THE PROMISE
Bible Study & Member Book

TONY EVANS
SESSION 1:
Experiencing the Spirit

SESSION 2:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Presence and Assurance

SESSION 3:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Filling

SESSION 4:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Release

SESSION 5:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Illumination

SESSION 6:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Conviction

SESSION 7:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Power and Authority

SESSION 8:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Freedom and Fellowship

SESSION 9:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Restraint

SESSION 10:
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SESSION 11:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Intercession

SESSION 12:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Gifts

SESSION 13:
Experiencing the Spirit’s Guidance
SESSION ONE
Experiencing the Spirit
The Holy Spirit is not merely a nice addendum to the Christian faith. He is at the heart and core of it. He is not merely a force or an influence. He is the third Person and ministry of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, my task is to try to address in a biblical and practical way as soon as possible the issues surrounding this important Person.

If everything in life emanates from the knowledge of God, then it’s safe to say that everything in the Christian life emanates from the knowledge of the Holy Spirit.

So the Holy Spirit is absolutely central to the Christian. And yet, because of the mystery surrounding this third Person of the triune God, a great deal of confusion has been connected with the work of the Holy Spirit. This has led to a lot of misappropriation, as well as a lot of gross under-appropriation, of His power and gifts.

Usually, the Holy Spirit is approached from one of two extremes. Either we know very little about Him or we try to make Him into a celebrity, someone we all think we know but don’t really know at all. Neither is desirable. The fact is, His role is the indispensable factor in whether you win or lose spiritually, whether you are a failure or a success as a Christian.


You’re aiming to…

- Help group members relate to the Holy Spirit as a Person they can know and not just a force or power to be used.

You’ll study…

- Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30; 139:7; Isaiah 40:13; John 1:12; 14:1-3,15-17, 26-27; 16:7, 13-14; Romans 3:23; 5:8; 8:9, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:2, 10-11; 12:11; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Peter 3:15
- Major themes from chapter 1 of the book The Promise

You’ll need…

- Bibles
- Copies of Resource 1A, “Getting to Know Him”
- Copies of Resource 1B, “The Benefit Package”
- Pencils or pens
- One pretzel twist for each group member (the kind that bend around to form three holes)
- Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
Imagine that you have just moved into your dream home. It is newly built, furnished with all new appliances and furniture, and decorated to perfection. Needless to say, you’re excited and filled with anticipation when you wake up on your first morning to the sun shining through the skylights in your new bedroom. Finally you can enjoy all the things you have dreamed about for so long! You make your way downstairs, and as you enter the kitchen, you turn on the radio and open the refrigerator to get the fresh raspberries and other goodies you have planned for breakfast. To your dismay there is no sound coming from the radio and all the food in the refrigerator is warm. Confused, you flip on a light switch to see if the electricity is working. Sure enough, it is.

So what’s the problem? Have group members give their opinions, which may range from faulty appliances to a blown fuse.

The problem? You failed to plug in the appliances!

Read the following from The Promise by Tony Evans:

“No matter how much you paid for it, your refrigerator won’t work the way it was designed unless it is plugged in to electric power. Neither will your spiritual life work unless it is plugged in to Holy Ghost power.”

The subtitle of The Promise is Experiencing God’s Greatest Gift: The Holy Spirit. The best gifts we receive are those we really want or need. The Holy Spirit meets both of these criteria. But in order to recognize and plug into the power of the Holy Spirit, we must address some fundamental issues. First of all who is the Holy Spirit?

Turn to Resource 1A, “Getting to Know Him” on page 11. Form three groups and assign each group one section of the resource.

Read the verses listed under your assigned question and as a group write down everything you learn about the Holy Spirit related to that question.
Have each group report their findings. After everyone has reported, fill in any missing answers from the following.

**Who is the Holy Spirit?**

- John 14:16-17—The Holy Spirit is a Person sent by the Father; He is our Helper.
- John 16:13-14—He is the Spirit of truth; He tells us about the things of God.
- Romans 8:27—He is a Person with an intellect that is known by God.
- 1 Corinthians 2:10-11—He has a mind.
- Ephesians 4:30—He has emotions.
- 1 Corinthians 12:11—He has a will.

**What is He like?**

- Isaiah 40:13; 1 Corinthians 2:2—He is all-knowing, or omniscient.
- Psalm 139:7—He is in all places at once, or omnipresent.
- Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30—He is all-powerful, or omnipotent.

**Why did He come?**

- John 14:103—He came because Jesus was leaving.
- John 16:7—He came to be with believers after Jesus left.
- John 16:13-14—He came to glorify Christ.

**What does He do?**

- John 14:26—He will teach us about God and the Christian life; He will help us remember the things we have learned about God.
- John 16:13-14—He guides us into all truth; He speaks on God’s behalf; He will reveal what is to come; He glorifies Christ; He cares for believers.
- Romans 8:26-27—He prays according to God’s will on behalf of all believers.

*Summarize by saying something like this:* We have seen that the Holy Spirit is a real Person who possesses attributes of God. Therefore, He is divine. He came as a Helper because Christ was leaving and as a sign to point people to Christ. He serves as our teacher, guide to truth, and intercessor.
To help group members begin to grasp the concept of the Trinity or Triune God (three in one), see the following examples:

Give each person a pretzel (make sure they are the kind that twist around and form three distinct holes) and ask:

1. **How many pretzels do you have in your hand? (one)**
   a. If you consider each hole, how many parts does this pretzel have? (three)
   b. What is true of these three parts? (They are all made of the same substance, but each one is distinct.)

2. **Ask:**
   a. How many forms or states can H₂O take on? (three)
   b. What are they? (Water or liquid, ice or solid, and steam or vapor.)
   c. What is true of these three forms of H₂O? (They have the same chemical composition, but look, act, and feel different.)
   d. In what ways do these examples demonstrate the reality of the Trinity? (Like the three holes of the pretzel and the three forms of H₂O, the Trinity is made up of three distinct parts or Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.)

Print these two Greek words on the board or newsprint:
1) Homoousios [hoh-mah-OOH-see-oss]
2) Homoiousios [hoh-moy-OOH-see-oss]

Read this excerpt from *The Promise* by Dr. Tony Evans:

“The Holy Spirit is God, third member of the Trinity. The word ‘trinity’ refers to the reality that God is one in essence, yet plural in personality. There is one God composed of three distinct Persons. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not
The Spirit, yet each is equally and fully God.”

As you continue to read from The Promise, circle the first “i” in homoiuosios and fill in the meaning of each word as stated here.

“In theological terms, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are homoousios, “of the same essence or substance,” not homoiousios, “of like or similar essence or substance.” That extra Greek letter “I” in the second term makes a world of difference!”

**Sum up with a statement like:** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are of the same essence, not similar essence.

### STEP 4

**THE CONDITIONS** (5 MIN)

**Being Sure You Are Plugged into the Real Source**

**Have a volunteer read John 14:15-17 aloud.**

To whom was Jesus speaking? (His disciples or followers.)

So who is it that will receive the Holy Spirit? (Those who obey His commands or who are Christians.)

Why doesn’t the world receive the Holy Spirit? (They do not know Christ. Therefore, they are not able to accept spiritual matters.)

**Listen to Romans 8:9:** “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”

What does this verse say about the Holy Spirit? (If a person has the Spirit within, he belongs to Christ. If a person doesn’t have the Spirit within, he doesn’t belong to Christ.)

So what is the one condition of receiving the Holy Spirit? (Being a Christian.)

Refer individuals to Part 2 of Resource 1A and allow a few moments for them to read this section. Encourage anyone who has not taken this step to talk with you after
group time so you can answer questions, etc.

We will never know and understand the Holy Spirit until we first know Christ. Once we know Christ, we automatically have access to the power needed to live the Christian life.

**Turn to Resource 1B, “The Benefit Package,” on page 12.**

Have a volunteer read “The Spirit’s Person” section aloud. Invite volunteers to underline the answers to this question as the excerpt is read: What are some things the Holy Spirit offers to us? (Constant fellowship, comfort, strength, guidance, power)

**STEP 5**

**THE RESULTS (15-20 MIN)**

Experiencing the Benefits of the Holy Spirit

**Have another volunteer read “The Spirit’s Enabling.”** As this person reads, have group members continue to underline the benefits of the Spirit. (Having the Spirit indwell or live within enables a person to become what God wants them to be and to do God’s will.)

**Have a third volunteer read the final section, “The Spirit’s Purpose.”** Again ask volunteers to underline benefits as they are read aloud. (Putting Jesus on display; being conformed or changed to be like Christ; receiving guidance; being able to remember God’s truth as it is needed; experiencing God’s peace.)

Now review the benefits you have underlined. Which one or two are you in need of most right now? Circle them. Now silently read again the first paragraph under “The Spirit’s Purpose.” Take the next minute or two to ask God sincerely whether your passion is to glorify Christ in all you say or do.

Be sensitive as this is a very private matter. Encourage each person to seek God’s enabling even in the area of personal purpose and motivations.

Divide into pairs and have them share with each other the benefits they circled and why. Invite the partners to spend a few moments in prayer—silently or aloud—for each other.

*Close with Tony Evans’s words: “Your responsibility is to study to show yourself approved, to hide the Word in your heart. When you do that, the Holy Spirit is your built-in computer system to pick up the words and illustrations and everything you need to know. Then at the proper time, He can punch the button*
GETTING TO KNOW HIM, RESOURCE 1A

Part 1: It's All in Who You Know

Read the Scriptures listed under the question your group is assigned. After each reference jot down everything you learn about the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

John 14:16-17  
John 16: 13-14  
Romans 8:27  
1 Corinthians 2:10-11  
Ephesians 4:30  
1 Corinthians 12:11

What is He like?

Isaiah 40:13  
1 Corinthians 2:2  
Psalm 139:4  
Job 33:4  
Psalm 104:30

Why did He come?

John 14:1-3  
John 16:7  
John 16:13-14

What does He do?

John 14:26  
John 16:13-14  
Romans 8:26-27

and the information will show up on your mental screen. We will bring to your remembrance the things you need to remember… If you are not committed to Christ and cultivating a relationship with the Spirit, the data will be there when you need it.”

Close in prayer.
**Part 2: How to Be Sure You Are a Christian By Tony Evans**

“If you don’t know whether the Holy Spirit is in you, perhaps it is because you haven’t come to Christ for salvation [for being set free from the consequences of breaking God’s moral law]. You can experience the person of the Spirit right now. Admit to God that you’re a sinner (Romans 3:23) and cannot save yourself, believe that Christ died on the cross to pay for your sins (Romans 5:8), and receive Him by faith as your only God and Savior (John 1:12). When you do, the Holy Spirit will come to live within you.”

Be sure to tell your group leader or the person who invited you to this group about your decision.

**THE BENEFIT PACKAGE, RESOURCE 1B**

By Tony Evans

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**The Spirit’s Person**

Jesus assured His followers that even though He would leave, there would be another Person who would take His place in their midst. This Person would be with them as Jesus had been with them for comfort, strength, and guidance, but this Person would also be in them. Jesus wanted the disciples to know He was going to send them a Somebody, not a something.

The Holy Spirit is spirit because He is nonmaterial, intangible, and invisible. Both the Hebrew and Greek words for spirit mean, “wind, breath.” The Holy Spirit is the very breath or wind of God. And like the wind, He wields great power even though He is invisible.

**The Spirit’s Enabling**

The Spirit is the Helper, the Enabler. When He indwells the believer, He enables that believer to be and do what the God wants that person to be and to do.

There would be no effective ministry or life that pleased the Lord by mere human effort… If you have discovered your own spiritual insufficiency, you are a good can-
didate for spiritual disaster. If you are a believer, the best help you have for whatever problem you face is inside you, not outside you… If you are a believer, this Helper is closer to you than anybody else could ever be, because He is within you.

**The Spirit’s Purpose**

The Holy Spirit focuses attention on His primary work in the life of believers: to progressively conform us to the image of Christ, the process we call sanctification. The Holy Spirit has one overarching goal—He is about glorifying Christ. The Spirit advertises Christ—He puts Jesus Christ on display. Any time there is an emphasis on the Spirit that supersedes the centrality and priority of Jesus Christ, it is not the Holy Spirit doing it. If your passion is not to glorify Christ, then you are not going to get help from the Holy Spirit. [1 Peter 3:15]

Jesus said the Spirit will “guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13 NASB). Isn’t guidance something you need? Are there decisions you need to make that you wish somebody would advise you on? The Holy Spirit stands ready to guide us even in the small things of life.

