all of God’s people will reign with him.

Every sign was a snapshot—a present-tense glimpse of a future-tense reality. The Spirit was not giving people spectacle. He was giving them a window into what God’s kingdom is actually going to look like, so they would want to enter it and give their loyalty to the King.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he commissioned his followers, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). What “gospel” (good news) were they supposed to proclaim? The same gospel Jesus had been proclaiming throughout his ministry, Jesus is King and God’s kingdom is at hand. He promised, “These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mark 16:17-18).

Unfortunately, many Christians today minimize the importance of the miraculous work of the Spirit by thinking Jesus was merely attempting to prove his identity and credentials, rather than give people a sneak-peek of the kingdom for which they had been waiting. If Jesus simply wanted to use spectacle to prove his identity he could have lifted heavy boulders, flown above the crowds, or shot lasers out of his eyes. There are many spectacular things the Son of God could have done to impress people and get their attention. However, that was not the primary point of the miracles. The miracles were specifically tied to the prophetic promises and a future reality.

John 6:26–35, 66–69

John 6 gives us the clearest example of the danger of missing the point of signs. After Jesus fed five thousand people, a crowd tracked him down the next day. Jesus confronted them directly: you are not looking for me because you saw a sign; you are looking for me because

you ate the bread and were satisfied. They wanted more bread. They loved the spectacle. They had missed the point.

Jesus tried to redirect them, explaining that the bread he gave was not the real gift. He himself was the bread of life. The feeding was a snapshot. The reality was Jesus himself. When he pressed this point, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. They wanted the miracle without the King.

The twelve stayed. Peter spoke for all of them: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” The twelve understood that the signs were not the destination. The King was the destination. The signs were pointing them to him.

This matters enormously for how we think about the Holy Spirit’s miraculous work, both in the first century and today. The Spirit is not in the business of performing random spectacle to entertain the curious. Wherever the Spirit is working—whether through healing, prophecy, generosity, service, teaching, or any other gift—he is pointing people toward King Jesus and the kingdom.

In the kingdom, God will do for all what the signs did for a few. Every hunger will be satisfied. Every disease will be healed. Every oppressor will be crushed. Every broken thing will be made whole. The right response is to follow signs where they are pointing: surrender to the King, and become part of the kingdom community that is already living in light of the future.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea to write down and reflect on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: The signs point to the King and his kingdom.

RELATE

1. Name some of Jesus’ miracles. How does each one point to the future kingdom of God, when it is fully consummated?
2. Why do you think so many people in John 6 missed the point of the sign and came back looking for more bread instead of coming to Jesus in faith?
3. How does understanding signs as snapshots of the kingdom change the way we

think about miraculous gifts?

4. What does it mean for us that the Spirit is still in the business of giving people glimpses of the kingdom right now, through the church's life and ministry?
5. Where do you see signs that point toward God's coming kingdom—acts of healing, justice, generosity, or restoration that give people a preview of what is coming?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to look for “kingdom snapshots” in their everyday lives—moments where they see something that looks like what God is going to do for the whole world.

Encourage them to: At the end of each day, ask yourself, where did I see a glimpse of the kingdom today? It might be reconciliation between people, generous provision, or a defeated temptation. Write it down and thank God for it.

Read Isaiah 11:1–9 slowly this week and let it sit with you. Ask the Spirit to help you live in a way that gives other people a glimpse of that kind of kingdom reality. Identify one way you can be a sign this week—one act of service, generosity, healing, or justice that points someone toward King Jesus and his coming kingdom.

7

Renewal

This lesson helps our students celebrate the Holy Spirit’s quiet, powerful work in opening human hearts to the gospel. We will explore how Scripture describes people as spiritually dead or blinded apart from the Spirit, and how faith itself is presented as a gift, not merely the result of good arguments or strong willpower. We want the class to recognize that whenever someone believes, repents, and follows Jesus, it is because the Spirit has been at work through the message, the messengers, and in the heart itself.

Primary Scriptures:

- Ezekiel 36:25–27
- Acts 16:11–15
- Ephesians 2:1–10
- 1 Corinthians 3:5–7

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

1. In our last lesson, we talked about miraculous signs as snapshots of the kingdom. Where did you see “kingdom snapshots” this past week—moments that reminded you of the world God is going to make new?
2. Thinking back over the earlier lessons (wind, anointing, breath, water, fire, and signs), which picture of the Spirit has most changed the way you think about evangelism and sharing your faith?

REVEAL

Most of us have heard an explanation of faith that sounds something like this: the Bible is a reasonable book, and if reasonable people read it with an open mind, they will come to faith. There is definitely truth in that. But if we are not careful, that way of talking quietly moves the spotlight from the Spirit to the human mind. It implies that faith is mainly what we produce when we think well enough.

Scripture tells a different story. The writers of the New Testament describe people apart from Christ as dead in their trespasses and sins, enslaved to the “prince of the power of the air,” and unable to see the glory of Christ on their own. That does not mean we are robots or that we have no genuine choices. It means something deeper is broken than mere logic can repair.

