

# THE HOLY SPIRIT?

## OBJECTIVE

In *Viva! Holy Spirit*, we discuss who the Holy Spirit is and explore some ways that we can listen to the Helper's guidance.

This first lesson specifically looks at some of the fundamental questions about who or what the Holy Spirit is.

## ACTIVITY

As we start this series on the Holy Spirit, start your first meeting by doing a word association brainstorm with your group. Explain that over the next four weeks you will be looking at the Holy Spirit and ask your group to merely share the thoughts, understandings, words or questions that come to their minds when it comes to the topic. You could have teens do this in small groups and then bring everyone back together, or just do a brainstorm on a whiteboard or poster paper altogether.

After you've completed the brainstorm, dive into these follow-up questions:

What conclusions, if any, can you make from the brainstorm about the Holy Spirit?

Would you say that there is more agreement about the Holy Spirit or disagreement?

With the Trinity – God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – how would you rank them as far as who you feel the most connected to versus the least connected to? Why do you think the order is that way?

Agree or disagree: The Holy Spirit is the least understood member of the Trinity? Why?

Why do you think there is such a diverse Christian response to the Holy Spirit? (i.e., Pentecostal or charismatic churches really emphasize the Spirit in their worship, where other churches never mention the Spirit.)

What has been your personal experience with the Holy Spirit?

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Bibles
- Whiteboard, poster paper or something to take notes on

## DISCUSSION

A little background on this text: The term that John uses exclusively for the Holy Spirit is the Greek word *paraklētos* which literally translates as “comforter” or “advocate.” The term describes someone who is “sum-

moned, called to one's side, especially called to one's aid."<sup>1</sup> It's also important to note the term "another" as Jesus describes the advocate that God would provide to Christ's followers. In Hebrew, two different terms mean "another": *eteros*, which means "another of a different kind" and *allos*, which means "another of the same kind." Jesus uses the later in verse 16. This is emphasized even more by the both/and descriptions of what Jesus would be facing (his death, resurrection, and ascension) plus the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is both leaving and going away so another Helper will come to his followers, yet Jesus also talks about him being in them at the same time.

Have your group look up John 14:15-27

Were there any words or lines that jumped out at you in the text? Why?

What does it mean that Jesus calls the Holy Spirit an "advocate"? (Or helper, counselor)

What does it mean that the advocate that Jesus speaks of will be with us "forever"?

What does it mean to "know" the Holy Spirit as expressed in verse 17 and why can "the world...not accept him"?

Why do you think Jesus seems to suggest that he is leaving and will go away, and thus another is needed, and yet at the same time seems to indicate that he will be with his followers? What does the Holy Spirit have to do with this?

Why does Jesus talk twice about those who love him following his commands? What does following God's commandments have to do with the Holy Spirit?

Go through the passage and make a list of all the things that Jesus says the Holy Spirit will do for his followers. Have you experienced the Holy Spirit doing any of these things in your life? If so, please share with the group. If not, why do you think that is?

## RESPONSE

A little background on this text: Just before the ascension, Jesus gathers his disciples and tells them to wait in Jerusalem for a few days until they receive the Holy Spirit. Which raises a bunch of questions: Why not right now? Why a few days? And mostly, how does one acquire the Holy Spirit?

This latter question has gotten lots of conversation throughout Christian tradition, and Scripture has stories of people receiving the Spirit in different ways. In Acts 2:38, Peter says that you have to repent and be baptized to receive the Holy Spirit. (Which adds a provoking layer as the Twelve had all likely done both of these things three years or so prior, yet they had just received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost just before Peter makes this statement.) In Acts 19:6, Paul lays hands on people so that they can receive the Holy Spirit. In John 20:22, Jesus breathes on people, which may just be a promise of the Holy Spirit and poetic writing as "Spirit" literally translates as breath (not to mention what does it suggest if John has the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit at this moment, but Luke has them receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?). In Luke 11:13, Jesus teaches that we can receive the Holy Spirit by merely asking. Ephesians 1:13, Paul writes that we need to hear the word and believe. In my opinion, what this goes to show us is the diversity to which the first followers of Jesus were experiencing people receiving the Holy Spirit. It's not about finding a formula, but instead being open to God's presence in one's life and understanding

1 *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary*