

# SESSION 2

## THE GIVER

### This Session's Focus

The teacher of an adult Bible class began a new class with these words: "Let me introduce you to the Holy Spirit."

Some people in the class had been active Christians all their lives. They had been in church and in Bible classes for years.

They had been baptized and confirmed. They had heard the invocation of the Trinity spoken thousands of times. They had sung their glorias to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now their teacher presumed to suggest that he would introduce them to the Holy Spirit. Who did he think he was anyway?

However, the Holy Spirit does rank a poor third place for many Christians today. As a spirit, He may seem vague, distant, or elusive. Introductions are in order. Meeting the Holy Spirit is a little bit like meeting a person who has had a far-reaching impact on your life but has managed to stay nearly anonymous in the process.

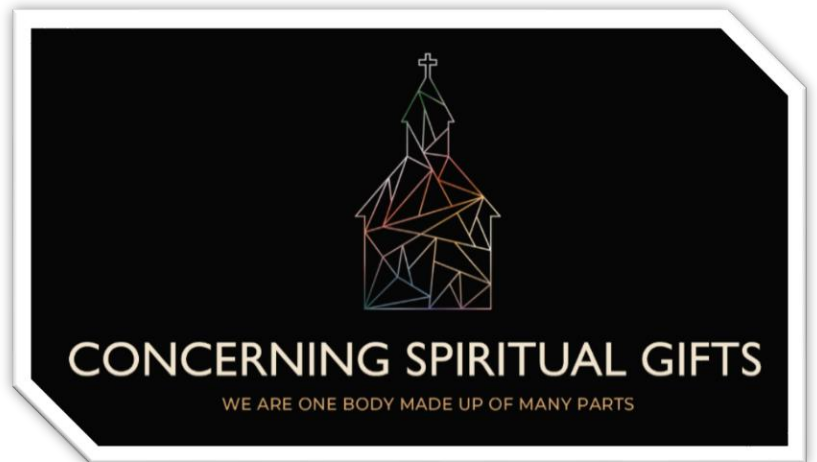
In our last session, we found the Church to be a gifted group, God's own people who serve Him well. In this session, we will get to know the Giver of our gifts. Your leader might well open your class by saying, "Let me introduce you to the Holy Spirit."

### Meditation

Lord Christ, it's about Your church again. Not far from here is a church everybody's talking about. Things are really happening over there, Lord. I mean *really* happening. Why, some of the young people from our church visit there and rave about it. That church must be doing something right. They say it's a Spirit-filled church. Some strange things go on over there too, Lord. I'm not sure I'm at all comfortable with their style. Is that what a Spirit-filled church looks like? Is it? There are times, Lord, when my faith swells within me, and I feel as if I'm standing on the edge of heaven itself! Is *that* being "Spirit filled," Lord? Is it? I guess I have a long way to go in understanding what Your Spirit is like, what He does, and how He would have me worship and live and love. But I am willing to learn, Lord. I am. Please teach me. Amen

### Session Primer

Read aloud the following quotation from Martin H. Franzmann. Then talk about it, using the questions provided.



Still the Holy Spirit comes where and when it pleases God to send Him to proclaim the wonderful works of God. How will we respond? Will we stop short at amazement and perplexity, shaking our heads at some of His stranger (and lesser) manifestations? Will we even stoop to mockery at those manifestations of the Spirit which strike us as bizarre, so that we may ignore the rest of them and proceed to the usual order of business?



Or shall we find grace to go the way Jesus went under the impulsion of the Spirit—the way into the wilderness to meet and overcome the Tempter, the way into the Scripture and obedience to the Father’s voice heard in the Scriptures, the way into self-consuming ministry and so into that life over which death has no more authority? Shall we find grace to go the way which the first church went in obedience to the Spirit? (From Martin H. Franzmann, *Alive with the Spirit* [Concordia Publishing House, 1973], p. 8.)

According to Franzmann, how does the Spirit come? Where does the Spirit lead? Which of Franzmann’s questions, in your opinion, presents the Church with the most timely challenge?