Ezekiel 36:22-38

Long before Jesus came, God promised through Ezekiel that he would do a radical work in his people. He would sprinkle clean water on them, cleanse them from their idols, and then do something even more profound: remove their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. He promised to put his Spirit within them and cause them to walk in his statutes.

That promise goes far beyond “better arguments” or “stronger willpower.” A heart of stone does not respond to anything. It cannot be persuaded, warmed up, or talked into obedience. It has to be replaced. When God gives a heart of flesh and puts his Spirit within a person, they become able to respond to him in ways they simply could not before. Renewal is not just a fresh coat of paint on an old heart. It is a new heart, animated by the Spirit.

Acts 16:11–15

When Paul and his companions came to Philippi, they met a group of women gathered by the river for prayer. Among them was Lydia, a seller of purple goods. Luke describes her conversion in a way that is easy to overlook: “The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.” Paul preached. Lydia listened. But it was the Lord who opened her heart.

Yes, Paul had to go. Yes, he had to speak clearly. Yes, Lydia had to listen, think, and respond. But God’s Spirit was also doing something inside her that Paul could not do. The Spirit took words, which might have simply bounced off a hard heart, and instead made them take root.

Ephesians 2:1–10

Paul reminds the Ephesians that they were once dead in their trespasses and sins, following the course of this world and the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience. But God, being rich in mercy, made them alive together with Christ. Salvation is framed as resurrection—from death to life. Dead people do not argue themselves out of the grave.

He goes on to say that we are saved by grace through faith, and that this is not our own doing; it is the gift of God. Faith is not a trophy we earn by being smarter than other people. It is the Spirit's gift, given through the preaching of the gospel, through the example and encouragement of others, and through his mysterious work in our hearts.

1 Corinthians 3:5–9

Paul pushes this point further in his letter to the Corinthians. Some were dividing over which teacher they followed—Paul or Apollos—as if their favorite preacher were the true source of their spiritual life. Paul corrects them: he planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are servants. The growth comes from God.

This is a vital word for anyone who teaches, preaches, or shares their faith. Our arguments, lessons, and sermons are seeds and water. They matter, and God uses them. But none of us can reach into another person's heart and make it live. None of us can produce renewal by force of personality or clarity of logic. That is the Spirit's work.

When we recognize that spiritual renewal is the Spirit's work, not our own cleverness, it changes the way we tell our stories. Instead of saying, "I studied my way into the truth," we learn to say, "God was patient with me. He brought people into my life, brought Scripture to my attention, and opened my heart so I could see what I had missed." That kind of language nurtures humility and gratitude.

It also changes the way we approach evangelism. If we secretly believe that people come to Christ mainly because we have the right arguments, we will put crushing pressure on ourselves to "win" every conversation. When we understand that we are planters and waterers, not heart-changers, we are freed to speak the truth in love, pray earnestly, and trust the Spirit to do what only he can do. We still prepare well, think clearly, and answer gently—but we do so with confidence that the invisible Spirit is at work in ways we cannot see.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea they can write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: God opens hearts.

RELATE

1. How should the promise in Ezekiel 36—to remove hearts of stone and give hearts of flesh—shape the way we think about what has actually happened to us in Christ?
2. When you read about Lydia in Acts 16, what difference does it make to notice that “the Lord opened her heart” rather than simply saying she made a good decision?
3. In what ways have you tended to place too much weight on human logic, strategy, or personality in evangelism, and too little on the Spirit’s invisible work?
4. How does Ephesians 2 challenge any pride we might feel about our own faith or understanding, and how does it invite us into humility and gratitude instead?
5. If we are planters and waterers rather than heart-changers, what practical difference should that make in how we share the gospel with our friends, family, and neighbors?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to pay attention to the Spirit’s unseen work in both their own story and the lives of people around them.

Encourage them to: Spend time this week writing a brief version of their own conversion story that highlights what God did—how he brought people, Scriptures, circumstances, and inner conviction together—rather than just what they figured out.

Choose one person they are praying for and, each day, specifically ask the Spirit to open that person’s heart to the gospel, while also asking for courage and gentleness in their own words and actions. As they read Scripture or listen to sermons this week, quietly pray before and after, Spirit, open my heart to this word, and help me see where you are renewing me.

8

Truth

This lesson helps our students see the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth who exposes the devil's illusions and reveals the permanent reality of God's kingdom. We will explore how Scripture describes the present world as passing away, how the devil blinds people with lies about power and pleasure, and how the Spirit opens our eyes to see Jesus and his kingdom as ultimate reality. We want the class to recognize truth, renounce lies, and learn to walk by faith and obedience in light of what is truly real.

Primary Scriptures:

- John 16:7–15
- 2 Corinthians 4:3–6
- 1 John 4:1–6
- 1 Corinthians 7:29–31

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- Looking back, which image of the Spirit (wind, anointing, breath, water, fire, signs, renewal) has most changed the way you think about your own faith story?
- In the last lesson, we talked about the Spirit's work in opening hearts and bringing renewal. Where have you noticed the Spirit at work in you or others this week—drawing, convicting, or softening hearts?
- How can you give more credit for your faith (the ways he has worked through people, Scripture, and circumstances in your life)?

