



THE COMPASS

A TOOL FOR DISCIPLERS

The Spirit-Filled Life

Conversation On the Journey

Who is the Holy Spirit?

While the focus of the lesson is on how to be filled, or empowered, by the Holy Spirit, there are a few foundational points concerning the Holy Spirit that need to be clarified before you can proceed. The first is a basic understanding of who the Holy Spirit is. What you want to ascertain is how much they already understand. If they don't have the faintest idea, you may want to spend the whole appointment simply discussing this, and save this lesson for the next week.

So how do you find out how much they know? Simple. Ask them a question like: How would you describe or define the Holy Spirit? If they answer, "A Marvel comic character," you're going to need to pause here and look at some passages that speak of the identity and role of the Spirit.

The basic fact you want to make sure they know is that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. They need to know He is a person. He can be grieved (Eph 4:30); lied to (Acts 5:3); teach us (Luke 12:12); lead and direct us (Acts 20:28). Thus, He has volition, emotion, and intellect. He is a person distinct from the Father and the Son. He came to glorify Christ and He works in Christians to conform them to the image of Christ.

Where is the Holy Spirit?

The second foundational teaching is that all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit from the moment they trust Christ (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor 12:13). So here you might want to ask your disciple, "Where is the Holy Spirit?" Again, an answer like "Chicago" is an indicator you'll have to repair their foundation before you can build further. Remind your disciple that the moment they trusted Christ, the Holy Spirit entered their lives and will never leave them.

These things should already be understood coming into this lesson. If not, take the lesson and teach these basic truths. If they know these basic truths you're ready to help them to better understand how they can enjoy the empowerment of the Spirit.

This Week's Excursion

After becoming a Christian, many believers feel that it is now up to them and their willpower to live a holy and pleasing life before God. Yet, as good as our intentions may be, we are incapable of living a life pleasing to God without His help. That help is found through the person of the Holy Spirit. Your disciple needs to understand the four most basic concepts that increase, or limit, the empowerment or influence of the Holy Spirit. They are: submitting to Christ's lordship of our lives, confessing sin, relying moment by moment on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and abiding in Christ.

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How to be filled with the Holy Spirit

While all believers are indwelt by the Spirit, not all are empowered by the Spirit, and not all are empowered equally.

The concept of being empowered by the Spirit is often called, “being filled with the Spirit.” The terminology is fine as long as your disciple knows that he is indwelt by the Spirit no matter what, and that what you are talking about is how the Holy Spirit can greater influence his life.

Surface the Desire

Sometimes it’s a good idea to create a need before looking at the solution. You might look at the passage in Galatians (5:22) where the passage elaborates on the character, or fruit, that the Spirit produces in our lives. You can read through the list and ask, “Which of these traits do you lack, or want to be true of you?”

Another way to surface the need is to read Romans 7:7-25. This seems to express the frustration of trying to live out the Christian life without the Spirit’s empowerment, by sheer willpower. You might want to ask: Can you identify with this struggle? How? In what way?

You may come up with better ways to surface the need. Give it some thought.

How to be Filled

Ephesians 5:18-20 says:

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a contrast being made between being filled with alcohol and being filled with the Spirit. There is also a similarity, which is the idea of influence. You might want to ask, “In what ways do you see these ideas as contrasting; in what ways are they similar?”

The metaphor of drinking can be a helpful one, in that it brings out the idea of influence. Under the influence of alcohol, people are emboldened to speak, express love, and become reflective. They also turn to alcohol for empowerment, comfort, courage, and companionship. These are helpful pictures of influence. Of course alcohol is the short-term counterfeit, while the reality is found in being filled with the Spirit.

So what causes a person to get more drunk, and to come more under the influence of alcohol? They drink more. The difference with the Christian is not that he or she needs more of the Spirit, but influence increases when the Spirit has more of them. While there are many things that affect the Spirit’s control of our life, there are four primary means by which the Spirit gains greater control, or influence, over our lives – where He consumes more of us.

