



## The Holy Spirit

### MEETING AIM

To show that the Holy Spirit is God, a person and a gift to us.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Isaiah 59:21; John 14:25-26; John 15:26; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 3:17

### BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

Sometimes we can shy away from exploring the Holy Spirit with our young people, as there can be a lot of hype around the work of the Spirit. Alternatively, our church tradition might not place as much emphasis on him than other traditions. However, it's important to devote time to such discovery, as to leave the Holy Spirit out gives young people an incomplete idea of God. Introducing him now will help young people continue to discover more as they grow in faith.

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

### INTRO ACTIVITY 5 MINS

**You will need:** five photos of celebrities or famous characters

Get five photos of celebrities or famous characters, but don't show them to your group. See if your group can guess whose photo you are looking at by asking you questions that you can only answer yes or no to, for one minute. Make one of the celebrities / movie characters a little obscure and hard to guess. Ask the group how hard it is to know someone when you can't see them. If any of the young people want to play, they can find photos on their phone to use.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** large sheet of paper and marker pens (or whiteboard facility on your video conferencing software)

Lay the paper on the floor in the middle of your group or share your whiteboard. Give out pens and ask each person present to write down words or phrases that come to mind when they think about the Holy Spirit (or ask them to shout out suggestions and you write them down, if you're concerned about all touching the paper). Perhaps ask them to try to come up with a definition of who the Holy Spirit is. As you undertake the rest of this session, pay attention to anything on the paper / whiteboard that links into the ideas that follow.

Read Isaiah 59:21 and 2 Corinthians 3:17 as a group and then discuss these questions:

- What do these verses say about who the Holy Spirit is and where he comes from?
- What do you think it means for the Spirit to be called 'Lord'?

Try to draw out that we can often find it hard to understand the Holy Spirit. It can be easier to picture God as the Father and Jesus as the Son, but much harder to picture or imagine the Holy Spirit. It can make us think the Holy Spirit is simply a power or an experience. Yet these verses describe the Holy Spirit as being fully God and coming from God.

Then read John 14:25-26 and John 15:26 as a group then discuss these questions:

- How does Jesus describe the Holy Spirit? What does this mean?
- Is there any other way Jesus describes the Holy Spirit?
- What does this tell you about who he is?

Reflect on the idea that as we describe the Holy Spirit, we often refer to him as 'it'. Yet this is not how Jesus describes the Holy Spirit. In both of these passages (and throughout the Bible) what we see is Jesus referring to the Spirit as a 'he'. This isn't about male as opposed to female, but demonstrates that we should understand that the Holy Spirit is a person and so he acts personally towards us. This is important because it highlights that the Holy Spirit is the same relational God who loves us, cares for us and helps us.

Finally, read Acts 2:38 then discuss these questions:

- How does Peter describe the Holy Spirit?
- Why do you think Peter refers to the Holy Spirit as a gift? What do you think this means?
- How do we begin to receive this gift?

The Holy Spirit is given as a gift from God. He is given to those who believe in Jesus to help them live out their faith in him. He is not just an experience that we need to seek and not something that we have to work hard at or be perfect to earn. Rather the Spirit is a gift that Jesus gives us to help us believe, to help us turn from our sin, and who equips us to live life in a way that points to and honours Jesus.

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your discussion about the Bible passages by using these questions:

- What is your reaction to what you have discovered today?
- Have you changed your thinking about the Holy Spirit (if you had ever thought about him before now)? Why? Why not?
- What difference might these things make to your life and faith, going forward?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

**You will need:** the paper / whiteboard from 'Intro activity'

Remind your group that the Holy Spirit is fully God, a person who we can have a relationship with and a gift that is given to help us live for God. Ask your group what has most struck them from their discussions about the Holy Spirit. Ask them if anything has surprised them or made them think differently. Go back to your big sheet of paper and see if there are any descriptions that people might change.

### PRAYER 5 MINS

Spend a few moments thanking God for the gift of his Spirit. Pray that as a group the Holy Spirit would help you to know Jesus better.