REVEAL

Imagine standing in a room full of mirrors at a carnival. The mirrors bend and twist your reflection so badly that you lose track of what you really look like. If you stayed in that room long enough, the distorted images might start to feel normal. Stepping out into normal light and looking into a true mirror might be jarring, even painful, but also liberating.

Scripture says the devil has done something like that to the whole world. He has filled it with illusions—lies about where power comes from, what pleasure is for, and what really matters. Power, pleasure, comfort, and self-rule are bent and magnified until they look ultimate. The Holy Spirit's job as the Spirit of Truth is to pull us out of the illusion, show us reality, and keep us walking in truth.

John 16:7–15

On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples he would send “the Spirit of truth.” This Spirit would convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. He would testify about Jesus, guide the disciples into all the truth, declare what is to come, and glorify the Son.

The truth the Spirit reveals is centered on Jesus. In a world that calls evil good and good evil, the Spirit says, “Jesus is Lord. His cross is wisdom. His way is life.” That sounds upside down to a world that believes life is found in saving yourself, grasping for control, and indulging every desire. The Spirit insists that real life is found in losing your life for Jesus' sake, trusting his word, and obeying his commands.

2 Corinthians 4:3–6

Paul describes the problem starkly: the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. The devil wants people to stay in the funhouse, convinced that what they see there is all there is. The Spirit does something different. He shines light into the heart, the way God once said, “Let light shine out of darkness” at creation.

When someone finally begins to see Jesus clearly—as glorious, worthy, trustworthy—that is not because they have simply upgraded their ideas. It is because the Spirit of Truth has cut through the fog and shown them reality. Jesus is not one option among many. He is the true picture of what humanity and power and love actually look like.

1 John 4:1–6

John warns his readers that not every “spirit” or teaching is from God. Some messages, even religious ones, are animated by the spirit of error. The test he offers is this: does this teaching confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh and line up with the witness of the apostles? If so, it is from the Spirit of Truth. If not, it is from the spirit of error, no matter how attractive or powerful it seems.

This helps your students make sense of the voices they hear every day: sermons, podcasts, news, social media, conversations. Some voices promise life through self-fulfillment, power through domination, security through wealth, or peace through avoiding hard things. The Spirit of Truth teaches a different way: life through self-giving love, greatness through serving, security in God’s care, and peace through faith and obedience—even when it costs.

1 Corinthians 7:29–31

Paul reminds the church in Corinth that “the present form of this world is passing away.” That does not mean physical creation is bad or disposable. It means the current arrangement of things—the systems of status, power, wealth, and pleasure as the world defines them—is temporary. Like a stage set that will soon be struck, this present age is not the permanent reality.

The Spirit helps us live accordingly. He helps us treat this present world as temporary, not ultimate. Marriage, grief, possessions, and daily business all matter, but they are not ultimate. The Spirit’s truth helps us use them without being used by them. He keeps whispering, “This is passing away. The kingdom is forever. Live like that’s true.”

When believers forget that the Spirit of Truth is exposing a lie-filled world, we will inevitably start to drift back toward the illusions. We will begin to believe that our safety comes from money, that our worth comes from success, that our joy comes from comfort, that our security comes from political power. The Spirit does not simply give us Bible facts. He gives us a different way of seeing everything.

Discipleship, then, is learning to trust the Spirit’s assessment of reality more than our own instincts. It is learning to ask, “What is true in God’s kingdom?” and then living as if that answer is more solid than whatever our eyes and feelings are telling us. The Spirit of Truth trains us to walk by faith, not by sight.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea they can write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: The Spirit reveals reality.

RELATE

1. When you hear Jesus talk about the Spirit of Truth in John 16, what stands out most to you about the Spirit's role in our lives today?
2. How does Paul's description of the devil blinding minds in 2 Corinthians 4 help you think about the people in your life who seem uninterested or hostile toward the gospel?
3. John contrasts the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error. Where do you see the spirit of error at work in our culture's messages about power, pleasure, money, or success?
4. What are some specific ways the statement "the present form of this world is passing away" should reshape our priorities, habits, and decisions?
5. Can you think of a time when the Spirit exposed a lie you were believing—about yourself, others, or God—and showed you the truth instead? How did that change the way you lived?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to pay attention to the messages they are absorbing and to practice naming lies and confessing truth.

Encourage them to: Once a day, identify one message they have heard—from media, conversation, or their own thoughts—that promises life through something other than Jesus (power, comfort, money, self-expression). Name it as a lie before God.

Pair each lie with a specific truth from Scripture about Jesus and his kingdom, and pray, "Spirit of Truth, help me believe the truth and live like it's real."

Choose one concrete act of obedience this week that goes against the world's logic but aligns with the kingdom's reality—such as forgiving an enemy, giving generously, or serving without recognition—as a way of walking by faith, not by sight.

9

Fruit

This lesson helps our students see the Holy Spirit as the one who patiently produces fruit in our lives so that the character of Jesus is formed in us. We will explore how Scripture describes the “works of the flesh” and the “fruit of the Spirit,” and how our role is not to manufacture virtue on our own but to keep in step with the Spirit who is already at work within us. We want the class to learn how to participate with the Spirit’s transforming work so that love, joy, peace, and the other qualities of Christ become increasingly visible in their everyday lives.

