**Learn in Community**



Small Group Study



**Volume Overview**

**Who is the Holy Spirit?**

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! ([Galatians 5:22–23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ga5.22-23))

*In His most famous sermon (*[*Matthew 5–7*](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt5-7)*), Jesus taught us to love our enemies, give to the needy, and put God’s kingdom first in our life. As His words outlined the high expectations of those in His kingdom, it doesn’t take us long to recognize a problem—our behavior. We simply can’t perfectly meet this standard on our own. It’s not in us to naturally love those who mistreat us. We often are too selfish to be generous. And we spend a lot of time building the kingdom of our own life, rather than God’s kingdom*.

*So, why did Jesus command us to live a life He knew full well we can’t live on our own? The key is that Jesus never asked us to live the Christian life on our own. In fact, Jesus spent significant time teaching about His indispensable gift for living the Christian life: the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His followers it was good for them for Him to go away because the presence of Holy Spirit would be coming into their life. God in the flesh was a wonderful gift, but God living inside of us is even better. When God lives inside us, He can empower us, help us grow, and equip us in a unique way. Let’s look closer at how the Holy Spirit empowers us*.

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**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**  Have you ever had a friend who was an exceptional helper? In what ways was that friend valuable to you? |

For young kids, reaching things in high places is difficult. They usually run to ask an adult for help. Does someone come to mind that helped you like that? Maybe they even picked you up, so you could grab it yourself. Even as adults, we can appreciate others who help us when we have a need.

Today we’ll be talking about the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Much like those helpful adults, the Spirit of God lifts us up and brings us close to the mission of God. This is the only way we can reach God’s amazing plans for our life.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: What is God’s mission and how are you involved in it?



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| **QUESTION**  What is God’s mission and how are you involved in it? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

In today’s Bible text, we’ll meet a man named Cornelius. He wasn’t a Jew, but Cornelius was God-fearing and devout. His love and devotion to God opened the door for him to receive a vision that would change his life.

We can learn from Cornelius’s story that God wants to connect with us in special ways as we love and draw close to Him. As a Roman soldier raised in a pagan culture, Cornelius’s access to Israel’s God was amazing. God met Cornelius’s desire to know Him more by sending Peter.

**The Holy Spirit Draws Near Those Who Seek God**

Read [Acts 10:1–8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac10.1-8).

Even though he was a Roman, Cornelius had a deep desire to follow God. He was devoted to God, gave to the poor, prayed often, and guided his household to do the same. His respect for God and pursuit of righteous living led to Cornelius experiencing a message from God through an angel.

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| **QUESTION**  What might this story tell us about the kind of person God usually speaks to? |

The angel gave Cornelius very unusual instructions. It would have been odd for a Roman army officer to call for a Jew. But Cornelius didn’t pause to consider the instructions he received. He obeyed what God commanded immediately. Meanwhile, in [Acts 10:9–15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac10.9-15), the Holy Spirit gave Peter a vision as he was praying that would prepare him for an interaction with Cornelius later. But Peter was left with questions after seeing the same vision three times.

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| **QUESTION**  Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit directing you to connect with someone in a specific way? How did you respond? |

**The Holy Spirit Empowers Us for God’s Work**

Read [Acts 10:19–23](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac10.19-23).

Peter’s confusion was resolved through the Holy Spirit’s direction. God’s Spirit prepared Peter to accept Cornelius’s invitation. Before the three men arrived, Peter had already been informed and empowered for God’s mission. The Holy Spirit speaks to empower believers today, too.

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| **QUESTION**  How can we make sure we’re listening for the voice of the Spirit of God? |

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| **QUESTION**  God may desire to use us just as He used Peter. What can we do to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, so we can be used for His purposes? |

**The Holy Spirit’s Empowerment Is Available to All Believers**

Read [Acts 10:44–48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac10.44-48).

God sent Peter to Cornelius to share about Jesus. While Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell on not only Cornelius, but on everyone who heard Peter’s message. Those who came with Peter immediately recognized Cornelius’s household had received the Holy Spirit. They knew it as they heard the Gentiles speak in tongues—a language they had never learned—as God empowered them.

God used Peter’s declaration of Jesus to bless everyone on the scene that day, regardless of where they were from. Romans would have been seen as outsiders by Peter and other Jews. However, what happened to Cornelius shows us that when it comes to the gift of the Holy Spirit, God does not restrict us from getting closer to Him because of our background. He wants us to pray and persevere as we ask Him to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

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| **QUESTION**  Many people are afraid to pray for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Why might this be? |

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| **QUESTION**  How should knowing that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is available to all people unite believers? |

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| **QUESTION**  What was the confirmation that these people had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit? |

**Did You Know?**

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| The distinction of Cornelius being a “God-fearer” is not a unique descriptor used only in the New Testament to describe those Gentiles who worshipped the God of Israel. Inscriptions all over the ancient Greek and Roman world speak of these individuals, highlighting how they were forced to live on the fringes of both Jewish and pagan Gentile society, neither of which they belonged to. One example is in the great theater in the city of Miletus (Acts 20:15). The theater has a designated spot where the God-fearers were to sit alongside the city’s Jewish minority. |

**Reflect**

**The Holy Spirit Empowers**

Cornelius had spiritual hunger, and God made a way to meet it. When one man sought God, the doors opened for all who were present to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Isn’t our God generous? Our obedience and righteous living can make a way for others to have more of God. God baptizing so many Gentiles in His Spirit highlights His inclusive nature.