Next Steps

Ask your disciple in which of these areas they can take some action to increase the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Ask what they think might be the greatest hindrance to the Spirit’s control of their life. Close in prayer about this, or these, issues.

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Lordship

Romans 12:1 says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

You might want to ask a question like, “What does it mean to be a living sacrifice?” The question you want to get at with your disciple is, “Does God have control of every area of your life?” This concept is often referred to as “lordship.”

One way you can bring out this idea is to draw out the floor plan of a house. Make the rooms correspond to different areas in their lives. Make the reading room what they watch or listen to. Make the bedroom symbolize their relationships. The rec room, their social life. You get the picture. You might ask, “What room would Jesus feel most at home in?” Though you would not want to end the question with a preposition like I just did. Or you might ask, “Which room do you keep to yourself?”

You want to emphasize that critical to being fully empowered by the Spirit is seeking to live each of these areas under the control or guidance of the Holy Spirit. Withholding rooms, areas of their lives, will severely impact the influence the Holy Spirit has. Nothing will bring home this idea better than examples from your own life. So give some thought in advance to a few examples, and describe how you turned these areas of your life over to the Lord.

Confession

When we sin, we take control of our lives. By definition, then, the Holy Spirit is not in control we are. The importance of confessing sin whenever we become aware of it is critical to keeping the Holy Spirit in control of our life. You might ask your disciple how often they are confessing sin? When they become aware of sin do they immediately confess and give back control to God? You should probably share some examples from your own life. Examples your disciple can relate to, or you suspect might be issues in his or her life.

Reliance

The third concept is “reliance,” which is turning to God throughout the day for enablement and empowerment. A good example you might point out is a cigarette smoker. Every time they sense a need, they “light-up.” If they feel lonely, they “light-up.” If they feel scared or nervous, they “light-up.” If they need confidence, they “light-up.”

We can find ourselves doing the same thing with food, music, TV, even coffee. Did you ever eat when you weren’t hungry—only lonely? Throughout each day we sense the need for empowerment, comfort, enablement, wisdom, companionship. We often turn to substitutes like food, film, sleep, caffeine, or even nicotine to meet these needs. God wants us to reflexively turn to Him throughout the day and ask for comfort, empowerment, wisdom, direction, etc. This constant reliance on the Spirit keeps us intimately connected to the Lord throughout the day, and allows our thirsts to be met by His “living water.”

Side Trails

Transferable Concept 3: How you can walk in the Spirit. Bill Bright. New Life publications.

Thirsty. (Booklet)

Living Supernaturally in Christ. Bill Bright. New Life publications.

Order at crustore.org

The Mystery of the Holy Spirit. R.C. Sproul. Tyndale House.

Baptism and Fullness: the work of the Holy Spirit Today. John Stott. IV press.

Order at christianbook.com

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You might want to ask your disciple in what ways he or she meets their thirsts? You might explain what this idea of reliance looks like in your life. You also should remind them that this is a process and not something that changes over night. They should be turning to the Lord increasingly with their needs throughout the day. Just like a cigarette smoker takes puffs all day long, they should be turning to the Lord all day long. A life of abiding and reliance.

Abiding

The rest of our Ephesians passage says, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

For lack of a better word, it is the picture of abiding, which means making ourselves at home with God. In John 15:5 it says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

You might want to share this illustration. Have you ever been to a party where the atmosphere is such that it inclines you to want to sin? The music, the lighting, how people are dressed, the conversations: they all set a mood or an atmosphere that can cultivate our flesh.

The passage mentions activities like singing spiritual songs, praising, and giving thanks. Engaging in activities such as these throughout the day sets an atmosphere in our hearts that cultivate the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit. You might share some of the things you do in your day to cultivate that intimacy with the Lord that sets an atmosphere in your mind and heart and thus maximizes the Spirit’s influence in your life.

Summary

There are four main things (there are others) which are critical to living a life controlled by the Spirit: lordship, confession, reliance, and abiding. The Christian strives to maximize the control of the Spirit in their lives through engaging in these activities and processes.

†End

Notes to Self



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