Primary Scriptures:

- Galatians 5:16–26
- John 15:1–8
- 2 Corinthians 3:17–18

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- In our last lesson, we talked about the Spirit of Truth exposing the lies of this world and revealing the reality of God’s kingdom. Where did you notice truth and lies in tension this past week?
- Thinking back to the lesson on renewal, how have you seen the Spirit at work in your own heart—changing desires, opening your eyes, or softening you toward obedience?

REVEAL

If you plant a fruit tree in your yard, there are a few things you can do and many things you cannot. You can plant, water, fertilize, prune, and protect the tree, but you cannot reach inside the branches and force fruit to grow. Fruit appears mysteriously, over time, as the tree draws life from its roots and responds to sun and rain. Your role is to tend the tree, not manufacture the fruit.

That is how the New Testament teaches us to think about the Spirit's work in our character. The Spirit is the life within us, drawing on the life of Christ. Our role is to stay rooted in him and cooperate with what the Spirit is doing. Over time, real fruit appears—fruit we could never have produced by willpower alone.

Galatians 5:16–26

Paul contrasts two very different ways of living: walking by the flesh and walking by the Spirit. The works of the flesh—sexual immorality, impurity, hatred, jealousy, fits of anger, selfish ambition, and the rest—are what naturally grow when we follow our instincts apart from God. No one has to teach us how to do those things. They come easily.

On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—comes from a different source. Paul uses the metaphor of fruit to describe the sort of character the Spirit produces. Just like a person might say, “A pineapple plant produces a fruit that has a tough, spiky, greenish-brown skin. It has long green leaves on the top. Inside, it has juicy yellow flesh that is sweet to the taste.” All of these characteristics describe the same fruit. Sweetness is one characteristic of a pineapple, but sweetness alone does not make a fruit a pineapple.

Similarly, the Spirit's fruit has these nine characteristics. These characteristics are indicative of the Spirit's presence, evidence that a person is walking by the Spirit and not by the flesh. To put it another way, these nine traits give us a composite sketch of the character of Jesus. When the Holy Spirit is living within us, empowering us, our lives begin to reflect all of these traits. We begin to look and act more and more like Jesus.

John 15:1–8

Jesus himself uses a similar image. He calls himself the true vine and his disciples the branches. Branches do not have life in themselves. They live and bear fruit only as they remain connected to the vine. If they are cut off, they wither. If they remain, they bear much fruit.

Your students need to hear this: fruitfulness is not primarily about trying harder; it is about abiding deeper. The Spirit is the one who keeps us connected to Christ, drawing his life into our hearts. As we abide in Jesus—listening to his word, trusting his promises, obeying his commands—the Spirit quietly forms the character of Jesus in us. We do not always feel it in the moment, but over time, the change becomes more and more obvious.

2 Corinthians 3:17–18

Paul says that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, and that we all, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. This transformation comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. The Spirit’s goal is not simply to make us nicer people. His goal is to conform us to the image of Christ.

This perspective changes the way we think about spiritual growth. Instead of constantly asking, “How can I fix myself?” we learn to ask, “How can I turn my face toward Jesus and respond to the Spirit today?” The Spirit uses Scripture, prayer, worship, suffering, community, and service as tools to chisel away what does not look like Christ and cultivate what does. The process is slow, but it is sure.

When we forget that the Spirit is the one producing fruit, we either fall into pride (when we think we are doing well) or despair (when we see how far we have to go). Recognizing the Spirit’s role cultivates humility and hope. Humility, because any Christlike character we have is a gift. Hope, because the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in us and is not finished with us yet.

At the same time, Scripture never lets us become passive. Paul still commands us to walk by the Spirit, crucify the flesh, sow to the Spirit and not to the flesh. We participate with the Spirit by saying yes to his will, no to the flesh, and arranging our lives in ways that keep us close to Jesus. As we do, the Spirit forms the very character of Christ within us.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea they can write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: The Spirit produces the fruit.

RELATE

1. When you compare the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5,

where do you see the clearest contrast in your own life right now?

2. How does Jesus' image of the vine and branches in John 15 shape the way you think about your responsibility in spiritual growth versus the Spirit's responsibility?
3. What practices, habits, or relationships have most helped you "abide" in Christ so that the Spirit can produce fruit in you?
4. Where do you sense the Spirit is specifically inviting you to crucify the flesh—some pattern, attitude, or habit that needs to be put to death—so new fruit can grow?
5. When you consider 2 Corinthians 3:18, in what ways can you look back and see that the Spirit has already been transforming you "from one degree of glory to another"?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to pay focused attention to one aspect of the Spirit's fruit and consciously cooperate with the Spirit in that area.

Encourage them to: Choose one characteristic of the Spirit's fruit (for example, patience or kindness) and each morning pray, Spirit, form this in me today, then watch for opportunities to practice it. When they notice a "work of the flesh" rising up (envy, anger, selfishness), pause and deliberately ask the Spirit for help to respond differently in that moment.