Jesus also said the Holy Spirit will “guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13 NASB). How are you going to remember every sermon you’ve heard and every word of the Bible you’ve read? You can’t and you don’t have to. Your responsibility is to study to show yourself approved, to hide the Word in your heart.

Another benefit of the Holy Spirit is peace (John 14:27). What’s your situation today? Whatever it is, if you have the Holy Spirit you can have peace in the midst of it because He lives within you. It’s a peace that circumstances can’t shatter.
SESSION TWO

Experiencing the Spirit’s Presence and Assurance
The Spirit’s task is to make real in the lives of true believers the comfort and joy of their security in Christ and to disturb those who are trusting anyone or anything else other than Christ for their salvation.

It’s not your obedience, dependent on your own reserves, that “qualifies” you to receive the Holy Spirit; the Spirit empowers you to live the Christian life if you let Him. It’s His work within you, not your own effort.

The Spirit’s talk is to make real in the lives of true believers the comfort and joy of their [position] in Christ and to disturb those who are trusting anyone or anything else other than Christ for their salvation.

Once you mix anything with Christ, you dilute Christ. He alone must be your absolute basis of confidence for salvation if you would be born again into the family of God. Birth into God’s family comes with your commitment to Christ as your only God and Savior.

You’re aiming to…

- Help group members experience the fullness of the Spirit’s Person and ministry by understanding their position in Christ.

You’ll study…

- 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26-28; 5:22-24; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:3-5; Colossians 2:10
- Major themes from chapters 2 and 3 of the book, The Promise

You’ll need…

- Bibles
- Pencils or Pens
- Blank paper
- Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
- Four- or five-inch square of white fabric, rubber gloves, and small clear glass container half filled with dark-blue-colored water for use in Step 1
STEP 1  TOTAL IMMERSION (5 MIN)

Illustrating a Change in Identity

Display the glass container half filled with colored water. Take one corner of the white cloth and dip it into the container. Remove it from the liquid and squeeze any excess back into the container.

Describe what has happened to this cloth. (A portion of it has been colored or changed.)

Now immerse the entire cloth in the colored liquid and remove it, again squeezing the excess back into the container.

Now what has happened to the cloth? (It has been completely re-colored; it has been changed or transformed.)

How is this like what happens to each person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? (He or she is placed into or immersed in Christ; is totally changed; is a new person.)

Read the following from *The Promise* by Tony Evans:

“My Purpose is...to help you experience the fullness of the Spirit’s Person and ministry in your life. The verse I want to center on...is 1 Corinthians 12:13, where Paul writes: ‘For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.’

[The word for baptism] is a transliteration of the Greek word baptizo. It means ‘to immerse’ or ‘to dip.’ It was used to describe the process of dyeing cloth... This baptism of the cloth was not just an act. It was a transformation because the cloth took on a whole new color...

God chose the imagery of baptism to explain the Spirit’s ministry of taking sinful people who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and immersing them into a whole new dynamic of life, an entirely new realm or environment called the body of Christ.”
Have a volunteer read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

In a practical sense, what does this truth mean or look like in the life of a new believer? (There will be new thought patterns, new values, new behaviors, and new associations.)

**STEP 2**

**A NEW YOU (10-15 MIN)**

Discovering Our True Colors

Based on how much time you have, tell group members how long they have to illustrate with words or pictures their life before and after knowing Christ as Savior and Lord. To prompt their thinking, have them include attitudes, habits, outward appearance, social activities, church involvement, relationships, etc.

After the allotted time, invite several volunteers to share their creations, focusing on the “After” pictures. As each person shares, jot down on the board or newsprint recurring themes or mentions.
STEP 3
THE VIEW FROM ABOVE (5-10 MIN)
Looking at the Believer’s Position

What do you think the phrase “position in Christ” means? (Answers will vary. This term refers to our standing in Christ or God’s view of us because of Christ.)

Why is it important to understand our position in Christ? (Just as we have an identity based on our physical family, so we have an identity based on our spiritual family. Our value system and standards of behavior are closely tied to those of our family.)

Indwelling = Where the Spirit is
Filling = What the Spirit empowers us to do
Baptism = New environment in which the Spirit places us

Rather than getting into a discussion of the merit of Dr. Evans’s definitions, simply point out that this information serves as the operating dictionary for this study. Based on your group size, divide into groups of two or three and assign portions of this resource. After several minutes have each group share its findings.

Answers should be similar to the following:

1. The Nature of the Spirit Baptism
   a. It Is Unique

   Ephesians 4:4-5: There is one and only one body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism. We get all of the Spirit, when we get any of the Spirit.

   Colossians 2:10: We are full or complete in the Spirit.

   b. It Is Universal

   Job 33:4: The Spirit gives all people biological life.
Isaiah 32:15: The Spirit gives life to plants or makes the desert fertile.

Galatians 3:26-27: All Christians are clothed with or in Christ.

2. **The Results of Spirit Baptism**

   a. **It Is Life-Giving and Life-Sustaining**

   John 3:5-6: The Spirit gives spiritual life to believers.

   John 7:37-39: The Spirit gives all we will ever need to maintain our spiritual lives.

   b. **A New Identity**

   Romans 6:1-5: To be identified with Christ is to become like Him.

   c. **A New Unity**

   Ephesians 4:3: The Spirit binds us together in the community of believers.

   Galatians 3:27-28: Those things that divided us before we were Christians—race, gender, etc.—no longer count.

   d. **A New Nature**

   2 Corinthians 5:17: Our old way of doing things is gone, and we are new creations.

   Galatians 5:22-24: Our old nature is replaced by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Have group members revisit what they illustrated in step 2. Allow a minute or two for them to add any other changes they may have thought of as a result of the discussion.

*Sum up with something like*, “It is clear that God’s Word confirms the role and power of the Holy Spirit. And each of the truths we’ve discussed will be evidenced in our lives as we continue to walk in obedience to God’s commands.”
SESSION THREE
Experiencing the Spirit’s Filling
The Holy Spirit can be in you, and yet you can know very little of His power and influence. The issue we always have to deal with is not how much of the Holy Spirit we have, because we have all of Him. The issue is how much He has of us.

You’re aiming to...

• Help group members understand and experience Spirit-controlled living.

You’ll study...

• Romans 7:18; 12:1; Ephesians 4:30; 5:14-21; 1 John 1:9; 4:4, 12-13
• Major themes from chapters 3 and 4 of the book The Promise

You’ll need...

• Bible
• Copies of Resource 3A, “The Spirit’s Filling”
• Copies of Resource 3B, “Monday through Saturday”
• Pencils or pens
• Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
• Forty 3- x 5-inch cards with a “Password” written on one side (see Step 1)
• One minute timer
• Prizes for the winning team (something related to control)

STEP 1

EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (15 MIN)

Experiencing the Security of Your Position in Christ

Divide into two teams to play a quick version of a game where one person gives clues about a key word while another person tries to guess the word. If your group is large enough, appoint a scorekeeper and timekeeper. Have each team select two people who will take turns giving and receiving clues. Review these simple rules before Round 1.
1. Each team will have 60 seconds to try to guess ten related words.

2. The time starts as soon as the clue giver names the category.

3. The clue giver may give as many verbal hints as he or she wants. However no form of the answer may be used. For example if the answer is “belief,” you cannot use “believe” or “believer” in the clues. A good clue would be “a thing I think is true.”

4. No hand or facial movements are allowed.

5. Award points for each correct guess. The team with the most points wins.

Before each round, give the designated “clue giver” a stack of cards with one answer printed on each card. (Slips of paper will work fine also.) On the back of the first card print the category (such as, “things that break relationships”). The clue giver will read this category and immediately begin giving clues.

After each team completes their turn, tally the score then discuss the questions.

ROUND 1, CATEGORY 1

Things that break relationships

- Lies
- Unfaithfulness
- Harsh words
- Gossip
- Mistrust
- Jealousy
- Anger
- Manipulation
- Selfishness
- Unforgiveness

After Round 1, Category 1

What word sums up the entire list of things that break human relationships? (Sin.) Just as these things can interrupt or disrupt personal relationships, they can temporarily damage our relationship with God. The Bible refers to this as “grieving the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 4:30). Silently ask God if any of these things are present in your life and need to be dealt with. An increasing sensitivity to or feeling of discomfort with these negative things is one evidence of the Spirit’s presence in our lives. Now have
Team 2 take a turn at Category 2.

ROUND 1, CATEGORY 2

Things that express love

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Giving</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
<td>Affection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After Round 1, Category 2

Say something like, “All of these actions or attitudes toward fellow believers are evidence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The longer we know Christ and the more diligently we seek Him, the more consistently we will see these things demonstrated in our lives.”

Ask a volunteer from Team 2 to read 1 John 4:12-13.

Silently ask God which of these things you need to develop in your life.
ROUND 2, CATEGORY 1

Things that need control

- Tongue
- Temper
- Puppets
- Dandruff
- Horses
- Puppies
- Crowds
- Children
- New drivers
- Weeds

After Round 2, Category 1

Relate this round to today’s sessions with comments like these: All of us have much in common with these things—we too need to be controlled. The control we need goes beyond self-control. We need the Spirit’s control. Jesus knew this and that is why He told the disciples before He returned to the Father that He would send another Helper. Being aware of our need for the Spirit’s control is evidence that He is in our lives.

ROUND 2, CATEGORY 2

Things that are filled

- Gas tank
- Dishwasher
- Balloon
- Riverbank
- Piggy bank
- Quiver
- Dump truck
- Closets
- Parking lot
- Vacancies

After Round 2, Category 2

Have a volunteer read Ephesians 5:18.

Tie the final round of the game to today’s session with these thoughts. According to this short verse, with what are we to be filled? (The Holy Spirit)

We are as helpless to fill ourselves with what we need as all these inanimate objects are. When we acknowledge this fact and seek the Spirit’s help, we experience another evidence of our position in Christ. Those who belong to Christ have the Spirit.
Before moving on make sure to tally the score and congratulate the winning team. Give prizes to the winning team if you choose.

**STEP 2**

**FOUR OBSERVATIONS** (10-15 MIN)

**Understanding Our Need of the Spirit’s Power**

Before we can be filled with the Holy Spirit, we need to understand what this means. Remember last time when we read Tony Evans’s definition of the filling of the Spirit? He said it “refers to [the Spirit’s] control and empowerment in the lives of believers to enable us to live the victorious Christian life.”

**Turn to Resource 3A, “The Spirit’s Filling,” on page 31.**

**First, invite a volunteer to look up and read Ephesians 5:14-17.** Then ask group members if they have any thoughts that are new or particularly meaningful to them. Allow several minutes for volunteers to share answers to these questions:

**What thoughts were new to you?**

**What is the significance of these new thoughts?**

**Which phrase or phrases were most meaningful to you?**

**In what way?**

Ask group members to turn Resource 3A over for the next part of the discussion. Write these five words from Ephesians 5:18 on the board or newsprint:

“Be filled with the Spirit.”

Group members may want to look in their Bibles to get the context of this verse. Paul was writing to the church of Ephesus, and the letter was probably circulated to other churches also.
Ask, is being filled with the Spirit optional? Who is to be filled with the Spirit? Who does the filling? When are you to be filled?

**Have everyone look again at Resource 3A and ask for a volunteer to read aloud.**

As this person is reading, write the four headings on the board.

In practical terms, what do these four observations mean to us today? (Unlike receiving salvation through faith in Christ, being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time-for-all-time experience. It is an ongoing, daily process.)

Why do you think Tony Evans chose Ephesians 5:18 as a key verse? (Answers will vary. Point out that this verse tells us what we must do to live the Christian life victoriously. It also tells us that we cannot do it alone.)

**STEP 3 CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE CONDUSIVE TO SPIRIT-CONTROL (10-15 MIN)**

*Read all of Ephesians 5:18 aloud:* “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery [or extreme indulgence]. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”

Why do you think being filled with the Spirit is contrasted with being drunk? (The key here is a matter of control. One does not get drunk by merely tasting alcohol or by looking at it or by being with others who are drinking. When enough alcohol is consumed, the person loses control of at least some of his or her faculties. When a person is filled with the Spirit, he or she voluntarily yields control.)

*Read this short quote from Tony Evans:* “What alcohol is to the body negatively, the Holy Spirit is to the spirit positively. He makes you walk in ways you would not normally walk and talk in ways you wouldn’t normally talk.”