This session was inspired by ideas from the *Premier Youth and Children's Work* archive, adapted by **ALEX TAYLOR**.



## Encounter

### MEETING AIM

To remove the fear associated with encountering the Holy Spirit and to explain why we respond in different ways.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 2:1-21

### BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

People have been encountering the Holy Spirit since the beginning of creation. All through the Old Testament, the Spirit filled people with his power in order to perform a godly purpose, until he came for good at Pentecost in Acts 2. Encountering the Spirit, working with him and listening to him is part of our walk with God. He comforts, instructs and guides us. It's not magic, you don't have to say any special words, just be open to encountering him.

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

**You will need:** various interruptions hidden in your room or just out of shot of your camera, such as a balloon, a siren, someone at the door, the ability to fall off your chair (safely!)

Get your group to describe times and situations when they have reacted in exciting, fearful or unusual ways to situations. As someone in your group is sharing their story, burst the balloon to see how people react. Ask for another volunteer and interrupt them in a different way.

After a few turns, explain that we all react to experiences in different ways; we have senses and emotions that make us feel and interact with people and circumstances in different ways.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** a volunteer to share their testimony about the Holy Spirit

Ask the prepared person to share their testimony about a significant time they encountered the Holy Spirit that helped them overcome a fear of waiting, encountering the Holy Spirit, or being prayed for. Leave time for your young people to ask them a few questions.

Split your group into individuals or groups of two or three, then give each group a different one of these verses: 2 Chronicles 5:12-14; Isaiah 6:1-5; Genesis 17:1,15-17; Acts 4:31; Luke 10:21; Daniel 10:4-11; Ezekiel 3:23-24; Acts 8:39-40; Acts 2:1-3; Acts 2:4; Joel 2:28-29. Get each individual or group to look at their passage and ask them to think about how the people in their verses responded when they encountered the presence of the Holy Spirit and why they might have responded the way they did. When everyone has had a few minutes, gather some feedback.

Then read Acts 2:1-13 together and spend a little bit of time thinking about how this scene must have looked to those who saw. Compare all these different reactions to encountering the Holy Spirit.

Go onto read Acts 2:14-21 and then ask the group to discuss these questions:

How does Peter explain the reaction of the disciples?

Who does he say the Holy Spirit is for?

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your discussion with these questions:

- What has stood out to them about who the Holy Spirit is?
- What have they learned about what the Holy Spirit does?
- Do they have any fear of waiting on the Spirit like the first believers in Acts?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

**You will need:** art materials

Encourage the young people to choose one of the encounters with the Holy Spirit explored during 'Bible exploration' and to create a representation of that encounter. It needn't be a realistic portrayal. It can be abstract, cartoon or give an impression of the encounter. Alternatively, they could write a short story or poem about it. Continue your discussion from 'Chatting together' as you do so.

Once everyone has finished, share the images and writing. What has God been saying to the young people? What more have they discovered about the work of the Spirit, or the Spirit in their own lives?

### PRAYER 5 MINS

**You will need:** artwork / writing from 'Creative response'

As you finish you might like to encourage your group to stand together and wait for a few minutes for the Spirit to come and meet with them. Encourage your group to wait patiently, not straining to encounter God, but also not zoning out; remind them to welcome God in their hearts and minds and to say: "Holy Spirit, meet me." Wait in silence and see what happens.

As leaders, perhaps wait with your eyes open so you can see what God is doing. Perhaps ask God to give your young people words, pictures and visions for your group. When it seems right, thank God for meeting with you and gently finish. Offer your young people space to share what they felt was happening. If your group are still a little fearful or unsure, simply pray for the Holy Spirit to give you all a sense of boldness and courage in seeking him as a group.

### ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.



## Spirit Father Son

### MEETING AIM

To highlight that one of the main roles of the Spirit is in restoring our relationship to the Father and the Son.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Romans 8:1-16; John 3:1-8

### BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

### JOINING THE SESSION 5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

### INTRO ACTIVITY 10 MINS

Chat about the fears that you had when you were children – the monster under the bed, the teacher with the massive eyebrows or the Cybermen on *Doctor Who*. Explain that sometimes things that don't make sense, or are beyond our understanding, can scare us when we're young. Ask the group what irrational fears or funny childhood memories they have and ask if they still have those fears. If they no longer have those fears, ask them what they did to get over them. Did they have a parent or guardian who helped them see the world differently?

### BIBLE EXPLORATION 10 MINS

**You will need:** Bibles; large sheets of paper and marker pens, or whiteboard feature

Make sure everyone can see a Bible or put the verses on a PowerPoint slide and share your screen:

#### Living with the Spirit

Read Romans 8:1-8 as a group then discuss these questions:

- What does it mean to live according to the Spirit?
- Why do those who live by the Spirit

have their "minds set on what the Spirit desires"?

- How is it possible for us to live a righteous life through the Spirit?
- What do you think the passage means when it talks about those who live according to the flesh having "their minds set on what the flesh desires"?
- Why would a mind governed by sin be "hostile to God"?

#### The Spirit in us

Read Romans 8:9-13 as a group and then discuss these questions:

- How does it feel to know that the Holy Spirit, the same one who raised Jesus from the dead, is living in you?
- How can you be more aware of the Spirit's work in your life?

Explain that when we know Jesus, we accept that he died for our sin and was then raised from the dead. The Spirit who raised him from death to life now lives in us. In other words, the full power of God is at work and alive in every Christian. We don't just believe in a God who is out there, but know a God who gives us life from the inside out. This is what the Spirit does; he makes us belong to Christ and equips us to live a new life. Read John 3:1-8 and then ask the group to discuss these questions:

We often use the phrase 'born-again Christian' to describe our faith, but what does this actually mean? How does this relate to the Holy Spirit?

#### Adopted as children

Read Romans 8:14-16 as a group and then discuss these questions:

- Do you think the idea that we are God's children has lost a bit of meaning? Do you think this phrase might have shocked the people who first read this letter?
- What does it mean to be adopted as a child of God and a co-heir with Christ?

These verses show that those who are led by the Spirit become children of God and that he will look out for us and comfort us when we're scared. Remember when you were a child and your trusted person comforted you? They would never think to scare you even more. The Spirit won't make you a slave, either. God says

his Spirit will adopt us; he wants us to be his children and so receiving the Spirit means we can 'let go' and fear nothing. Our whole status as human beings changes as the Spirit brings us into the family of God. The Spirit restores our relationship with God and enables us to be God's children.

### CHATTING TOGETHER 5 MINS

Continue your discussion with these questions:

- How can we know God more intimately?
- What else might we encounter if we are adopted into God's family?
- What do we inherit from this relationship?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE 10 MINS

**You will need:** art materials

Make sure everyone has access to art materials – even a pencil and some paper would be enough. Give the group time to create a piece of artwork or writing that explores what God has been saying to them today – what have they discovered about living in the Spirit?

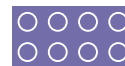
Continue chatting as you work; while the young people are busy with their hands, their minds have space to wonder and reflect. There may be some big questions that arise – don't dismiss them, but try to come up with some answers together.

### PRAYER 5 MINS

Pray for each other, asking that the Spirit would reveal more of the Father to you. Pray that each of you would be able to live free from fear. If your group is not used to praying for each other or not comfortable praying out loud, why not try initiating a 'prayer bomb'. Everyone looks at the person to the right of them on their screen. Then after the count of three everyone prays out loud at the same time for that person. When the prayer dies down, finish by saying Amen.

### SIMEON WHITING

is an experienced youth worker, a writer and a PhD researcher.



## Breath of life

### MEETING AIM

To highlight that the Spirit breathed life into creation and yet, because of our sin, that breath became stale and polluted. Jesus breathes the Spirit over his followers to renew them.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4; John 20:19-23

### BACKGROUND

This session is designed for you to do online in a group video call (on something like FaceTime or Zoom). Make sure you have parental permission to do this, as well as following your church's safeguarding procedure.

