

LifeGroup Study
2024-01-21
OPEN TO THE SPIRIT
A Formal Introduction
Leader Notes



OVERVIEW:

Welcome back to our study, Open to the Spirit. Over the six weeks of our series we are exploring who the Holy Spirit is, how He is at work in our lives and how we can follow his lead. For this week, our topic is “A Formal Introduction”. Who is the Holy Spirit? What does the Bible teach us about his identity within the Trinity? The goal of today’s study is that we would have a formal introduction to the Spirit of God by learning what the Bible teaches about him.

ICEBREAKER: That Famous Person I Met – Or Would Like to Meet!

Several years ago my wife (Merlene) and I attended Saddleback Church in California, where the well-known pastor and author, Rick Warren, was pastor. At a break between the services, I was standing in line to purchase a CD when Rick Warren showed up and said, “I’m going to hug everybody in this line!” So, I can now say that I have been hugged by Rick Warren! 😊 Who is someone famous you have met? Or, who would you like to meet? Share your story with the group!

STUDY:

THE BIBLE PROJECT – THE HOLY SPIRIT THEME VIDEO

In this video, the authors of The Bible Project explore the original meaning of the biblical concept of “spirit” and what it means that God is physically present in all creation. Watch this video together and then discuss the questions that follow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNNZO9i1Gjc>

READ: Genesis 1:1-2

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”
NIV

In the first verses of the Bible we are introduced to the Spirit of God. In the video, we learned the Hebrew word for Spirit is *Ruakh*.

1. What did the authors tell us about the meaning of this word?

LEADER NOTE: In the video the authors told us *Ruakh* means God’s personal presence manifested in “energy” or “power”. This power (God’s Spirit) is invisible, like the power of the wind that moves the tree limbs. This power is also like our breath which gives us vitality and energy. Just as breath sustains life so the Spirit gives and sustains all life.

- 2. In verse 2 we read that the earth was formless and empty (dark and chaotic) and the Spirit was there, hovering over the waters. What is the significance of God’s Spirit being present in this situation?**

LEADER NOTE: In this dramatic scene of darkness and chaos, God’s Spirit is present, about to bring life and order and beauty to the situation. For example – verse 3 – “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” For the first time ever, light pierces the darkness.

- 3. In the video, the author’s go on to talk about how the Spirit would come upon certain people in the Old Testament to equip them for a task. For example, the Spirit empowered the prophets in the Old Testament to speak for God. What was the message God gave them about a coming Messiah?**

LEADER NOTE: The prophet’s message was that while the Spirit (*Ruakh*) had created a good world, humans had given in to evil and unleashed darkness and chaos back into the world through their injustice. This was another kind of disorder. The prophets said the Spirit would come to bring light and order back to the world. They looked ahead to the coming of the Messiah (Jesus).

THE TRINITY – FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT

In the Bible, we see God made known to us in three distinct persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Trinity at Jesus' Baptism

READ: Matthew 3:16-17

¹⁶As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." NIV

4. What can we learn from these verses about how God is three distinct persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?

LEADER NOTE: In these verses we see the three persons of the Trinity in action. Jesus (the Son) is baptized. The Spirit (Greek is *pneuma* meaning "wind, breath, spirit") descends on Jesus. The Father proclaims from heaven "This is my Son, whom I love; in him I am well pleased."

One God – Three Persons

The Trinity is the term we use to describe the Bible's teaching that there is one God in three distinct Persons. In Scripture, we see the Father, the Son and the Spirit are each described to us as God.

The Father is God

READ: John 6:27

²⁷Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval. NIV

READ: Romans 1:7

⁷To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. NIV

READ: 1 Peter 1:2

²who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. NIV

5. What do you notice in these verses about some of the activities of God the Father?

LEADER NOTE: God the Father has placed his seal of approval on Jesus, his Son. (John 6:27). God knew us before we were born and has chosen us to be his children (1 Peter 1:2). God the Father blesses us with his blessing of grace and peace (Romans 1:7).

The Son is God

READ: John 1:1, 14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. NIV

READ: Romans 9:5

⁵Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised!^[a] Amen. NIV

READ: Hebrews 1:8

⁸But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. NIV

6. What can we learn from these verses about Jesus, God the Son?

LEADER NOTE: Jesus is eternal – he was there in the beginning with God and he *is* God. Jesus became God in the flesh. He is God’s one and only Son. (John 1:1, 14). Jesus has a human ancestry. He is fully God but also fully man. (Romans 9:5). Jesus is God, our ruler and king. (Hebrews 1:8)

The Holy Spirit is God

READ: Acts 5:3-4

³Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.” NIV

READ: 1 Corinthians 3:16

¹⁶Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? NIV

7. What do we learn in these verses about the Spirit of God?

LEADER NOTE: In these verses we learn that the Spirit of God can be lied to (Acts 5:3) and that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God (Acts 5:4). We learn that as God’s temple here on earth, the Spirit of God lives in us. (1 Cor. 3:16)

READ the following quote:

“The doctrine of the Trinity is not an explanation but a definition of the being of God and life of God. The Trinity itself remains a mystery even to faith. It reflects the truth that God is intelligible but

incomprehensible. It bears witness to the affirmation that God is known truly, but not exhaustively, in his self-revelation in Jesus Christ.” - Donald G. Bloesch

8. What do you think of the idea that God, as revealed to us in the Trinity, is “intelligible but incomprehensible?”

LEADER NOTE: In his revelation of himself to us in Scripture and particularly in Jesus, God has given us enough to know him (intelligible) but there is much about God that is also a mystery to us (incomprehensible). The fact that God is not fully comprehensible should not be a surprise to us. Our God is infinitely great and holy, yet he has made himself known to us through his Son, Jesus, and empowered us to live for him through his Spirit. This is the amazing, mind-blowing revelation of the Trinity!

PRAYER:

For today’s prayer, spend some time thanking God for how he has revealed himself to us as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thank him for what his Spirit is doing in your group members, shining his light in your hearts and showing you who he is.