Read aloud the list of “Things that need control” from Step 1: tongue, temper, puppets, dandruff, horses, puppies, crowds, children, new drivers, and weeds.

Why do these things need control? (They cannot control themselves; if not controlled, they can hurt themselves or cause harm to other things.)
The Bible is very clear that we need to let the Spirit control us. But how can we do this? Think of times when you’ve felt particularly close to the Lord—when you sensed His prompting or leading in your life. Perhaps you were in a worship service, on a retreat, or having personal devotions.

**What was the setting or the surroundings?**

**What people were with you?**

**What activities were taking place?**

Have volunteers briefly share the activities and surroundings that draw them toward the Lord. List these on the board or newsprint. As the sharing is slowing down, ask someone to read aloud Ephesians 5:19-21. Generate discussion with questions like:

**How are Christians to talk with each other?**

**How are we to communicate with the Lord?**

**What attitude are we to express to the Lord?**

**How are Christians to relate to each other?**

**What does it mean to be subject to one another?**

In general, does the body of Christ demonstrate these qualities? How?

**Sum up with thoughts like:** These verses give us some specific things that create an atmosphere of worship. As we share the truths of God’s Word in song with other believers, make melody in our own hearts, express gratitude in all things, and serve one another, we are aligning ourselves with the Spirit.
STEP 4 PERSONAL WORSHIP (5-10 MIN)

Understanding Our Need of the Spirit’s Power

Turn to Resource 3B, “Monday through Saturday,” on page 33. Explain that this resource is intended for continued use throughout the week. For now you will walk through each of the activities to acquaint group members with each one so they will be comfortable with them during their personal times of worship.

Either read aloud or have a volunteer read aloud the “Personal Worship” section.

What are your favorite parts of corporate or group worship?

How do you think you can make worship a way of life?

Share these three suggestions:

1. **Sing, play, or listen to favorite hymns and praise choruses.** Allow a minute or two for group members to share the names or words to one or two of their personal favorites. Have them jot down their favorites on Resource 3B.

2. **Use favorite Scripture passages as your own personal prayers.** Since we know God will grant our requests if they conform to His will, we can be confident that He will hear and answer us when we use His own words. For example, a prayer using Romans 12:1 might go like this:

   “Lord, I bring my body—all that I am and hope to be—before You as a living and holy sacrifice. May I be acceptable to You, Lord. I give up my own dreams and wishes and ask that You replace them with Yours. For you alone are worthy of my praise and worship.”

3. **Keep a personal prayer journal.** Write out your prayers and then record His answers. This will encourage you and help you to remember all the Lord is doing in and through you. It will also be a good lead-in to worship! For your first entry use the suggestion on Resource 3B.
Introduce the concept of spiritual breathing with this quote from *The Promise*: “Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, has helped many Christians appropriate the Spirit’s fullness with his concept called ‘spiritual breathings.’ First you exhale the bad air. That’s confession of sin. Then you can inhale, claiming the Spirit’s fullness as yours. It’s a great concept—and, like physical breathing, you can do it as often as necessary.”

Review the two steps involved in Spiritual Breathing. Point out that the first step—exhaling—has two parts:

*Confession (agreeing with God that you are wrong in specific areas) and Repentance (turning away from sin)*

If time allows, have group members spend several minutes in silent confession. Jog their thinking by asking them to recall some of the actions or attitudes which came to mind when playing the word game at the start of this session. Encourage them to write down the specific things they have done that they shouldn’t have, and the specific things they haven’t done that they should have. If time is short, encourage them to do this at home.

**Have someone read 1 John 1:9 aloud.**

Ask: What does God promise to do in this verse? (Forgive our sins and purify us from unrighteousness.)

What is the condition for the fulfillment of this promise? (We must confess our sins.)

**Have everyone write “1 John 1:9” across their list.**

Remind them of the Lord’s command in Ephesians 5:18 to “be filled with the Spirit.”
Lead in prayer: Lord, thank You for forgiving me. I now yield control of my life to Your Spirit and ask Him to fill me. Thank You for answering my prayer as You promised.

Assure those who prayed that they are now controlled by the Holy Spirit. Emphasize that being filled with the Spirit is a continuous process. To walk in the Spirit they will need to breathe spiritually for the rest of their lives. Encourage everyone to keep the copy of Resource 3B in his or her Bible for future reference.

Close by reading the quote from Tony Evans on page 27.
Our Need of the Spirit’s Filling

The Spirit of God wants to control our lives so that we wake up spiritually, we become wise spiritually, and we stop being foolish spiritually so that we know what God’s will for us is.

The fastest way to get from where you are to where you are supposed to be spiritually is to learn to live a life of “Spirit-filledness.” God gave us the Holy Spirit because He knows something we tend to forget. It is impossible to live the Christian life on our own.

When Jesus Christ saved us, He gave us Someone to lean on who has the strength to hold us up. He gave us the Spirit because He knows the number sin has done on us. When you got saved, you did not lose your fleshly desires.

Your flesh is as corrupt today as it was when you were lost. There is nothing in your flesh that is going to help you live the Christian life (Romans 7:18). This means that in your own strength, your attempts at self-improvement won’t be any more successful today than they were in your unconverted state. The only remedy for the flesh is crucifixion with Christ.

If the Christian life is a supernatural life, then we need supernatural help to live it. The only thing that makes you more powerful now than you were before is “He who is in you” (1 John 4:4). It’s not a matter of doing your best and letting the Holy Spirit make up the difference.

If it were just a matter of being sincere, we might make it. But sincerity is not our problem; the power to change is. God has given us the Holy Spirit to provide us the enablement we need to overcome. Our challenge is to “be filled with the Spirit.”
God’s Command
The first thing we need to note is that this is a command, not a suggestion.

For Every Believer
The command of Ephesians 5:18 is plural in the Greek text. It applies to every believer.

God Does It
The command is passive. You are to “be filled,” not fill yourself. Somebody else provides the action. You are the object of that action, the one acted upon. The content of the filling, of course, is the Spirit Himself. And you can resist the filling, but you cannot fill yourself.

Keep It Up
This plural, passive command is also in the present tense. In Greek this means it is to be a continuous process. An accurate way of translating it would be, “Keep on being filled with the Spirit.”
MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY, RESOURCE 3B

Personal Worship by Tony Evans

The way you learn to live a Spirit-filled life is to learn to do Monday through Saturday what you did on Sunday. The way you get filled with the Spirit as a day-by-day experience is to make worship a way of life.

In the NASB, Romans 12:1 says “I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” Here God is calling us to hold our own private worship services. Every morning get down by your bed and say, “Lord, for the next 24 hours, I’m Yours. You can do with me whatever You want and take me wherever You want, because the only thing that matters today is Your will for me. Fill me with Your Spirit this day.

Favorite Hymns

Favorite Praise Choruses

Favorite Scriptures

Personal Journal by Tony Evans

For the next twenty-four hours, keep a record of what you fill your mind and heart with. Include your listening, viewing, reading, daydreaming, conversations—anything
that affects your mind. Your list should tell you what you’re giving the Spirit to work with and where you may need to adjust.

**Spiritual Breathing (developed by Dr. Bill Bright)**

**Exhale**
List any known unconfessed sins. (This is helpful when you first use this concept.)

Ask God to reveal any you are not aware of.

Agree with God that you are wrong and ask His forgiveness.

Write 1 John 1:9 across them: “If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

**Inhale**
Thank God for His forgiveness. Yield control of your life to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to fill you. Remember, just like physical breathing, spiritual breathing can be used anytime, anywhere, and as often as necessary!
SESSION
FOUR
Experiencing the Spirit’s Release
Experiencing the release of the Spirit is a wonderful thing. But the process the Spirit uses to bring us to that point may not always seem so wonderful, because the Holy Spirit has to break us before He can release us.

By brokenness, I mean the work of the Holy Spirit that strips away our self-sufficiency. Many of us experience perpetual spiritual defeat because we are too self-sufficient. We can make it on our own. Although we may go through the spiritual motions, we really don’t need God.

You’re aiming to...

• Help group members see that the way to experience spiritual victory is to come to a point of brokenness and to yield themselves continuously to whatever the Spirit is doing in their lives.

You’ll study...

• Major themes from chapter 5 of the book The Promise

You’ll need...

• Bibles
• Copies of Resource 4A, “Biblical Brokenness”
• Copies of Resource 4B, “Since It’s Broken, Fix It”
• Pencils or pens
• Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
• Index cards with names and Scriptures for use in Step 2
Begin your group time with a simple word association. Ask: What comes to mind when you hear the word “broken”?

On the board or newsprint, list all of the words and phrases that are mentioned. There are no right or wrong answers, but if the following two concepts are not mentioned, add them to your list: “needs fixing” and “doesn’t work.”

Have a little fun with the following tongue-in-cheek quiz. Read each problem and then ask group members which solution they prefer.

**Car with knocking noise:** Wear earplugs so you cannot hear it or hire a mechanic to eliminate the cause of the noise?

**Pain from broken arm:** Take prescription painkiller to cover up pain or surgery to set it correctly?

**Water in your basement:** Use towels to soak up water or repair crack where water comes in?

Transition to the topic of the Spirit’s release with comments like the following: “If we are honest with each other, we would have to admit that there are areas of weakness in our lives and relationships. We may find it hard to get close to other people, or we may deal with chronic anger or depression, or we may spend money we don’t have for things we don’t need.”

Ask, “What are some of the ways people try to fix or overcome these kinds of problems?” (Answers will include things like reading books, prayer, Bible study, counseling, etc.)

We’ve all heard and probably used the expression, “If it’s not broken, don’t fix it.” In the case of humanity, we know that something is broken.

*Read this quote from Tony Evans in The Promise: “Any attempt to correct the actions of the body and the perspective of the soul without starting with the life of the spirit is not Holy Spirit-orchestrated transformation. At best, it is psychological programming that camouflages the problems rather than transforming the person.”*
The Promise - STUDY GUIDE

STEP 2  
THE CAUSE (10-15 MIN)  
Exploring Biblical Brokenness

Continue with this quote: “Experiencing the release of the Spirit is a wonderful thing. But the process the Spirit uses to bring us to that point may not always seem so wonderful, because the Holy Spirit has to break us before He can release us. By brokenness, I mean the work of the Holy Spirit that strips away our self-sufficiency.

Peruse your Bible and you will hardly find a man or woman God used who didn’t get broken first.”

Have the following names and related Scripture references written on separate index cards. Divide into pairs and assign each pair one or more of the Bible “superstars” to research. Ask them to answer these questions:

What circumstances did God use to get this person ready for His purposes?

What was it about this person that needed fixing?

David: 1 Samuel 11:1-15

Peter: Matthew 26:31-35; 69-75

Moses: Acts 7:23-36

Jacob: Genesis 27:1-7, 14-29, 41-44; 29:14-28

Mark: Acts 12:25; 15:36-41

After about five minutes read the following list of circumstances one at a time and have the pairs “claim” the one(s) describing their star(s). As each one is identified have that pair give a few more details and answer the questions above.

Spent forty years in the desert before he was trusted (Moses; needed to follow rather than run ahead of God)
Denied his best friend even though he pledged faithfulness (Peter; needed to realize his own sinfulness)

Used deceit to get an inheritance and then was deceived into 14 years of service (Jacob; needed integrity and honesty)

Wiped out on the mission field (Mark; needed perseverance)

Slept with the wife of one of his employees and had employee murdered (David; needed morality and integrity)

Discuss the following statement: Tough circumstances alone do not guarantee we will be shaped or molded into the men and women God wants us to be. Have group members share whether they agree or disagree and why.

Point out that how we respond to the tough things determines the benefit they will have in our lives. If we run from them or from God, we will waste an opportunity for spiritual growth and possibly postpone God’s plan for our lives.

How would you summarize what the problem was with all of the Bible people we just looked at? (They needed to stop depending on their own sufficiency and abilities; they needed to get out of the way so God could work through them.)

Pose this rhetorical question before moving on: What is it in your life that needs fixing?

STEP 3

THE DIAGNOSIS (5 MIN)

Understanding Our Makeup

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Thessalonians 5:23 aloud.

What three parts make up a Christian according to this verse? (Spirit, soul, and body.)

Ask a volunteer to read the section “Our Need for Brokenness.”