At the end of each day, reflect briefly: where did I see the Spirit's fruit in my words, actions, or reactions today, and where do I need to confess and keep in step with him more closely tomorrow?

Mission

This lesson helps our students see that the Spirit has not been given to the church for a dozen competing agendas but for one shared mission: to be and make loyal disciples of Jesus. We will explore how Jesus' Great Commission and the story of Acts tie the Spirit's power directly to bearing witness, and how every gift, role, and act of service in the church ultimately serves this purpose. We want the class to embrace their place in this collective mission and trust that the Spirit has equipped them—not just a few “professionals”—to participate fully in it.

Primary Scriptures:

- Matthew 28:18–20
- Acts 1:6–8
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–7

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- Last week we talked about the Spirit growing fruit in us so that the character of Jesus is formed in our lives. Where did you notice evidence of the Spirit's fruit—or the works of the flesh—this past week?
- Thinking back over the series, how have the images of the Spirit (wind, anointing, breath, water, fire, signs, renewal, truth, fruit) changed the way you think about your everyday life, not just your “church life”?
- When you consider your own role in God's work, do you tend to see yourself as

central to the mission, on the sidelines, or somewhere in between?

REVEAL

If a football team showed up on game day and half the players thought they were there for band practice, a few thought they were there to sell concessions, and others thought they were just there to sit in the stands, the game would be a disaster. It is impossible to win when the players do not know why they are there or what they are trying to accomplish.

In a similar way, many Christians know they are “on the team,” but are unclear about what the church is actually for. Some think the church exists mainly for their personal encouragement, some for social programs, some for political influence, and others for keeping traditions alive. Scripture gives a much clearer and simpler answer: the church, filled with the Spirit, exists to be and make disciples of King Jesus. In other words, the church’s mission is helping people become more like Jesus. Everything else flows from and serves that mission.

Matthew 28:18–20

After his resurrection, Jesus gathered his disciples and announced that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him. On the basis of that authority, he gave them one great commission: make disciples of all nations. They were to do this by going, baptizing people into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

This is not a private assignment for the apostles only. It is the marching order for the entire church in every generation. The promise that follows—“I am with you always”—is fulfilled through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is Jesus’ abiding presence with his people as they carry out this mission. That means we cannot separate the Spirit’s work from disciple-making. If we are filled with the Spirit, we are called into this mission.

Acts 1:6–8

Right before his ascension, the disciples asked Jesus if he was about to restore the kingdom to Israel. They were probably thinking in terms of political power and national concerns. Jesus redirected their attention: they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

The Spirit's power is tied directly to witness. The same fire and wind we read about at Pentecost were given so that fearful disciples could become bold proclaimers of the risen King. Throughout Acts, the Spirit lead, empowered, emboldened, and sometimes even re-routed the church so the gospel could go where it has not gone before. The church is not an audience; it is a Spirit-empowered witness.

1 Corinthians 12:1-31

Paul reminds the Corinthians that there are many different gifts, services, and activities in the church, but the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God are behind them all. The Spirit gives different gifts to each person “for the common good.” That common good is not a vague sense of community. It is the strengthening of the body of Christ so the church can carry out its mission.

This means your students can expect that whatever gifts the Spirit has given them—whether teaching, encouragement, generosity, hospitality, administration, mercy, or something else—are not random. They are strategically given so that the whole body can work together to be and make disciples. No gift is wasted. No member is unnecessary. The Spirit equips the church entirely for this purpose.

When the church forgets its mission, the gifts of the Spirit get misused or neglected. Teaching becomes mere information transfer instead of disciple-making. Hospitality becomes social entertainment instead of kingdom welcome. Giving becomes fundraising instead of generous participation in God's work. The Spirit did not empower the church simply to have religious activities. He empowered the church to participate in God's plan to rescue and transform the world through loyalty to Jesus.

Embracing this mission also keeps us from thinking too small about our lives. The Spirit has not only saved us from sin; he has saved us for a purpose. Every conversation, workplace, neighborhood, kitchen table, and church gathering can become a place where the Spirit uses us to help someone move closer to Jesus.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea they can write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: The Spirit empowers us for the mission.

RELATE

1. When you hear Jesus' words in Matthew 28, how does it challenge the way you have thought about what the church is mainly for?
2. Acts 1:8 connects the Spirit's power directly to being witnesses. In your own life, where do you most need the Spirit's power to be a faithful witness to Jesus?
3. How does understanding spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 as tools for the church's mission change the way you view your own abilities and opportunities?
4. If our mission is helping people become more like Jesus, how should that shape the way we think about church programs, budgets, and calendars?
5. Where do you sense the Spirit is nudging you personally to step more fully into this mission—at home, at work, in your neighborhood, or in the congregation?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to take one concrete step toward living as Spirit-empowered disciple-makers in their everyday context.

Encourage them to: Identify one person in their life (family, friend, co-worker, neighbor) and commit to praying daily for that person by name, asking the Spirit for an opportunity to encourage them toward Jesus.

Tell them to pay attention this week to the ways their gifts might serve the mission, teaching a child, encouraging someone discouraged, practicing hospitality, or serving in a quiet way that supports disciple-making.