Reading the story in John in isolation means that we forget that this happened on the same day that Jesus came back from the dead. The disciples must have been so confused, overjoyed, overwhelmed...and now he declares peace and breathes his Spirit over them.

### JOINING THE SESSION

5 MINS

As people join you online, ask them to share what they have been doing during the past seven days.

### INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

**You will need:** balloons; rubber gloves; stopwatch

Before the session, if you're working online, deliver a normal-sized balloon, a massive balloon and a rubber glove to a few volunteers. Hold a 'who has the strongest breath' competition by seeing who can blow up all three items in the fastest time. Take it one volunteer at a time.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION

10 MINS

**You will need:** pens and paper

Read Genesis 2:7 and Job 33:4 and then ask the group what these verses have to do with the Holy Spirit. Explain that the 'Spirit of God' is a translation of the Hebrew word ruach, and one of the ways we understand this word is as the 'life breath of God'. In creation, ruach is hovering over the waters (Genesis 1:2). In Genesis 2:7, God breathes this life breath

into humanity and humanity comes into being. The life of God is in us and with us; the Spirit creates life in us and his breath sustains us. Yet our human nature means we turn away from breathing God's breath and try to do life on our own.

Read John 20:19-23 and explain that this is same day that Jesus rose from the dead. His friends must have been very confused! Ask the group to suggest some of the emotions that the disciples might be feeling. How much of a difference would Jesus saying: "Peace be with you" (v19) make?

What questions might your group want to ask about what Jesus does in verses 21 and 22? Write them down on a piece of paper and see if the group can start to answer any of those together. Bring in the idea of God's breath – Spirit or ruach – from the creation passages.

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Continue your discussion with these questions:

- Why do you think the disciples needed a fresh intake of the Spirit?
- What changes would the Spirit have brought about in Jesus' friends?
- What about you? Do you need a fresh intake of the Spirit?
- What changes do you want in your life?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

**You will need:** paper and marker pen or the whiteboard facility on your video calling software; 'Breathing the breath' by Matt Redman

Ask the group to create a list of the things that pollute the air we breathe. You could make a column for things that are general (impacting the whole world, like wars and famines) and a column for things specifically impacting the way they experience life (like the bad stuff they look at on the internet).

Discuss the list you have created. How does the world pollute the air we breathe and how do we pollute our own air? Ask if they are aware of any areas of their lives where they live separated from God. Are there times when they are aware of not breathing God's breath? How easy do they find it to breathe God's breath: at school, at home, at church, with friends, by them-

selves? Do any of them feel like they are breathing slightly toxic air at the moment or really struggling to breathe fresh air?

Create some space and invite people to close their eyes, relax, listen and invite God to meet with them. Ask God to restore them as they listen to Matt Redman's 'Breathing the breath'.

### PRAYER

5 MINS

Finish by reading this prayer and asking the young people to focus on their breathing as they breathe out some of the poison that has been filling their lungs, and breathe in the life breath of God. You may want to adapt it to connect with some of the things that you have written on your pollution lists:

Breathe out the pollution that is filling our lungs. Breathe in the fresh life-giving breath of the Spirit. Breathe out the poison that has squashed life from you. Breathe in the breath that encourages and sustains. Breathe out the sin that has trapped and ensnared. Breathe in the breath that forgives and frees. Breathe out hate. Breathe in love. Breathe out fear. Breathe in courage. Breathe out anger. Breathe in self-control. Breathe out meanness. Breathe in kindness. Breathe out the thoughts that no one knows. Breathe in the Spirit that renews your mind. Breathe out the words that have hurt and harmed. Breathe in the Spirit that speaks life and truth. Breathe out the actions that have battered and bruised. Breathe in the Spirit who reveals love and goodness. Breathe in the peace and completeness Jesus gives to you and receive the Holy Spirit. Breathe the breath you were created to breathe. Wait on the Spirit to restore your life.