God always wants to pour out His Spirit on all nations, tribes, and peoples. In fact, the Jewish believers present with Peter immediately accepted Cornelius and other Gentile believers because God had placed His seal of approval when He baptized them in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit unites us in this way. This gift of God breaks through cultural divisions to empower all of us who call on the name of the Lord and earnestly pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal*.

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| **QUESTION**  Have you seen the Holy Spirit empower people? If so, how? |

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| **QUESTION**  How would you describe your relationship with the Holy Spirit? If you haven’t yet, what’s keeping you from asking God to baptize you in the Holy Spirit? |

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| **QUESTION**  What honest questions do you have about the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Take time to ask and discuss these questions with a Spirit-filled believer. |

**Activate**

The empowerment of the Holy Spirit is available and necessary in the life of every Christian. When we partner with God’s Spirit, previously hard things become possible. Obeying Him is easier, words flow when we witness to others, and even our gifts are readied for use. We need the baptism in the Holy Spirit in our life.

**Challenge**

Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Share your experience with your group.

Do you desire to be baptized in the Spirit? Ask a Spirit-filled friend to pray with you and ask God to baptize you in His Spirit.

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and remember to pray for them during the week. |

Before next time, continue to spend time in God’s Word with the personal devotions.

**What We Believe**

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| **The Holy Spirit Empowers**  All believers are entitled to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and therefore should expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. The baptism in the Holy Spirit was the normal experience of all believers in the Early Church. With the experience comes the provision of power and productive service for victorious Christian living. It also provides believers with specific spiritual gifts for more effective ministry ([Luke 24:49](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk24.49); [Acts 1:4](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac1.4), [8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac1.8); [1 Corinthians 12:1–31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co12.1-31)).  The baptism in the Holy Spirit is separate from salvation and follows the new birth experience ([Acts 8:12–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac8.12-17); [10:44–46](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac10.44-46); [11:14–16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac11.14-16); [15:7–9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac15.7-9)). With this Baptism come such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit ([John 7:37–39](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn7.37-39); [Acts 4:8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac4.8)), a deepened reverence for God ([Acts 2:43](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac2.43); [Hebrews 12:28](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Heb12.28)), an intensified commitment to God and dedication to His work ([Acts 2:42](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac2.42)), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word, and for those who have not yet accepted Him ([Mark 16:20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk16.20)). |
| **The Significance of This Doctrine**  Emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a major focus of the Pentecostal Movement. Some have felt that Pentecostals stress this doctrine and the person of the Holy Spirit to the neglect of the other members of the Trinity (God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ) and of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, such as salvation and sanctification. But a survey of the teaching curriculum and general literature published by Pentecostal groups shows a balance that matches the emphases of Scripture. We believe after centuries of neglect, Pentecostals have brought back into the Christian experience an appropriate emphasis on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. |

**Learn on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: The Holy Spirit Empowers**

Read [Acts 10:1–48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac10.1-48).

Look back over Learn in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**  What is God saying to you about how the Holy Spirit empowers people? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 2: Comes with Signs and Empowerment**

Read [Acts 2:1–4](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac2.1-4).

When the Holy Spirit fell on the believers gathered on the Day of Pentecost, signs accompanied the event. At least one of these signs was evident even to outsiders. To their amazement, the Spirit-baptized men and women were suddenly empowered to speak in other languages they didn’t know. We call that speaking in tongues.

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| **QUESTION**  What were the signs that accompanied the baptism in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost? |

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| **QUESTION**  Why is the sign of speaking in tongues an effective way to identify receiving the Baptism among all other signs? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 3: Promised in the Old Testament**

Read [Joel 2:28–29](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Joe2.28-29).

In the Old Testament, the prophet Joel spoke of future events. In [Acts 2](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac2), the apostle Peter spoke to the crowd after the Holy Spirit had come as Jesus had promised. Peter connected Joel’s prophecy with the promised baptism in the Holy Spirit.

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| **QUESTION**  What does Joel say the Holy Spirit will empower believers to do? |

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| **QUESTION**  Did you know the baptism in the Holy Spirit was promised in the Old Testament? Does this impact your views of the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Why or why not? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 4: Worth Seeking and Waiting For**

Read [Acts 1:1–5](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac1.1-5).

Jesus commanded His disciples to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit before they went out to do any work of the ministry. The disciples gathered together for days, praying and seeking God for the promised Holy Spirit. We should not assume that God always baptizes people immediately. A wait was involved, even for Jesus’ disciples. God and His gifts are worth waiting for.

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| **QUESTION**  The Baptism is a gift that God eagerly wants to give us. Why then do you think He chose to make the believers in the Upper Room wait? |

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| **QUESTION**  Have you or someone you know prayed for the Baptism and not received it? How does today’s Scripture help people have hope when they pray for the Baptism? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 5: Empowers Us to Witness**

Read [Acts 1:6–9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac1.6-9).

Jesus promised the baptism in the Holy Spirit to His disciples for one main purpose: power to witness. The task of telling the world about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was given to ordinary people. You and I know of Jesus today because the Holy Spirit empowered these regular people to be effective witnesses.

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| **QUESTION**  This passage records some of the last words Jesus said before returning to heaven. What might that say about the importance of the baptism in the Holy Spirit? |

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| **QUESTION**  Being a witness is the direct result of being baptized in the Spirit. Do you find that people who are baptized in the Holy Spirit are more ready to witness than others? Why or why not? |