At the end of the week, write down one specific moment when they sensed the Spirit helping them point people towards Jesus, and thank God for including them in his mission.

Unity

This lesson helps our students see that the Holy Spirit has already created a deep, spiritual unity among believers that is far richer than surface-level sameness. We will explore how Scripture describes this unity as a gift to “maintain,” not something we need to create, and how it binds very different people together through a shared loyalty and love for Jesus. We want the class to eagerly protect and display this Spirit-given unity in local congregations and relationships, even when differences and tensions arise.

Primary Scriptures:

- Ephesians 4:1–6
- John 17:20–23
- 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- Last week we focused on the Spirit’s mission to make and mature loyal disciples. Where did you see opportunities this week to participate in that mission, with your words, your example, or your service?
- Thinking back to the lesson on fruit, how have you seen Jesus’ character (love, patience, kindness, etc.) being evident—or not being evident—in your relationships with other Christians?
- When you consider the images of the Spirit so far, which ones help you most when there is conflict or tension in the church?

REVEAL

If you have ever watched a marching band at halftime, you know what *uniformity* looks like. Everyone wears the same outfit, moves in the same direction, and plays the same song in tightly scripted patterns. It is impressive, but it is not the same thing as unity. Uniformity demands sameness. True unity makes space for difference.

The Spirit does not create a marching band. He creates a body. In a healthy body, different parts look and function differently, but they share one life and one purpose. In the same way, the Spirit brings very different people—young and old, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, introverts and extroverts—into one family and calls us to eagerly maintain what he has created.

Ephesians 4:1–6

Paul urges the Ephesian Christians to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling” they have received, and then immediately describes what that looks like: humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, and being eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Notice he does not tell them to create unity. He tells them to maintain the unity the Spirit has already given.

He roots this unity in a series of “ones”: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. That list is the deep foundation of Christian unity. We might differ on preferences, personalities, backgrounds, and opinions, but if we share that “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” the Spirit has already bound us together. Our task is not to decide if other believers “deserve” unity. Our task is to treat them as family because the Spirit has made them family.

John 17:20–23

On the night before his death, Jesus prayed not only for the apostles but “for those who will believe in me through their word”—which includes us. He asked the Father to make them one, just as he and the Father are one, so that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son.

This shows how high the stakes are. Unity is not a bonus feature. It is part of our witness. When the Spirit enables believers who are different (and sometimes difficult) to love each other deeply, forgive each other, and work together, the world sees a preview of God’s kingdom. When we fracture, divide, and devour one another, we tell a different story.

1 Corinthians 12:12–27

Paul uses the body metaphor to address division in Corinth. Some members felt inferior, as if they did not really belong. Others felt superior, as if they did not need the rest. Paul insists that the body is one, with many members, and that God has arranged each one as he chose. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” and the foot cannot say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong.”

This is a crucial word for unity. The Spirit’s unity is not fragile sameness. It is a robust bond that makes room for different gifts, roles, and perspectives. Honor, care, and mutual dependence are the way we “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” When one member suffers, all suffer. When one is honored, all rejoice.

In a world that sorts people by tribe, party, class, race, and preference, the Spirit is doing something radically different. He is building a people whose deepest identity marker is Jesus. That unity does not erase our differences; it reorders them. Our shared loyalty to Christ and our shared experience of his Spirit become more important than anything that might divide us.

Practically, this means that Spirit-filled believers cannot be careless about relationships. Grudges, gossip, bitterness, and contempt are not small issues; they are attacks on something the Spirit himself has created. To be “eager” to maintain unity is to take initiative in peacemaking, to listen carefully, to forgive quickly, and to work patiently through disagreements because our common Lord and common love matter more than being right or getting our way.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea they can write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: One Spirit, one family.

RELATE

1. When you hear Paul call us to “maintain the unity of the Spirit,” what does that suggest about where unity comes from and what our role is in it?
2. How does Jesus’ prayer in John 17 challenge the way we think about division and reconciliation among believers?

3. In 1 Corinthians 12, which body-part attitude do you tend to slip into more often—“I don’t really belong” or “I don’t really need them”—and how does the Spirit correct that?
4. What are some practical ways a congregation can show that its unity is rooted in “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” rather than in sameness of culture, politics, or preferences?
5. Can you think of a relationship with another Christian where you need to move toward unity right now—through confession, forgiveness, listening, or simply choosing to stay connected?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to take one concrete step toward maintaining and displaying the unity the Spirit has given.

Encourage them to: Identify one brother or sister in Christ with whom there is tension, distance, or misunderstanding, and intentionally reach out this week with a humble, gentle conversation.

Pray daily through Ephesians 4:1–6, asking the Spirit to grow humility, gentleness, patience, and love in their heart toward specific people in their congregation.

Look for one opportunity to honor a different member of the “body” this week—someone with a different background, gift, or perspective—and express genuine appreciation for the way the Spirit is using them.

Presence

This lesson helps your students see that the Holy Spirit’s presence in their lives is temple language—God has made his people his dwelling place. We will explore how Scripture moves from the tabernacle and temple to the church and the individual believer, and how this leads directly to the call to present our bodies as living sacrifices. We want the class to embrace a whole-life response to God’s presence, submitting every part of themselves to the Lord in grateful, embodied worship.