Discuss the two diagrams by asking questions like:

What is the difference between these two diagrams? (The first set of circles shows that our identity in Christ begins on the inside with the presence of the Holy Spirit. The second shows an attempt to live the Christian life from the outside in.)

What is the significance of that difference? (It is the difference between living by the Spirit who changes us from the inside out and living by human effort to change ourselves by self-discipline or worldly approaches.)

STEP 4

THE PRESCRIPTION (10 MIN)

Defining “The Spirit’s Release”

Have one or two volunteers read aloud the next section of Resource 4A, “Our Makeup.”

At this point you might want to mention that Dr. Evans’s view is a common view of the distinctions between “soul” and “spirit” but is not accepted by all biblical scholars. Generate discussion with these questions:

What was the impact of Adam’s sin for him personally? For us? (His spirit died; we inherited his sin nature.)

What is the impact of our sin-scarred soul to our daily life? (It traps and thus inhibits the Holy Spirit’s ministry.)

What evidence of “scar tissue around the soul” do you see in yourself or other people?

Allow a brief time for general sharing. Be careful and sensitive not to get bogged down here. The point is, all of us have scars we need to deal with.

Ask another person to read “Breaking the Shell.”
Have you ever thought of your spirit being encased within your soul and your soul encased within your body?

In what ways does this image help you understand how some people act or respond to difficult things in their lives?

What do you think Tony Evans means by this statement: “If you are a Christian, your spirit is perfect”? (Since our spirit has been made alive by God’s Spirit, we have His perfect Spirit in us. We now have the potential or freedom to not sin.)

**Ask a volunteer to read 1 John 3:9.**

What does this verse say about those who have been born of God? (We cannot go on sinning. That is, the spiritual part of us does not sin.)

**Ask another volunteer to read Colossians 2:9-10.**

Point out that according to Evans, in this verse “Paul says that when we become believers we are already complete in Christ. In the process of spiritual growth, the Holy Spirit is outworking our internal completeness.” In other words, God takes what is true in our position in Christ and makes it real in our experience.

**Once again have a volunteer read “Breaking the Shell” from Resource 4B.**

So it’s as if the shell of our soul needs to be cracked to allow the Spirit of God to be released.

Have group members think of three things that need to be shelled:

1. **A nut (it can be anything from a peanut to a Brazil nut).**
2. **A butterfly in a cocoon.**
3. **A chick in an eggshell.**
Have volunteers compare and contrast how each shell is broken. Point out the following:

**Similarities:** The shell must be broken to get to the good stuff; the shell cannot break itself.

**Differences:** A nut must be broken from the outside, while the other two must be broken from the inside; the true nature of what is inside cannot be known until the shell is cracked. The emerging butterfly or chick is strengthened by the process of breaking its shell.

Point out that as Christians, our spirit is like the butterfly or chick.

**STEP 5**  
**THE SURGERY (10-15 MIN)**

Releasing the Spirit

Summarize Dr. Evans’s presentation to this point:

1. **Christians have God’s perfect Holy Spirit in them.**
2. **The spirit is encased in the hard shell of the scarred soul.**
3. **The spirit is released by breaking the shell from the inside out.**
4. **It is only when we walk by the Spirit that our souls are changed.**

Transition by posing this question: How does the shell around our scarred souls get broken?

**Ask a volunteer to read Hebrews 4:12-13.** What does God say His Word does? (Divides the soul and spirit; judges our thoughts and attitudes or intentions.) In what ways is subjecting oneself to the Word like going under the surgeon’s knife? (In both cases we are submitting to change being done by someone besides ourselves; it can be painful; we are better off afterwards; true healing can take place when the scar tissue is removed.)
Read each of the following statements and ask group members to select the real goal of the Word. (The last statement is what the writer considers the true one.)

The goal of the Word is to make the body feel better.
The goal of the Word is to make the soul feel better.
*The goal of the Word is to open up the soul and release the spirit.*

Emphasize that God knows it is painful to be broken. He also knows it is necessary in the life of every believer to grow into the man or woman God has in mind.

**Turn to Resource 4B, “Since It’s Broken, Fix It,” on page 47. Have a volunteer read the section “Personal Brokenness.”**

Ask group members to prayerfully consider the people, situations, and events in their lives that may be agents of God’s discipline or correction. Clarify that God’s discipline is for our good and reveals what needs to be fixed. Have them write down anything that the Lord brings to mind under the heading “Personal Challenges.”

**Ask a volunteer to read 2 Corinthians 4:6.**

What is the result of having the Holy Spirit in our lives? (We have God’s light and knowledge available; the darkness of sin is exposed.)

*Read this quote from The Promise: “Christ calls us to put to death what the Bible calls the flesh, that part of self that seeks to live for its own sinful agenda. To do that He must do some breaking, and the agent is the Holy Spirit.”*

Since brokenness is a very private, personal experience, this may be a hard topic for some people. Point out that recognizing opportunities for growth is just a starting point. Encourage each person to continue the process during a personal time with the Lord at home.

Read the “Prayer of Brokenness” from Resource 4B. Encourage those who have been prompted by the Spirit to pray silently as you pray aloud.
By Tony Evans

Our Need for Brokenness

We are both material and immaterial beings. Our material or physical part, the body, is that which allows us to interact with the physical world through our five senses. The immaterial is the invisible part of us, the soul and the spirit. We are spirit, soul, body—not body, soul, and spirit. If we look at ourselves as bodies first, we will work toward sanctification from the wrong direction; from the outside in, rather than from the inside out.

Our Makeup

Some Bible students have described the components of the human makeup the following way:

Man developed God-consciousness because he has a spirit. Man also developed self-consciousness because he has a soul. Man developed what you could call environmental or world consciousness because he has a body. Life is the ability to relate to these different levels of consciousness because he has a body. Life is the ability to relate to these different levels of consciousness: the spirit to God, the soul to self, and the body to the outside world. The day Adam sinned, something went wrong. His spirit died. He lost his God consciousness. Because Adam sinned, we are all stillborn spiritually. We have no capacity to commune with God. We are dead in our sins. That’s why we need to be born again. When you come to Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God brings your spirit alive, so that you can communicate with God and He can communicate with you. There is still a problem, however, because in saving you, God did not kill off your sin-scarred soul and give you a brand-new one. Your newly alive spirit is still surrounded by your soul.

When Adam sinned, his spirit died and he lost his ability to communicate with God, but he kept his soul. He was still a person (soul) even though he was spiritually dead. The problem is, due to Adam’s sin, a negative component was added to his soul—that is, what the Bible calls the “old man” or the sin nature. The sin nature is the part of our...
soul that, like a magnet, gravitates to everything that is against God. Some people seem to have deep personality problems. What many really have is a deep layer of scar tissue around their souls. The process of spiritual growth is peeling the scar tissue from around the soul.

**Breaking the Shell**

The spirit has a casing around it called the soul. The soul has a casing around it called the body. The spirit expresses itself through the soul, and the soul through the body. Your soul is what needs fixing, but you can't fix your soul just by fixing your body, because the body only does what your soul tells it to do.
Personal Brokenness by Tony Evans

Brokenness does not necessarily mean that everything goes wrong in our lives or that God takes everything away from us.

God brings things into our lives to reveal what is wrong so that we will make it right. God uses circumstances and people to cut through the scars in your soul. If you don’t see that, you will miss the very thing He is trying to do. When you run from this person to that person because the first person was the hand of God in your life, then God will just move from this person to that person.

**Personal Challenges**

(Use this space to prayerfully consider what agents of discipline or correction God may have in your life right now.)

Prayer of Brokenness by Tony Evans

*Lord, I know that You are bringing this trial into my life to correct something in my personality that needs to be fixed so that the Spirit can be freed to live out Your life in me. So Lord, even though I don’t like what I am going through right now, I like why You are putting me through it. I am going to put this one in my ledger under the heading, “Opportunity for Spiritual Growth.” Amen.*
SESSION FIVE

Experiencing the Spirit’s Illumination
When you became a Christian, God gave you a new capacity to communicate and fellowship with Him. He transformed the inner you by making the dead spirit come alive, and by giving you a new mind. All of this is possible because the Holy Spirit came to indwell you. In His role as the Illuminator, the Spirit enlightens us so that we are able to grasp, experience, and apply God’s Word to our lives.

The Bible makes clear that the person without Christ, the unbeliever, has a darkened mind. That is, no matter how brilliant this person may be, he or she does not have the capacity to understand—or the access to—spiritual truth.

You’re aiming to…

• Help group members understand how the Holy Spirit can enable them to grasp, experience, and apply God’s Word to their lives.

You’ll study…

• 1 Corinthians 2:9-13; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 2:20-27
• Major themes from chapter 6 of the book The Promise

You’ll need…

• Bibles
• Copies of Resource 5A, “The Spirit As…”
• Copies of Resource 5B, “Words to Grow By”
• Pencils or pens
• Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
• Index cards with the role play for Step 3 written on them
STEP 1  THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT (5-10 MIN)

Leaving the Darkness

Think back to when you were a young child alone in bed at night. You may have had trouble falling asleep or just awakened from a dream. The house was very quiet and you lay there with eyes open wide, listening. What feelings do you remember having? (Answers will vary. If not mentioned, probe about the fear of darkness and the fear of being alone.) Have a volunteer give a detailed report of a scary night.

How did you handle these feelings?

What action did you take? (Called for a parent; turned on a light; hid under the covers; ran from the room.)

Point out that spiritually we are much like the child alone in the dark. The unbeliever is like the child who tries to hide or run away from the darkness. As Christians we aren’t alone because we have the Holy Spirit and He will illuminate the darkness.


To transition to the next activity, ask a volunteer to read “The Illuminator” section.

STEP 2  THINGS THAT ONLY THE SPIRIT KNOWS (5 MIN)

Experiencing the Light

Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 2:9-13. What do these verses tell us about the Holy Spirit? (He knows things we are unable even to imagine; He searches the depths of our hearts and the mind of God; He has access to the innermost workings of the Godhead; no one knows God’s deepest thoughts better than the Spirit; He reveals these things to us; He teaches us spiritual things.)

Read this quote from Tony Evans in The Promise: “One way the Spirit illuminates us is by giving us spiritual discernment—the ability to distinguish good from bad, right from wrong, to make sense out of what is happening… [Paul] says in verse 10 [of 1 Corinthians 2] that God has revealed these things
to us by His Spirit. The Spirit can do this because He searches the very depths of the heart and mind of God. In fact, He is Himself God, the third Person of the Trinity [and He] functions within the Trinity the way our human spirit functions within us. Our spirit is the innermost part of our being. It’s where our deepest, most private thoughts reside.”

Ask, “What do you think Dr. Evans means when he says, ’The Spirit functions within the Trinity the way our human spirit functions within us’?” (Within us, it is our spirit that knows our real heart desires and dreams. Likewise it is God’s Spirit who knows all the inner thoughts, intentions, and desires of the Godhead.)

**STEP 3 THINGS THAT NEED INTERPRETING (10-15 MIN)**

Learning the Language

To demonstrate the importance of common language, have five volunteers do the following role playing which you have written on index cards. While the actors are preparing, ask the rest of the group to look up Isaiah 55:8-9 and Romans 11:33-34 in their Bibles. These will be discussed after the role play is complete.

**Role Play 1 (A Tourist and a Local Person):**

You are traveling in a foreign country and do not know the language. You are trying to find the subway station. There is only one person nearby so you ask him or her for directions. The person seems very nice but obviously does not understand or speak English.

**Role Play 2 (A Tourist and Two Local People):**

You are traveling in a foreign country and do not know the language. You are trying to find the subway station. There are only two people nearby. One speaks English and the language of that country but does not know the area. The other knows the area well, but does not speak English.

When Role Play 1 is completed (it won’t take long!), ask the players: How did you feel as you were trying to communicate? (They probably felt frustrated and limited.)

Move right into Role Play 2. Afterward, ask: How did you feel in your attempts to
communicate? What made the difference? (Whether the person was the interpreter or translator.)

**Ask a volunteer to read Isaiah 55:8-9.**

**Have a second volunteer read Romans 11:33-34.**

What do these verses tell us about God’s thoughts and our thoughts?

Point out that spiritually we are like the tourist who needs help. We do not naturally speak or understand God’s language. Therefore, we need an interpreter. God knows this and gives us His Spirit.

*Review 1 Corinthians 2:12-13: “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given to us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”*

So God has placed within us His Spirit who will teach us the things of God in ways we can understand and apply to our lives.

