

LifeGroup Study
2024-01-14
OPEN TO THE SPIRIT
OPEN
Leader Notes



OVERVIEW:

Welcome to our study, Open to the Spirit. Over the next six weeks we will explore who the Holy Spirit is, how He is at work in our lives and how we can follow His lead. For week one, our topic is about being *open* to the Spirit. Jesus was wide open to God's Spirit, and we can be too. The Holy Spirit is God and is present in our lives to guide us, comfort us, and empower us to live the life God has called us to live. Today, let's explore how we can be open to His work in our lives.

ICEBREAKER: New Beginnings

What are you looking forward to in 2024? Is there something new you are planning to take on? Maybe you're looking into a new work opportunity or new courses at school. Maybe you're planning to try a new spiritual discipline or take on a new hobby. Share your new beginning plans with the group!

STUDY:

1. INTRO QUESTIONS

For some of you, the topic of the Spirit's work in you may be brand new, or maybe you're really not sure how you have experienced the Spirit to this point. Others of you may have exciting experiences to share. Still others may be somewhat skeptical about being open to the Spirit because of negative experiences you've had in the past. Whatever your experience with the Spirit has been to this point, that's OK. Take a few minutes to share some initial questions you have or personal experiences you've had to start your discussion about being open to the Spirit.

- What has been your experience with the Holy Spirit in your personal life?
- What experiences have you had in church life (Sunday morning worship or other) that involved the Spirit?
- Have you had any negatives experiences that people said were from or of the Holy Spirit but you are left skeptical?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Holy Spirit was present and active in the Old Testament. Let's explore how we see God's Spirit at work in the time before Jesus came.

2. In the Old Testament the Spirit REGENERATES God's People.

In the Old Testament (OT) we see the Spirit's work of *regeneration* where God gives his people a "new birth" spiritually.

READ: Ezekiel 36:26-27

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a **new spirit** in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my **Spirit** in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. NIV

- What do you notice here about the work the Spirit was doing in his people in the OT?

LEADER NOTES: In this passage we see the spiritual outcomes of the regenerating work of God's Spirit in his people in the OT. God tells them He will change their *heart* – "I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." The result of this heart transplant was the people then chose to follow God.

3. In the Old Testament the Spirit INDWELLS Certain People.

In the Old Testament we see the Spirit "coming upon" certain people.

READ: Numbers 27:18

¹⁸The LORD replied, "Take Joshua son of Nun, who has the Spirit in him, and lay your hands on him. NLT

READ: 1 Samuel 16:13

¹³So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the flask of olive oil he had brought and anointed David with the oil. And the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah. NIV

READ: 1 Samuel 10:10

¹⁰When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, they saw a group of prophets coming toward them. Then the Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul, and he, too, began to prophesy. NIV

- What do you notice about the Holy Spirit's coming upon people in the Old Testament?

LEADER NOTES: While the Holy Spirit in the New Testament permanently fills all believers in Jesus, the Spirit in the Old Testament functioned differently by coming upon certain people at certain times. This was a selective and temporary empowerment God would give certain people to fulfill a task. For example, God filled David and Joshua with His Spirit so they could lead His people. He filled Saul with His Spirit so that Saul would prophesy. The Spirit coming upon people in the Old Testament was not an indication of their spiritual condition. Saul, and many of the unrighteous judges we read about in the book of Judges, received God's Spirit for a time, until a certain task was completed, and then presumably the Spirit departed from them.

JESUS WAS WIDE OPEN TO THE SPIRIT

In the New Testament we read about how Jesus was wide open to the Spirit. Let's explore the Spirit's work in Jesus.

4. Jesus was FILLED with the Spirit.

READ: John 1:32-33

³²Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' NIV

- What is the significance of Jesus being filled with the Spirit when He was baptized?

LEADER NOTES: Jesus being filled with the Spirit showed the Father's approval of His Son (see Matthew 3:15-17). The Spirit's infilling also inaugurated the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

5. Jesus was EMPOWERED by the Spirit.

READ: Luke 4:17-21

¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”^[a]

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” NIV

READ: Acts 10:37-38

³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. NIV

- What do you notice in these passages about the empowering impact of the Holy Spirit in Jesus?

LEADER NOTES: In these passages we see that God gave Jesus the Spirit so that Jesus would be empowered for ministry. The Spirit empowered Jesus to perform signs and wonders, showing us that He is God’s Son. The Spirit empowered Jesus with words to teach us God’s will and plan. The empowering of the Spirit enabled Jesus to win the battle with Satan and ultimately to go to the cross to defeat sin and death. Jesus was wide open to the Spirit’s work in his life. We should be as well!

JESUS WANTS US TO BE WIDE OPEN TO THE SPIRIT

6. Jesus promised we would RECEIVE the Spirit.

READ: John 14:26

²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26 NIV

- What does Jesus tell us about why we receive the Spirit?

LEADER NOTES: In this passage Jesus tells us we receive Spirit so we will be reminded of Jesus’ teachings. Receiving the Spirit means we now have an *Advocate* (one who comes alongside us) to empower us to follow Jesus.

READ Acts 1:4-5

⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with^[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with^[b] the Holy Spirit.” Acts 1:4-5 NIV

7. God has GIVEN us his Spirit.

READ Acts 2:16-18, 33-39 The Spirit Poured Out at Pentecost

- What stands out to you as significant about the early believers receiving the Spirit?
- What questions do you have about followers of Jesus receiving the Spirit today?

LEADER NOTES: The event of the Holy Spirit’s coming to the believers at Pentecost was extremely significant for them and for us today. This event was prophesied by Jesus (see John 14:15) and confirmed through the signs and wonders the apostles performed (see Acts 2:4). Peter prophesied that this same Spirit who indwelt them would indwell his people for all time to come (see Acts 2:36-39)

BEING WIDE OPEN TO THE SPIRIT

The goal of today’s study is that we would begin to be wide open to the Spirit’s work in us.

- What do you think might happen if you started to be more open to the Holy Spirit? Are there fears you have about this? Are there things you are excited about?

LEADER NOTES: Some of your group members may have some hesitation or fear about being open to the Holy Spirit’s work in their life. They may wonder – “Will the Spirit ask me to do something I’m afraid to do? Will He convict me or ask me to change in some way?” Others in your group may be excited about the potential of what the Spirit can do in their life. Your group members may have questions about what it looks like to be more open to the Spirit. That’s OK. The goal of today’s lesson is just to begin to be more open. In the coming weeks we’ll explore lots more about the topic of what this looks like.

- What would it look like to become more open to the Holy Spirit as we go through this series?

PRAYER:

For today’s prayer, let’s respond to God by telling Him we are open to his Spirit’s work in us.

“Father, thank you for the opportunity to study today about your Spirit. Thank you for the work your Spirit has done in the lives of your people in the Old Testament. Thank you that Jesus was wide open to your Spirit’s presence and power in his life. Please help me to be wide open to your Spirit as well.

Please use these coming weeks to teach me more about what you want to do in me and through me by your Spirit. Thank you for your presence, power and love. In Jesus' Name. Amen."