Primary Scriptures:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16–17
- 1 Corinthians 6:18–20
- Romans 12:1–2

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- Last week we talked about the Spirit’s role in creating and maintaining unity among believers. Where did you see opportunities to protect or repair that unity this past week?
- Thinking back to the mission lesson, how has knowing the Spirit empowers us for one shared mission shaped the way you think about your place in the church?
- When you consider the Spirit growing fruit in us, how has that challenged the way you think about your body—your words, habits, and physical choices—as part of your spiritual life?

REVEAL

If you ask a child, “Where does God live?” they might point up to the sky or to the church building. In the Old Testament, Israelites could say God dwelled in the tabernacle and later in the temple, above the mercy seat between the cherubim. His presence was focused there in a unique way. You could not casually stroll into that space. It was holy ground.

In Christ, something astonishing has happened. God has not lowered his standards of holiness, and he has not become less present. Instead, he has chosen to make his dwelling in a new kind of temple: his people. The same holy God who filled the tabernacle and temple now lives in and among those who belong to Jesus by the Holy Spirit. That reality calls for a whole-life response.

1 Corinthians 3:16–17

Paul tells the Corinthian church, “You are God’s temple and God’s Spirit dwells in you.” Here the “you” is plural. He is talking about the gathered community. In a city full of temples to various gods, Paul announces that the living God’s true temple is the people who confess Jesus as Lord and are filled with the Spirit.

That means the way we treat the church—and one another—is temple business. To divide, despise, or tear down the church is to tamper with God’s holy dwelling. To build up, honor, and care for the church is to honor the presence of God. Your students need to see the church not as a religious club but as a sacred space, a living temple where God’s Spirit has chosen to dwell.

1 Corinthians 6:18–20

Later in the same letter, Paul applies temple language to the individual believer’s body, especially in the context of sexual ethics. He reminds them that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, whom they have from God, and that they are not their own; they were bought with a price. Therefore, they are to glorify God in their bodies.

This cuts directly against the idea that spirituality is purely internal or that what we do with our bodies doesn’t matter. Our eyes, hands, mouths, and sexuality are not neutral; they are part of the temple. To use our bodies for impurity is to profane the temple. To use them for obedience, purity, generosity, and service is to offer God fitting worship.

Romans 12:1–2

Paul brings this temple imagery into sharp focus when he urges believers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is their spiritual worship. Instead of bringing an animal to the altar, we bring ourselves. We place our whole selves—mind, body, habits, schedule, relationships—on the altar each day.

He goes on to say that we are not to be conformed to this world but transformed by the renewal of our minds. This is temple language too. The world wants to shape us according to its patterns of self-indulgence and self-rule. The Spirit renews our minds so that we can discern and do the will of God. Living as God’s temple means letting him set the agenda for how we think, feel, speak, and act.

When we understand that we are God’s temple, it changes the way we think about holiness. Holiness is not just avoiding a few obvious sins so we can feel respectable. It is living in conscious awareness that God’s Spirit dwells in us and among us. It is asking, “Does this honor the presence of God who lives here?” before we speak, click, spend, or act.

It also changes the way we think about worship. Worship is not confined to an hour on Sunday in a particular building. Worship is a life offered to God, moment by moment, as a living sacrifice. Gathered worship becomes the family of God’s temple-people coming together to remember who we are, to confess and be renewed, and then to scatter as mobile temples into homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea they can write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: You are God’s temple.

RELATE

1. When you hear that “you are God’s temple and God’s Spirit dwells in you” (as a church), how does that change the way you think about the congregation and your relationships within it?
2. How does the idea that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit challenge common ways people talk about “my body, my choice” or “it’s just physical”?

3. What does it practically look like to present your body as a living sacrifice in daily life, at work, at home, online, and in your habits?
4. In what areas do you personally feel the strongest pull to be “conformed to this world,” and how might the Spirit be inviting you to a renewed mind and a different way?
5. Can you think of a time when remembering God’s presence with you changed the way you spoke, reacted, or made a decision?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to intentionally acknowledge and honor God’s presence in their bodies and in the church.

Encourage them to: Begin each day this week with a simple prayer, Lord, my body is your temple; help me honor you with what I do today, in my thoughts, words, and actions.

Choose one specific bodily habit to offer to God as a living sacrifice—this could be how they use their phone, what they watch, how they eat or exercise, or how they speak—and consciously practice obedience in that area.

At least once this week, take a few minutes with another believer to quietly thank God for making his people his temple and to pray for greater holiness and reverence in every aspect of life.

Hope

This lesson helps your students see the Holy Spirit as God's own down payment on a future inheritance that is guaranteed in Christ. We will explore how Scripture describes the Spirit as a seal and firstfruits, and how this deep, future-oriented hope can produce meekness, patience, and joy even in the midst of suffering, rejection, and ordinary pressures. We want the class to learn to lean on the Spirit's presence as proof that the best is yet to come and to live differently because of that hope.