**Have a volunteer read “The Translator” from Resource 5A.**

**Sum up** with a thought like this: To know God, we must link up with the Spirit.
Invite a volunteer to read 1 John 2:20-27. Explain that John, the writer of this letter, was warning believers of false teachers who deceive and mislead God’s people. Who are some of the false teachers of today? (New Age movement; horoscopes; Ouija boards; palm readers; non-Christian therapists; psychics.)

What is so dangerous about these things? (They deviate from God’s truth; in some cases they have an element of truth but then add to it; they appeal to our spirit but do not fulfill our spiritual needs.)

Have someone read “The Anointing” section of Resource 5A.

Start off a time of personal sharing by telling of a time you experienced the inner alarm or alert of the Holy Spirit saying, “Careful.” Be sure to include answers to these questions: What was the result? What could have happened if you had not heeded that inner prompting?

Invite group members to share their personal experiences. Keep the emphasis of the sharing time on the reliability of the Holy Spirit directing and convicting as one yields to Him. Point out that the key to spiritual discernment is knowing God’s Word well enough to know when something is in conflict with it and then obeying God’s commands.

Turn to Resource 5B, “Words to Grow By,” on page 58.

Depending on the amount of time available, either go through this activity as a group or encourage group members to do it on their own during a personal quiet time. If you complete the resource as a group, allow time for everyone to answer these two questions:

Which of these verses are most meaningful to you right now? Why?

Invite volunteers to share as time allows.
Ask a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 1:7. If possible have others read this same verse in other Bible versions.

What attitude or spirit does God give us? (One of confidence.)

What words or phrases would you use to describe people who have confidence? List all the words on the board or newsprint. If the list does not include the following ideas, add them:

1. They have a sense of where they’re going.
2. They keep going when it gets tough.
3. They have a different perspective.

Summarize the three aspects of the Spirit’s illuminating ministry with a comment like this: Not only will the Holy Spirit give us spiritual discernment and spiritual recall, He will also give us spiritual confidence.

Quickly divide into three groups and assign each group one of the following passages which will demonstrate the three results of confidence listed above:

1. Acts 20:17-38 (Paul’s farewell to the church of Ephesus and departure to Rome.)


Have the groups scan the passages and look for evidences of a new confidence. After a few minutes, have each group share their discoveries.

Point out that in each case the main person was given the strength and joy of the Lord in the midst of very difficult times.

Point out that there is one more aspect of the Spirit’s ministry of illumination, which is spiritual direction or guidance. This will be covered in Session 13.

Close by having group members think about the situations where they feel least confident or unable to handle what they are facing.

Lead in a time of prayer (those who are uncomfortable with praying aloud can pray silently), asking the Holy Spirit for the ability to see beyond just the circumstances to what God has planned.

“Lord, I am Yours today. Bring those influences and people into my life that You can use to keep me close to You and walking in Your truth.”
The Promise STUDY GUIDE

THE SPIRIT AS..., RESOURCE 5A

By Tony Evans

The Illuminator

One benefit of the Spirit’s abiding presence that believers enjoy is His ministry of illumination. Illumination means enlightenment. When I talk about the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, I am referring to that process of spiritual enlightenment whereby the Spirit enables you to grasp, experience, and apply God’s truth in your daily Christian life.

The Spirit does for us what He did in Creation. He serves as the light of our lives, doing for us what a night-light does for a frightened child. The Spirit enables us to see things that would otherwise be invisible or unclear and to hear clearly that which was formerly unintelligible. The result is that order replaces chaos and clarity transcends confusion, for darkness is no match for light. So rather than being afraid and insecure, we can be confident and secure as we walk by faith.

The Translator

The Spirit of God knows the deep things of God. He is like a deep-sea diver who can go down into the depths and find out what’s down there. That’s why the Bible says that even when you don’t know what is going on, the Spirit can help you because He dives deep down. He gets way down there where the action is. He goes “deep-thought fishing” to connect us to the mind of God.

The Anointing

Every Christian has the same spiritual capacity when it comes to walking with God. We all have different IQs, but in the spiritual realm we have the same capacity to hear the voice of the Spirit. Don’t think that only super-Christians hear from God. You have the anointing.

The anointing of God is like a satellite dish that points upward, pulls in a signal from the heavens, and translates the signal into a message you can see and understand. All you have to do is turn on your television to receive it.
When the Holy Spirit has sensitized your human spirit, you know when something is not right spiritually. Your “truth alarm” goes off. You may not know exactly what it is, but you just know what you’re hearing or reading isn’t right. God has given this spiritual sensitivity to all believers. But if you don’t know the Word and aren’t in touch with the Spirit, you’ll be relying on what man says.
Look up the verses below and jot down the truths Jesus spoke. Any teaching contrary to God’s Word is not of God. As you hide these truths in your heart, you will be increasingly sensitized to false teaching.

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”—Psalm 119:11

**John 14:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>6-7</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16-17</th>
<th>23</th>
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**John 15:**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>3-4</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>12-13</th>
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**John 16:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>7-10</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>24</th>
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**John 17:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Which of these verses are most meaningful to you right now? Why?

_______________________________________________________________________

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_______________________________________________________________________
SESSION SIX

Experiencing the Spirit’s Conviction
The Bible declares that, apart from God, all people are eternally lost. They are forever separated from the life of God. They need to know they are lost, and they need to know the way back home.

The Holy Spirit is the champion of the lost and found. His unique task is to bring men and women front and center before Jesus Christ: to bring the unregenerate and the unconverted into a saving relationship with Christ and to keep the regenerate in constant fellowship with Christ.

You’re aiming to…

• Help group members to develop a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit’s ministry of conviction.

You’ll study…

• Psalm 51; Matthew 25:41; John 1:2; 6, 12; 16:7-11; Acts 1:8; Romans 3:23; 5:15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-7; 2 Corinthians 5:19; James 2:10; 1 John 1:9
• Major themes from chapter 7 of the book, The Promise

You’ll need…

• Bibles
• Copies of Resource 6A, “What Do You Think?”
• Copies of Resource 6B, “With Conviction”
• Pencils or pens
• Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
• Index cards on which you have written the beliefs of “Mariah Merriweather,” “Scottie Scout,” and “Jordan Justify” from Step 2
To understand and benefit from the Holy Spirit’s ministry of conviction or convincing, it is important to have the facts straight.

**Turn to Resource 6A, “What Do You Think?” on page 67.** Allow a few minutes for group members to individually complete it.

When they’ve finished, have couples or small groups discuss and compare their answers. Are there areas where they disagree? Where they need more information? Where they used to agree but have changed their opinion?

Have the whole group reconvene to discuss all of the statements. Use one of these ideas to get the discussion going:

- **a. Ask for a show of hands to see how people reacted to each statement.** Invite several volunteers to share about the statements they feel are most important.

- **b. Ask individuals to name one statement they used to think was true, but don’t any more—and why.**

Opinions will vary. Many of the statements have truth in them, but stop short of all the truth.

Use the following information about the statements as needed.

1. **False.** Actually the Holy Spirit needs more of us. We sin because we are not totally yielded to the Holy Spirit.

2. **False.** It is because of their sin nature that people sin. The reason they go to hell is that they reject God’s Savior and choose to be their own saviors (see John 16:9; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 5:15).

3. **True.** Since God’s standard is perfection, it is pass or fail. He doesn’t grade on a curve (see James 2:10; Romans 3:23). Therefore without Christ, we all fail.

4. **False.** It is true that Jesus lived a perfect life and satisfied God’s standard.
Because of this He was able to pay our sin debt. But his resurrection and ascension are what show He conquered death and is able to save us (see John 14:12; 1 Corinthians 15:3-7).

5. False. Since we are called to be Christ’s witnesses (see Acts 1:8), it’s important to live by God’s standard. However we must also speak the gospel so the Holy Spirit has something to work with. Also, we do not want to set ourselves up as the standard. Only Christ can do that (see John 14:6).

6. True. God prepared hell for Satan and his angels (see Matthew 25:41). If we choose to go our own way, God will allow us to do so. But He has also prepared a place for those who believe in Christ (see John 14:2).

7. False. While asking forgiveness is good and necessary to restore the relationship with another person, it is not enough. We need to confess our sin to God and turn from it. (See 1 John 1:9; Psalm 51—we’ll take an in-depth look at this psalm later in this session.)

**STEP 2**

**CONVICT ME** (10-15 MIN)

Examine the Holy Spirit’s Role as Convictor

**Have a volunteer read John 16:7-11.**

**Turn to Resource 6B, “With Conviction,” on page 68.** Form groups of no more than four people and ask them to read and discuss each section. Encourage the groups to come up with specific truths that are central to the Christian faith.

Reconvene as one group. Have each small group share its findings. Ask if anyone wants to add anything.

On the board or newsprint list something similar to these four truths to communicate the answers of the group:

- **We are all sinners**
- **Christ is the Standard.**
- **All will be judged and God’s judgment will be enforced.**
As Christians we should feel a sense of guilt when we violate God’s standard.

Now have the group apply these truths. Ask three volunteers to stand in front of the group. Have each one read or express in his or her own words one of the following, which you have written on index cards. Make sure they introduce themselves.

1. Mariah (or Martin) Merriweather: I just can’t believe a loving God would send anyone to hell. No one is that bad.

2. Scottie Scout: I do my best to help others and to love God. And I attend church almost every week.

3. Jordan Justify: Oh, I know I’m not perfect. But I’ve never robbed a bank or shot anybody. I don’t even gossip about my neighbors like everyone else.

After each person is finished, ask the rest of the group to respond to these questions: What does this person need to be convinced or convicted of? If this were a friend of yours, how would you pray for him or her?

Responses should include:

1. Mariah (or Martin) Merriweather needs to believe God’s judgment is real. Pray that he or she would understand that if Satan did not escape judgment, neither will anyone who rejects Christ.

2. Scottie needs to understand what God expects and how serious sin is. Pray that he or she will see that we are all sinners and how one responds to Christ is the key, not good works or habits.

3. Jordan needs to get his or her eyes off of others and on to Christ’s righteousness. Pray that he or she will see that Christ alone is God’s standard of righteousness.
STEP 3  

PLUGGED IN (10-15 MIN)  

David’s Confession

Give the background of Psalm 51: In 2 Samuel 11 we are told King David had sent his men into battle, but he stayed home. This led to his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. About a year later the prophet Nathan confronted David. This Psalm is David’s prayer of confession.

Ask a group member to read Psalm 51.

Lead a group discussion with questions like these:

- **What was David’s attitude toward his sin?** (He acknowledged he was wrong and that he had sinned against God—verses 1-5)

- **What was David’s view of God’s authority in his life?** (He knows God can do anything He wants—verse 4)

- **What did David ask God to do?** (Have mercy—verse 1; cleanse from sin and forgive—verses 1-2,7; restore him to fellowship and bring back the joy of salvation—verses 8-12)

- **What did David anticipate as the result of being forgiven?** (He will be a powerful witness of God’s righteousness and goodness—verses 13-15)

- **What does God want from us when we sin?** (A broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart—verses 16-17).
STEP 4  FOLLOWING DAVID’S EXAMPLE (10 MIN)

As you close, say something like: When we examine the total brokenness of David before God, we can’t help but be a little afraid. David was a person who could be admired for a great many things, including his obedience toward God. But the story of Bathsheba and the lies and deceit that followed David’s adultery are very tough to see. But imagine what it would have been like if David had not confessed and repented of his sins before God. What might have happened? (Take responses.) But what did God and His Spirit’s conviction bring to David? (Take responses.)

**Sum up by** sharing thoughts like these:

God wants us to come to Him when we violate or break His moral laws. He wants us to truly mourn over our sin just as He does.

When we sincerely acknowledge our own inability to live the Christian life, the Holy Spirit is free to work in us.

The result of the Spirit’s work is an empowered witness to others about God’s truths.

Close with these two questions:

- *Is there any unconfessed sin you need to deal with right now?*

- *What or whom do you fear most today?*

Close with prayer, giving time for group members to commit silently these things to God.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True/False</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>1. You sin because you do not have enough of the Holy Spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>2. The reason people are condemned to hell is because they were born with a sin nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>3. The person who has tried to keep the Ten Commandments and failed is as guilty of sin as the thirteen-year-old who entered an Oregon school cafeteria and opened fire on fellow students, killing several of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>4. Jesus is able to save us because He lived a perfect life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>5. The best way to win others to Christ is to set a good example yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>6. God never intended people to be separated from Him for eternity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True</td>
<td>7. When you sin against someone, you are forgiven when you say “I’m sorry.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WITH CONVICTION,
RESOURCE 6B

By Tony Evans

The Great Convictor (John 16:7-8)
The Holy Spirit’s job is to make the issue clear and to jar people loose of their misconceptions about the good news of the gospel. The Spirit is the great Convictor, the great Convincer, the great Explainer. But in order to do this, He must get people’s attention.

Conviction of Sin (John 16:9)
The Holy Spirit must make clear to sinners the seriousness of sin. People must see that they have fallen short of the Divine standard, that God is so infinitely holy there is no such thing as a “good” sinner versus a “bad” sinner. But there is something more specific the Holy Spirit wants to convict the world of: the ultimate sin of rejecting the Savior. The issue on the table is what a person does with Christ.

Conviction of Righteousness (John 16:10)
The Holy Spirit convinces the world of a new standard of righteousness, which is Christ. The reason the Spirit must convict men is that Jesus Christ is no longer on earth to demonstrate His righteousness. Jesus is the only One who has beaten death and can lay claim to being the righteous standard of God.

Conviction of Judgment (John 16:11)
How do we know judgment is real? Because Satan, “the ruler of this world,” has been judged. If Satan did not get away with his sin, neither will any of his followers. If Satan did not get away with rebelling against the holy standard of God, then neither will any who adopt him as their father. To those who refuse to say to God, “Thy will be done,” He says in judgment, “Your will be done.”
Conviction of the Saints

Because He is the Holy Spirit, His job is to make us uncomfortable with our sin. You have a good reason to question your salvation if you never feel any guilt over sin. Your body is the Spirit’s temple, and when your temple starts going places it ought not go and doing things it ought not do, the Holy Spirit, like a metal detector in an airport, goes off when He detects something illegitimate.

The light of God’s revelation, His Word, sensitizes us to sin. That’s why the Holy Spirit wants to keep us in the Word.
SESSION
SEVEN
Experiencing the Spirit’s Power and Authority
Let me begin by making two statements. First, there is no victory in the Christian life apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, this means that any attempt to live the Christian life by any authority other than that which the Spirit supplies is doomed to end in abysmal failure.

I make these statements lest we forget—because we do tend to forget. Someone has said that the Christian life is not a matter of our ability, but of our availability. The ability is all from above, made real to us in our day-by-day lives by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

I want to show you how you can experience the Spirit’s authority.

Tony Evans

You’re aiming to…
Help group members discover and experience the Holy Spirit’s power and authority to live the Christian life.

You’ll study…
- Major themes from chapters 8 and 9 of the book The Promise

You’ll need…
- Bibles
- Copies of Resource 7A, “Just a Lad”
- Copies of Resource 7B, “Your New Problem”
- Pencils or pens
- Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
STEP 1

THE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY (10 MIN)

Finding Out Who We Are

In Session 2 we spent time on the believer’s position in Christ. In this session we are going to expand on this theme. Begin with this quote from Tony Evans in The Promise: “Successful Christian living is predicated on what you know about how you ought to live because God has revealed it to you. Therefore, if you don’t know what you need to know, you will be handicapped in living successfully. Why? Because it is the knowledge of our identity in Christ that allows us to interpret life from a divine frame of reference.”

Turn to Resource 7A, “Just a Lad,” on page 78.

Invite two or three volunteers to read the allegory aloud.

Divide into small groups to discuss these questions:

- **When Lad lived in the tiny house, what did he think was true of him?** (He was poor; he had no options; he was not loved and perhaps not even lovable.)

- **How did this affect his behavior?** (He feared his father and other people; he had little hope.)

- **How did his behavior change when he lived in the castle? Why?** (He began to act like a prince because he learned his true identity.)

- **How quickly did the change take place?** (It was a gradual process.)

- **Who do the story characters represent?** (Lad—the unbeliever; Father—the devil; the King—God the Father; Prince—the Christian)

- **In what ways are we like Lad?** (We are lost without Christ; we had a harsh, cruel father—the devil; we were more like slaves than children; we are often fearful.)

- **In what ways are we like the prince?** (When we are in Christ, we are children of the King; we do not change all we need to at once.)
This story illustrates the fact that we are God’s children and should act like it! We have been adopted by the most powerful being in the universe, who loves us and wants the best for us. And to help us, God has given us His Spirit to accomplish His purposes. If as Christians we have the Holy Spirit within us, why do we sometimes feel defeated? Overwhelmed? Ineffective? (We are not engaging or plugging into the power available; we are not obedient to Christ.)

If we want to experience the power of the Holy Spirit, what do we need to do? (Give ourselves and the control of our lives to the Holy Spirit.)

It has been said that we can give only as much of ourselves as we know to as much of God as we know. A key to knowing ourselves is to bring all things in our lives into the light of God’s Word. Why is this so important? (It is only in the light of God’s truth that all our sins are revealed. A good illustration to use is that of washing windows or a windshield on a cloudy day or in poor light. The window may look very clean until the sun comes out again.)


Write these four major points below about the Spirit’s power on the board. Then ask group members to select the verses from Acts that address each one. Use the following to generate discussion.

1. A Powerful Presence (Acts 1:4-5: Jesus told the disciples to wait for the gift God would send. Verse 5: He promised that the disciples would be baptized [immersed] with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings the believer into the presence of Christ.)

2. A Powerful Program (Acts 1:3, 6: The resurrected Christ spoke of the kingdom of God. Tony Evans writes: “The ultimate goal of the Spirit’s coming at Pentecost to indwell believers is building the kingdom of God.” He does this in the hearts of believers.)

3. A Powerful People (Acts 4:1-13: The disciples were transformed from fearful, weak individuals. Compare Peter in this passage with how he behaved in
Matthew 26:69-74. The only way to explain the difference is found in Acts 4:8. They were filled with the Spirit.

4. A Powerful Proclamation (Acts 1:8: Through the Holy Spirit believers have been given the power to be Christ’s witnesses at home and beyond.)

**STEP 3**

**OUR NEW IDENTITY** (10 MIN)

Knowing What We Need to Believe

**Have a volunteer read Romans 6:1-4, 11, 13.**

Write the following chart on the board.

| 1. Need to know | What is true of me in Christ | 6:1-4: (My old nature has been crucified, buried, and raised from the dead.) | (I am not the same person I was before I became a Christian.) |
| 2. Need to consider | Live as it is true | 6:11: (Therefore I am dead to sin and alive to God.) | (I have the freedom to do what is right.) |
| 3. Need to do | Take action on what is true | 6:13: (I need to stop giving myself to sin and start giving myself to God.) | (I need to continually yield control of my life to God.) |

Use this quote from The Promise to explain the difference of “knowing” and “considering” in Column 1: “To consider a biblical fact to be true is to begin the process of experiencing that truth in your life.”

To further explain this meaning use this illustration: You may know that exposure to poison ivy can cause a severe rash and itching. If you are allergic to poison ivy you will consider that fact every time you are in the woods or areas where it may be present. You may go so far as to wear long sleeves and pants even when it is warm outside because you do not want to experience discomfort because of the rash.

As a group fill in Column 4 based on the Scriptures listed. For Column 5 answer this question: What do each of these truths mean in a practical sense in our everyday living?
Say: “We have seen that God’s Spirit gives us power and authority. But lest we think we have these things on our own, we need to remember that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God to help us, not a reserve of power we can create and sustain within ourselves. And as we will now see, any attempt to walk in power and authority apart from God will fail.”

Read Romans 7:14-23. In what ways do you identify with Paul in these verses?

Invite volunteers to share any struggles they have with knowing what they should do, but not seeming to be able to follow through. The purpose of this discussion is to show the commonality of the flesh’s inability to produce anything worthwhile. It is not to air everyone’s dirty laundry.

Why do you think it is so difficult to do what we know is right?
Turn to Resource 7B, “Your New Problem,” on page 80. Have a volunteer read the section, “So What’s the Problem?”

Generate discussion with questions like:

- What new insights do you gain from these thoughts?
- What encouragement does this information give you?
- What actions will you take as a result of these truths?

Allow several minutes for group members to individually fill in the chart on Resource 7B.

With the whole group back together have volunteers share their ideas.

Are there any other common areas that should be added? Brainstorm ways to starve the flesh and feed the spirit for each addition. Encourage everyone to jot down new ideas as they are mentioned.

**STEP 5 A NEW LAW (10-15 MIN)**

Have a volunteer explain how to jump-start a car. Make sure these points are made: For the car with the dead battery to start, there needs to be a power transfer from the live battery. Even if the cables are attached, the car will not start until the ignition is turned on.

How is jump-starting a car like living the Christian life? (Our sin nature is like the old battery; the Holy Spirit is like the jumper cables; Christ is like the good battery; like the dead battery, we will not have power until we turn on the ignition; we can tap into the power and authority God offers by submitting to the authority of the Spirit.)

Invite someone to read Romans 8:1-4. Discuss the meaning of this passage by asking questions like:

- What law were we all born under? (The law of sin and death.)
• How has the power of this law been negated? (By the death and resurrection of Christ.)

• By whose authority? (The Holy Spirit.)

• Under what law do Christians live? (The law of the Spirit of life.)

• And what is the result? (We are no longer condemned.)

Ask: Is it your heart’s desire to walk in the Spirit and experience the reality of Philippians 4:13 which says, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”? Now answer these questions silently.

• Are you willing to go wherever God’s will takes you? Even before He shows you the specific destination?

• Do you acknowledge that you are totally dependent on the enabling of the Holy Spirit to get there?

• Do you yield to the Spirit’s authority?

• Will you continue to offer yourself as a sacrifice daily?

Close with this quote from The Promise: “When the combustion of the Holy Spirit is combined with the power of an obedient life, you transcend the gravitational pull of sin and soar in your spiritual life. That’s what God is after, but it only comes when you are walking in the Spirit as a habit of life, drawing on His power and authority.”

Close in prayer.
By Terri Hibbard

Long ago in a faraway land a young boy named Lad lived with his stern, elderly father. They lived far from any village in a tiny house that was against the rocks and hidden by dead trees and brush. Sometimes Father would leave for many days, telling Lad not to leave the tiny house. He warned that there were men who like to steal little boys.

Life was difficult for Lad. Each morning he awoke before daybreak, and day after day he did everything his father asked. But Lad was never able to please him. The harder he worked, the more Father demanded. Whenever Lad took the few sheep and goats over the hill, he would stop at the highest point and look in all directions. The land was harsh and little grew on it for miles around. Sometimes he thought he could just make out the silhouette of a grand castle on a very distant hill. Maybe someday I can find out if it’s real.

He often longed for a better life. Once he found a book with pictures of people dressed in fine clothes laughing and eating at a long table overflowing with food. He imagined it was inside the castle. When Father found Lad looking at the book, his eyes filled with rage, and Lad was very frightened. He closed the book very carefully and gave it to Father, who said nothing. Even so, Lad knew he must never look at it again. But he could dream about the people. Sometimes he pretended they were his family. Many times, as he grew older, he would see his own reflection in a puddle and think that he even looked like one of the men.

Although he felt no love for his father, Lad never considered leaving him for fear of what he might do. Where would I go? Who would care for me? One spring day Father left on one of his journeys and did not return as usual.

Certain he had been abandoned, Lad took his few belongings and some food and set off toward what he hoped was a real castle. After many days he began to see houses and barns, children and parents. The land was greener and the people were happy. As he passed, people looked at him and whispered to each other. Afraid to speak, he
just traveled on. Tired, with his meager provisions almost gone, he came over the top of a hill, and there stood a castle far grander than he ever imagined.

Soon a great number of horsemen encircled him saying, “Come with us.” Fearing for his life, Lad began to walk slowly.

A voice called out, “No. You must ride.” So Lad took the horse offered him and rode near the head of the procession into the castle courtyard. He heard murmurs: “He's coming!” and “Look at the man he has become.”

Then Lad heard a strong, loving voice above all the rest, “My son. You have been found. Welcome home.” As he looked into the eyes of the one who spoke, Lad saw the King and felt a gentleness he had never known. All fear vanished.

Soon Lad learned that the man he had called Father was the King’s former butcher who had run off with him when he was just a toddler. It took a long time to believe he was not Lad, but a Prince! It was strange to be treated kindly and to never feel hunger. He had so much to learn and it wasn't easy remembering all the kingdom rules. At times he even looked back at the hill where he once lived, thinking he should return. As weeks turned into months, and months into years, he began to think and act more and more like the Prince he was.
So what’s the problem?