### **Biblical Search and Study**

1. The passages that follow create what might be called a “Spiritscape,” a panoramic view of the Spirit’s nature and work. Select one or more of the following verses. Then summarize what each reference says about the Holy Spirit.
  - a. Responses should focus on the Spirit’s nature and work, that is, on what the Spirit is like and what the Spirit does. Be especially alert to the verbs describing the Spirit’s actions and to the impact of the Spirit on people’s behavior. You might wish to jot down key verbs and descriptive words as a summary of your search and study.
  - b. Genesis 1:1–2; Judges 15:9–17; 1 Samuel 16:11–13; Psalm 139:7–10; Isaiah 42:1–7; 63:10–14; Joel 2:28–32; Mark 1:8; Luke 4:14–21; John 3:5–6; 16:12–13; 20:21–23; Acts 2:1–4; Romans 5:5; 8:2, 5, 9, 11, 13–17, 26–27; 1 Corinthians 2:6–13; 3:16–17; 12:1–4, 7, 12–14; Galatians 4:6–7; 5:16–25; Ephesians 3:14–19; 4:1–4, 25–32; Philippians 3:3; Titus 3:4–7; 2 Peter 1:20–21.
2. Use the information from the Spiritscape to answer the following:
  - a. Who does the Holy Spirit have?
  - b. What are the Spirit’s gifts meant to do?
  - c. How can we be sure that the Spirit is near, close to the heart of the Church?
  - d. What do all who have the gifts of the Spirit have in common? In what way(s) can those gifted by the Spirit be different?

3. As Luke by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 2:13) recorded the Early Church's history, he saw the Holy Spirit behind every one of its growth spurts. Examine Acts 2:4; 4:8; 10:44–45; and 13:1–3. These passages from Acts affirm that the Holy Spirit empowered all these advances of the Early Church. Do you think the Church today has this confidence in the Spirit's direction of its future? Why or why not?
4. A person earnestly seeking the Giver and His gifts asks, "How can I be sure I have the Holy Spirit and His gifts?" How do you respond? For clues, see Luke 11:9–13; Romans 5:1–5; 10:17; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; 12:13; and Titus 3:4–7.



### **What this Means for Us**

1. If you were to begin a program of spiritual renewal, which of the following would be most feasible for you personally?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Daily study of God's Word
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Regular, more focused prayer
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Support and nurture from Christian friends
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Memorization of important Scripture passages
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Scheduled "retreats" away from the daily routine
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ Daily renewal of your Baptism
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ More frequent participation in the Lord's Supper
  - h. \_\_\_\_\_ Involvement in the Church's mission
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_ Focus on discovering or developing your spiritual gifts

Are you willing to make a commitment to begin your program now? The Scriptures present few prerequisites for being filled with the Spirit and using one's spiritual gifts. The Scriptures encourage the use of the Means of Grace, prayer, and the fellowship of the Church as the context for spiritual renewal. Think about your life in the Spirit. Share with your group your plans for nurturing your spiritual life. What changes in routine will you need to make? When will you begin?

2. How do you most often view the Holy Spirit in your faith and prayer life? Choose one of these responses, and share it with a partner or your group.
  - a. The One who calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth
  - b. The half-known God, running a poor third in the Trinity
  - c. A Friend I have not come to know
  - d. The Giver of all my gifts, near me to bless me
  - e. The person of the Trinity I wish we would talk about more
  - f. The person of the Trinity who seems to belong to other denominations

We've learned that the Holy Spirit comes when and where He wills. We cannot program the Spirit's comings and goings. It can be exciting, however, to catalog His doings in the Church. On a separate sheet of paper, describe a time when the Holy Spirit richly blessed you. (It may or may not have been a time of great emotional exhilaration. The Spirit comes mightily at times and gently at other times.) Jot down the experience under headings such as "The Event" (perhaps your confirmation, a stirring moment in a worship service, or a time of testing in the hospital); "The People Who Surrounded Me" (if you were not alone); "The Feelings"; "The Means" (Scripture, Baptism, Lord's Supper); "The Outcome."



Share your event with your group. As you listen to others talk about their events, be alert to the rich variety of the Spirit's manifestations in His Church.

3. Talk about the Spirit's direction of your congregation's growth and ministry. Where especially have you seen the Spirit's blessings? What direction does He seem to have for you as a congregation in ministry? Tell about any surprises you've seen.

### **Gleanings**

Summarize what you've learned in this session, especially in these areas:

- the Spirit's nature and work;
- your own need for spiritual renewal;
- and your congregation's life in the Spirit.