Primary Scriptures:

- Ephesians 1:13–14
- Romans 8:14–25
- 2 Corinthians 1:21–22

REVIEW

Spend a few minutes connecting back to previous lessons:

- Last week we talked about being God's temple and offering our bodies as living sacrifices. Where did you consciously try to honor God with your body, and where was that especially challenging?
- Thinking back to the unity and mission lessons, how has the Spirit's presence changed the way you see your place in the church and in God's larger story?
- When you consider everything we have studied about the Spirit so far, where do you most need hope right now—some area where you need to be reminded that God is not finished yet?

REVEAL

If you have ever bought a house, you know what earnest money is. Before the sale is finalized, the buyer puts down a deposit. That money is not the whole purchase price, but it is real, substantial, and meant to show that the buyer is serious and will follow through. It is a promise in concrete form.

Scripture uses a similar picture to describe the Holy Spirit. God has given his own Spirit to his people as a seal, a first installment, a down payment on everything he has promised to do when he makes all things new. The Spirit is not just a vague feeling of comfort in the present. He is God's way of saying, "I will finish what I started. You really will receive the inheritance I have sworn to give you."

Ephesians 1:13–14

Paul tells the Ephesians that when they heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and believed in Christ, they were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. He calls the Spirit "the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it." That word "guarantee" is the language of down payment or earnest money. God has put his own Spirit in us as the first portion of what is coming.

This means that every sign of the Spirit's work in our lives now—conviction of sin, love for Jesus, desire for holiness, comfort in sorrow—is a reminder that we belong to God and that he fully intends to finish his work. Your students do not have to wonder whether God will give up on them or abandon his promises. The Spirit's presence is the proof that he will not.

Romans 8:14–25

In Romans 8, Paul says that those who are led by the Spirit are children of God, and the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. Then he takes it further: if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ—provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

He goes on to say that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed. Creation itself is groaning, and we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. In this hope we were saved. The Spirit is called the "firstfruits" here—the beginning of the harvest. We taste the Spirit's presence now as a preview of the full harvest of resurrection and new creation that is coming.

2 Corinthians 1:21–22

Paul tells the Corinthians that it is God who establishes us in Christ, has anointed us, has put his seal on us, and has given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. The picture is layered: anointing, sealing, and guaranteeing. Anointing marks us out as belonging to God's royal family. Sealing marks us as authentic. The guarantee is the Spirit himself, dwelling in our hearts as the pledge that God will finish what he has started.

This perspective is crucial when life gets hard. Paul knew suffering, rejection, and daily pressure far beyond what most of us experience. Yet he anchored his hope in the Spirit's presence as proof that his story did not end with beatings, imprisonments, or disappointment. The Spirit's guarantee allowed him to be bold and gentle at the same time, to embrace meekness instead of grasping for power, and to rejoice even in weakness, because he knew where the story was headed.

When we forget that the Spirit is our down payment on a future inheritance, we will naturally cling to this life as if it were all we have. We will fight for control, panic over loss, and measure success by short-term comfort or recognition. The Spirit's guarantee invites us into a different posture—one of quiet confidence. We can be meek because we are not in danger of losing anything that truly matters. We can endure rejection because our acceptance with the Father is secure. We can face everyday frustrations with patience because this present moment is not the whole story.

This kind of hope is not wishful thinking. It is confidence rooted in God's own pledge. The Spirit's presence in us is like a constant whisper: "You are God's child. You have an inheritance. Glory is coming." As that hope sinks in, it produces a surprising combination of realism and joy. We see suffering and evil clearly, but we are not crushed. We grieve, but not as those who have no hope. We live in the present, but we are anchored in the future that God has promised.

RECORD

Encourage the class to take notes by displaying PowerPoint slides or distributing handouts. Give them at least one key idea they can write down and meditate on throughout the week.

Suggested key takeaway: The Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance.

RELATE

1. When you hear that the Spirit is God's "guarantee" or "down payment" on your inheritance, how does that change the way you think about your future?
2. Romans 8 ties being heirs with Christ to suffering with Christ. How does the Spirit's presence help us endure suffering without becoming bitter or hopeless?
3. Where in your life right now do you most need the Spirit's help to "abound in hope" rather than be ruled by fear, anxiety, or discouragement?
4. How might viewing yourself as an heir of God and co-heir with Christ reshape the way you respond to rejection, loss, or lack of recognition in this life?
5. In what practical ways could a deeper grasp of your future inheritance lead to more meekness and joy in your everyday relationships and responsibilities?

REHEARSE

Suggested practice for the week: Invite your students to consciously connect their daily struggles with the Spirit's guarantee of a future inheritance.

Encourage them to: Each morning this week, pray through a short phrase such as, "Spirit of God, remind me today that I am an heir in Christ," and ask the Spirit to anchor their heart in that hope.

When they face a difficult moment—conflict, criticism, disappointment—pause and quietly remind themselves, "This is not the end of my story; the Spirit is my guarantee," then choose a meek, Christlike response.

At least once this week, spend focused time (perhaps with Romans 8 or Ephesians 1) thanking God specifically for their future inheritance and asking the Spirit to produce joy and perseverance in a particular area of suffering or challenge.