The problem is, only the inner you was made brand-new in Christ. Your spirit was dead in sin, and now it is alive in Christ. But this new you is still living in the same old house at the same old address: the flesh. When Paul refers to the flesh, he’s talking about our bodies and appetites under the destructive control of our old nature inherited from Adam and thoroughly ruined by sin. Since the body is our vehicle to get around on the planet, it is through the body that we express the sins of our old or fleshly nature.

The flesh is totally diseased. It attracts sin like a magnet. Sin appeals to the flesh because sin pleases the flesh. The thing that makes the flesh so bad is that it seeks to serve and please self rather than serve and please God. But your new inner person seeks to please God.
You say, “Then why is my flesh so dominating?” Because it has been in control of you so long. That’s why the only way to overcome the flesh is by growing the new you, not trying to fix the old you.

How do you grow the new you while shutting down the old you? You do it by feeding your spirit while you starve your flesh—those old, corrupt impulses and desires and habits. You cannot feed the flesh, neglect the inner you, and expect to have victory over the flesh.

What old appetites or habits of the flesh still haunt you? Whether the ones listed below are among those you personally struggle with or not, fill in ways to combat them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Appetites</th>
<th>Starving the Flesh</th>
<th>Feeding the Spirit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gossip</td>
<td>Get off phone</td>
<td>Get on knees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greed</td>
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<td>Pornography</td>
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<td>Anger</td>
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<td>Depression</td>
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<td>Critical spirit</td>
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<td>Stubborn</td>
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<td>Pride</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lying</td>
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SESSION EIGHT

Experiencing the Spirit’s Freedom and Fellowship
One purpose of the Spirit’s ministry is to help us experience the freedom Jesus purchased for us. We need this even as believers, because many of us are trapped and held hostage by all manner of things.

Some of us are trapped in our past. Things that happened a long time ago still control how we function today. Maybe it was abuse by an insensitive parent or a mistake that we can’t seem to shake off. Others of us are bound by our fears and insecurities and worries. We spend so much time worrying about what might happen that we never get around to enjoying what is happening. It is a terrible thing to be free and not be able to enjoy it.

If you and I are powerless Christians, it is directly attributable to the lack of fellowship between us and the Holy Spirit. If you and I are anemic, if there is little joy and peace, if there is little of anything in our lives that seems to demonstrate the Spirit’s reality, it is because our fellowship with the Spirit is not as it ought to be.

I believe if we want to enjoy intimate fellowship with Him, we must be serious about carrying out His purposes for our lives.

If you want to enjoy the Spirit’s fellowship, you need to make His passion your priority. The Spirit’s passion is to glorify the Son.

Tony Evans

You’re aiming to...

Help group members gain and practice a biblical understanding of the Spirit’s freedom and fellowship.

You’ll study...

- Proverbs 23:7; John 8:36; 16:13-14; Romans 8:1-2, 5-7, 13; 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:3-6, 32; 5:21; Philippians 2:1-5; 4:6-7, 19; Colossians 3:23; 1 Timothy 6:6-10
- Major themes from chapters 10 and 11 of the book The Promise

You’ll need...

- Bibles
- Copies of Resource 8A, “Freedom Busters,” for each of the four characters
- Pencils or pens
- Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
- Blank index cards and envelopes, gift-wrapped box (top and bottom wrapped separately), and ribbon for use in Step 5
STEP 1

Let Freedom Reign (10 Min)

Defining True Freedom

It has been said there are two types of people: Those who enjoy the destination and those who enjoy the journey regardless of where they are going. Into which group would you place yourself?

Divide into two groups based on the answer to this question. Ask each group to come up with definitions for “freedom,” “license,” and “bondage.” Now write out the following questions on cards and read them aloud, alternating between the groups. Give the teams a few seconds to discuss whether each of the following situations are examples of freedom, license, or bondage. Ask for reasons for their answers.

- **Legalized marijuana** (Bondage to drugs.)
- **Children in fenced play yard** (Freedom to be safe.)
- **Speeding on unpatrolled country roads** (License to do whatever you please.)
- **Married couple being faithful to each other** (Freedom to enjoy sex as God intended it.)
- **Taking supplies home from an unlocked cabinet at work** (License to do whatever you want.)
- **Released convict on parole** (Freedom to reenter society.)
- **Being a bondservant of Christ** (Freedom to become what God intends.)

**Sum up with** this quote from *The Promise*: “Freedom never means you are free to do whatever you want. That’s license. Freedom means that God has liberated us to fulfill the purposes for which He saved us. He has freed us up to become what He redeemed us to become.

“Freedom does not mean there are no rules. Without sidelines and foul lines, a football game or tennis match or baseball game would be nothing but chaos. The only thing that makes the game work is that there are restrictions.”
STEP 2

FREEDOM FOR ALL (15 MIN)

Looking at Four Specific Freedoms

Turn to Resource 8A, “Freedom Busters,” on page 90 to four volunteers who will introduce themselves with a dramatic flair.

As each one finishes, give a round of applause and have the group answer these questions: 1) What word or two would describe this person’s freedom buster? 2) What action does this person need to experience freedom?

- **Eddie Eager:** (Pleasing people; get focus back on God’s expectations.)

- **Polly Pastel:** (Past hurts; let go of past by forgiving her ex-husband. She may need to get some counseling help in order to get past this.)

- **Warren Waffle:** (Worry; allow Holy Spirit to calm him and trust God for future.)

- **Maria Hunter:** (Materialism; practice contentment in God’s provision.)

List the following references on the board. Have volunteers look them up, summarize the truth, and apply them to one of your “guests.”

- **Ephesians 4:32** (Forgive others as you’ve been forgiven—Polly.)

- **Philippians 4:6-7, 19** (In all things tell God your need without anxiety, with thanksgiving; receive his peace; believe that God will give you all you need according to His promise—Warren.)

- **Colossians 3:23** (Do all you do for the Lord, not for people’s approval—Eddie.)

- **1 Timothy 6:6-10** (Contentment with godliness is great gain; avoid the love of money—Maria Hunter.)

Mention that these are just four examples of many from which the Spirit has set us free, or wants to set us free. If time allows, have the group brainstorm other common ones. The list might include: the flesh, disappointment, lack of knowledge, addictions. 
STEP 3  STEPS TO FREEDOM (10-15 MIN)  

Walking the Talk

Write these three steps to the Spirit’s Freedom on the board and discuss as suggested.

1. **Believe God’s promise of freedom.**

   *Have volunteers read John 8:36, Romans 8:1-2, and Romans 12:2.*
   Who has set us free? (Christ.)
   From what are we freed? (Condemnation and the law of sin and death.)

2. **Commit yourself to lifelong discipleship.**

   *Have a volunteer read Romans 12:1.*
   Imagine placing a living sacrifice on an altar. What problem might you have? (It can climb off.)
   Obviously we need to make sure we go on presenting ourselves to God.

3. **Forgive anyone you may need to forgive so God can set you free.**

   Be sensitive to the fact that this may be the hardest step for some people, and may not be able to be taken in a group setting. Use this opportunity to discuss why it is important to forgive others even if they do not seek forgiveness.

   - **It is God’s will.**
   - **If we don’t forgive, we will suffer emotionally and spiritually.**
   - **We cannot experience true freedom if we are harboring bitterness or resentment.**
STEP 4

According to Tony Evans, once we experience the Spirit’s freedom we need to continue in His fellowship. We can do this by carrying out His purposes in our lives. Let’s look briefly at three of them.

First is the Spirit’s passion. What do you think the Spirit’s passion or primary purpose is? Have several volunteers offer their opinions.

**Turn to Resource 8B, “What Would the Spirit Do?” on page 92.**

**Have a volunteer read** John 16:13-14 and another volunteer read through the “Prioritize the Spirit’s Passion” section. Point out that the Spirit’s number one priority is to glorify the Son.

As we found out in Step 1, some people focus on the journey while others focus on the destination. Another way of putting this is that some are process-oriented (journey) and others are product-oriented (destination). Point out that in the Christian life we need to focus on the destination—maturity in Christ—and to do all we can to enjoy the journey—walking in the Spirit.

**Invite a volunteer to read** “Preserve the Spirit’s Unity” on Resource 8B.

What are some things that disrupt unity in the body of Christ? (Disagreement over doctrinal issues such as modes of baptism, the role of women in the church, the definition of the gift of tongues, and others; disagreement over preferences such as worship style, dress, color of carpet, etc.; personality differences; personal and corporate sin; critical spirit. The list could go on and on.)

**Ask a volunteer to read** Philippians 2:1-5. What is the key to preserving the unity God has already given us? (Humility that is demonstrated by thinking of others before thinking of ourselves.)

Another way of putting this is expressed by Paul in Ephesians 5:21: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”
Are there any personal preferences or interests you need to put aside to preserve unity in the church? At home? (This is really a rhetorical question, but if someone is compelled to answer, that is fine.)

Transition to the final path to full fellowship with the Spirit: To experience the Spirit’s fellowship we must also practice the Holy Spirit’s disciplines or training.

**Have a volunteer read** the final section of Resource B. Ask someone else to read Romans 8:5-7.

Where does spiritual discipline begin? (By setting our thoughts on the things of God.) What are three ways of doing this? (Prayer, Bible study and reading, and trials.)

**STEP 5 REQUESTS FOR FREEDOM AND FELLOWSHIP**

(10-15 MIN)

Evaluating Personal Habits

**Ask a volunteer to read** Philippians 4:6-7. Explain that you are going to give an opportunity for everyone to give God their requests regarding the Spirit’s freedom. Make sure they know that this is a personal, confidential gift exchange between them and God.

Give a blank index card and envelope to each person. Ask group members to write down any “Freedom Busters” they may deal with. It may be the name of a person they need to forgive, a recurring temptation or foothold of Satan, or something no one else knows about.

Since no one else will see the cards, they can be totally honest. Have them place the card in an envelope and seal it. Then lead in a time of prayer, allowing anyone to pray aloud who wants to. Remember to thank God for His answers and freedom from these things by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ask group members to place their sealed envelopes in a gift-wrapped box you have prepared by wrapping the top and bottom separately. Place the top on the box and tie a ribbon around it.
Sum up with this: Since we are giving these prayers as a gift of thanksgiving to God, they are no longer ours. Whenever the temptation to reclaim them taps you on the shoulder, picture this box and thank God for His freedom knowing that moving past it will lead to increased fellowship with God and His Spirit.

Close with this quote from The Promise: In the NASB, "Romans 8:13 says, 'If you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.' There it is, the secret to a life of intimate fellowship with the Holy Spirit. It’s you doing it, but not by your own power. You do it by the Spirit’s power. So whatever you need to do on the positive side or to put away on the negative side, you can do it because your human spirit is harnessed to the Holy Spirit."
Case Study 1

Hi, I'm Eddie Eager. You know I just love people. In our Bible study I think it's great how we all get along. Sometimes someone will say something that just doesn't sound like it comes from God's Word, but I don't say anything. Take my friend Tom. He's been talking about going on vacation with his girlfriend. I figure they're old enough to know what they're doing. Besides, we've been friends for so long, I'd never forgive myself if I did anything to mess that up.

Case Study 2

Polly Pastel is my name. I became a Christian about three years ago through my best friend. I had seen the changes in Tricia's life and wanted the same thing in mine. It took a long time for me to believe that God really loves me when my own husband didn't. Geoff left me with two little ones and a stack of bills—just like Dad left Mom when I was ten. Right after I became a Christian everything seemed really good. But lately I just don't know. Tricia keeps telling me that God is there and He really does love me. That's easy for her to feel—her husband is so devoted to her. I just know I hurt so much. It's just not fair that Geoff could walk away seemingly without a care.

Case Study 3

Warren Waffle here. Shh, come here. I don't want my wife to hear me. We just moved across the country for this incredible new job of mine. The company paid for all our moving expenses and even took over the sale of our home back east. I don't know. It all seems too good to be true. I keep thinking. What if the company downsizes—where will we be then? And last night Sylvia mentioned she misses her friends. What if she gets so depressed that we'll have to move back home? There is so much that might go wrong.
Case Study 4

Oh, hi! My name is Maria Hunter. Did I ever find a great deal today at Homemaker’s Heaven. It’s even better than last week’s deal. Buy any two items at full price of $100 or more and you get the third item free! Wow, did I have a good time. Let me show you all my goodies. I bought Bedclothes-in-a-Bag for Joey’s room. He was tired of the comforter I bought last fall. And Kelly is just going to love the closet organizer I got her. She needs someplace to put the fourteen sweaters I bought her. I’ve saved the best for last. Look at this incredible little table. Isn’t it darling? Where am I going to put it? Who knows, but I just couldn’t pass it up.
If we want to enjoy intimate fellowship with Him [the Holy Spirit], we must be serious about carrying out His purposes for our lives.

**Prioritize the Spirit’s Passion (John 16:13-14)**

If you want to enjoy the Spirit’s fellowship, you need to make His passion your priority. What is the Spirit’s passion? [It] is to glorify [God’s] Son. If you want to hang out with Him, He is going to take all your energy and all your aspirations and focus them on magnifying Christ.

When you start making your decisions and your choices based on whether they bring Christ glory, you will automatically see the Spirit changing you. Automatic does not mean magic. We’re talking about a process.
Preserve the Spirit’s Unity (Ephesians 4:3-6)

Note that we only “preserve” the Spirit’s unity; we do not create it. This is because unity was already created for us when we were baptized by the Spirit into one body. Our job then is not to allow anything or anyone to divide the new family into which we have been placed.

In the Bible, unity does not mean uniformity. It does mean commonality of purpose, everybody going in the same direction.

Practice the Spirit’s Disciplines (Romans 8:5-7)

Here is the key to the successful practice of spiritual disciplines: Discipline your mind to focus on the realm of the Spirit. Discipline is a matter of setting your mind on “the things of the Spirit.” The writer of Proverbs put it this way: “As [a person] thinks within himself, so he is” (23:7 NASB).

If you are walking wrong, it is because you are thinking wrong. If you are talking wrong, it is because you are thinking wrong. To the extent that the Spirit of God controls your mind, He is able to lead you in new spiritual directions.

The most crucial disciplines:

1. **Prayer:** Prayer takes you out of your realm, the realm of the flesh, and transports you into another realm, that of the Spirit. Prayer is not an end in itself. It is our invitation to fellowship with the Holy Spirit, to seek His mind on the things we face. Communication and communion with God are the goals of prayer.

2. **Reading and studying the Bible:** [The Bible] is a love letter from the Holy Spirit. If you want to cultivate a mindset on the things of God, you need to get in the Spirit-inspired Word.

3. **Trials:** Trials are what happens when God removes the “training wheels” from our spiritual life. Unless [He does], we will never learn how to get our balance. We will never learn to pedal for the glory of God.
SESSION NINE

Experiencing the Spirit’s Restraint
One reason we do not get everything we deserve is the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s ministry of restraint is not as well known and appreciated as the other aspects of His work. It’s something we tend to take for granted, like the air we breathe.

I use that analogy because the Holy Spirit’s restraint of sin is like the atmosphere around us. It’s helping to sustain this world as we know and experience it. The only reason worldwide sin isn’t as bad as it could be is because of the Spirit’s restraint. So we need to understand and appreciate what the Holy Spirit is doing to hold back sin in this age so we can cooperate with rather than resist His work.

You’re aiming to…

Help group members gain an understanding and appreciation for the Spirit’s restraint of the full effect of sin.

You’ll study…

- Major themes from chapter 12 of the book The Promise

You’ll need…

- Bibles
- Pencils or pens
- Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
STEP 1  

**WITHOUT RESTRAINT** (10-15 MIN)

Realizing the Value of the Spirit’s Restraining Ministry

**Turn to Resource 9A, “The Day Without Rules and Laws,” on page 100 and ask**
group members to form groups of two or three.

Invite each group to imagine for a few minutes what life would be like if all governmental policies and laws were revoked. Have them complete as many of the sentences as they can in a few minutes.

Have each group share two or three completed sentences until at least one response has been shared for each sentence.

What word or phrase would you use to describe a day like this one? (Responses may include disorder, chaos, anarchy, out of control, destruction, confusion.)

We have described what would happen if human-made controls were revoked. Let’s take it a step further and describe life if all moral and ethical influence of the Holy Spirit were removed. (Rampant sin of all kinds—robbery, murder, sexual indulgence, greed, licentiousness, violence, and on and on.)

All of this would result in the end of civilization as we know it. The fact that there is any law and order in society is due to the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit.

**Invite a volunteer to read** 2 Thessalonians 2:1-7.

What is Paul describing in these verses? (The coming of the Antichrist.)

Point out that the presence of the Holy Spirit is multiplied by His presence in each believer. Dr. Evans’s view is that at some point His presence will be removed when the church is raptured or taken up to be with Christ. Until that happens, believers and nonbelievers alike will not experience the full impact of sin because He restraints it.
STEP 2 WELCOMING RESTRAINT (10 MIN)

Exploring Seven Methods of Restraining Evil

Turn to Resource 9B, “The Spirit’s Restraint,” on page 101. Ask a volunteer to read the verses from 2 Thessalonians and the paragraph which follows. Comment that though we probably take this ministry of the Spirit for granted, if it were gone, we would miss it immediately in more ways than we have imagined.

Assign each of the “Seven Means of Restraint” to an individual, pair, or triad (depending on the size of your group). Have them look up the Scripture listed for an example of the Spirit using the assigned method to restrain evil during Bible times.

After several minutes reconvene the entire group and ask them to share their findings for their discoveries. (Have the group members keep this Resource handy as you will be adding to it in Step 4.)

Sum up with this quote from The Promise: “When people, whether leaders of family or government or even the church, refuse to allow the Holy Spirit to carry out His ministry of restraint through them, the repercussions are staggering because they are removing the only true source of restraint.

“So we need to make sure we are not hindering, or quenching, the restraining work of the Spirit. It’s as much a part of His ministry as salvation or sanctification or any other work He is carrying out today.”

STEP 3 THE DANGER OF RESISTANCE (10-15 MIN)

Avoiding the Results of Resistance

Direct attention to the second section of Resource 9B and have someone read “Resisting the Spirit’s Restraint.” Point out that the italicized portions of the verses from Romans 1 show the three ways God gives people over to sin. The cost of resistance is very high.

In what ways do you see evidence in our society today of God giving people over to sin in each of these ways? (Desires of their hearts—people in bondage to everything
from drugs to debt and power to sexual immorality; Shameful lusts—homosexuality, promiscuous sexual behavior by people of all ages; Depraved mind—doing all manner of things that should not be done and approving it and those who do likewise.)

Point out that God’s judgment for lack of restraint is seen in the Bible. Divide into three groups and assign each group one of the passages below. In each case identify:

- **Who was judged;**
- **What the manner of judgment was; and**
- **Due to what sinful behavior.**

Genesis 6:1-13; Matthew 24:36-39—(The entire world except for Noah and his family was judged; because of its evil, violence, and total disregard of God and His ways; they were drowned.)

Exodus 14:1-31—(Pharaoh and his army were judged; because of their hardness of heart even in the face of miracle after miracle; they became confused, their chariots came apart, and they drowned in the Red Sea.)

Acts 5:1-11—(Ananias and Sapphira were judged; they lied about giving all the money they received from selling some property; they both died instantaneously.)

**STEP 4**

**AFFIRM RESTRAINT (10-15 MIN)**

Cooperating with the Spirit’s Restraint

As a group, brainstorm personal ways to enhance or advance each means of restraint discussed in Step 2. Encourage group members to jot these down on Resource 9B. Remember, the goal is to get your group members to think of specific ways they can cooperate with the Spirit’s restraint.

Ideas will vary and may include things like:

1. **Direct intervention:** Pray that your loved ones, friends, and fellow Christians will recognize the Spirit’s intervention and respond positively; pray that those who do not know Christ will have a wake-up call.
2. **Godly leaders:** Pray for the Spirit’s intervention in the lives of your spiritual leaders; write them notes of encouragement; pray for wisdom for them.

3. **Family:** Pray for each family member daily and specifically; family devotions and prayer time; be a model of godliness; set guidelines so your children are free to become what God has planned.

4. **Conscience:** Keep in the Word so the Spirit has something to work with; fellowship with other Christians; avoid influences that will water down your conscience.

5. **Church:** Active participation; acting as salt and light to the world; living in a way that directs people to the Person of Christ.

6. **Bible:** Live out its commands on a daily, decision-by-decision basis; support all policies and laws that follow biblical principles; speak against those that don’t agree with Scripture.

7. **Government:** Be informed of issues and candidates; pray for God to raise men and women who will follow Him and not compromise to stay in office; call and write local, state, and federal officials to express your biblically informed opinion on issues and specific legislation.)

Have everyone select at least one specific action they will take to cooperate more fully with the Spirit’s restraining ministry.

**Close with** comments like these: The ministry of the Spirit’s restraint is a demonstration of God’s grace. If humankind were to receive what we deserved, we would tremble in fear as the early church did. God’s judgment cannot be taken too seriously.

Close in prayer, thanking God for His restraining ministry.
1. This morning I woke to the sound of…

2. As I turn on the shower, I…

3. Looking out my window at the highway, I see…

4. Turning on the television, I hear reports of…

5. When I hear a knock at the door, I open it and see…

6. When I go out to my garage, I discover…

7. When I arrive at the store to buy new locks, I find…

8. As I approach the drive-up window at the bank, a man…

9. Returning home, I notice…

10. I decide to call my brother in California and…
THE SPIRIT’S RESTRAINT,
RESOURCE 9B

By Tony Evans

“And now you know what [the principle of restraint] is holding him [the Antichrist] back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one [Holy Spirit] who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7).

We need to understand and appreciate what the Holy Spirit is doing to hold back sin in this age so we can cooperate with rather than resist His work. His restraint keeps sin from overflowing its banks and flooding the world.

**Resisting the Spirit’s Restraint**

People can resist the Holy Spirit’s attempts to restrain their sin. This leads to the Spirit making a momentous decision. When sinful people resist Him to the point of no return, the Holy Spirit gives them over to practice their sin and suffer the awful consequences of their resistance.

“Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another… God gave them over to shameful lusts. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done” (Romans 1:24, 26, 28; emphasis added).

**Seven Means of Restraint**

1. Direct intervention to limit what Satan can do (Job 1:12).
2. Godly leaders, appointed by God, are used by the Spirit (Exodus 32:11-35).
3. The family is taught by the Spirit through the parents (Deuteronomy 11:19).
4. The conscience is sensitized by the Spirit (Romans 2:14-15).
5. The church means the multiplied presence of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).
6. As the Bible is allowed to infiltrate society, its restraining influence is felt as an expression of God’s grace to all (Proverbs 14:34).
7. Government is used of the Spirit to punish evil (Romans 13:1-7).
SESSION TEN

Experiencing the Spirit’s Fruit
I want to walk you through the Spirit’s “orchard” of ripe fruit, those qualities of the spiritual life that the Holy Spirit will produce in us if we submit to His filling and control.

Paul delineates the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, two tightly packed verses that are worthy of extended study. It would be great just to turn there and let the sweet juice of the Spirit’s fruit run down our arm, so to speak, as we dig in and enjoy the good things He has for us.

But to do that, we would have to climb over the verses that precede verses 22-23, which means ignoring the context in which Paul’s discussion of spiritual fruit occurs. But more important, if we skip over verses 16-21 of Galatians 5, we will miss a truth about the Christian life that is critically important to understanding and experiencing the Holy Spirit’s fruit.

You’re aiming to…
Help group members gain a practical understanding of the fruit of the Spirit and walking in the Spirit.

You’ll study…
- Psalm 16:11; Ecclesiastes 7:8; Romans 12:17-19; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Galatians 3:1-3; 5:16-25; 6:7-10; Ephesians 4:32; 5:18; 1 Peter 5:5-6; Titus 2:11-12; 3 John 3
- Major themes from chapter 13 of the book The Promise

You’ll need…
- Bibles
- Copies of Resource 10B, “The Fruit of the Spirit”
- Pencils or pens
- Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
STEP 1  

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW? (5 MIN)

Taking a Brief Look at Gardening Principles

If you have a “resident expert gardener” in your group, have this person sit in front of the class and answer these questions. If no one considers himself or herself an expert gardener, ask a volunteer who dabbles in gardening to fill in.

What naturally grows in a garden? (Weeds.)

How does one eliminate weeds? (Pull them out by the roots; use weed killer; choke them out with plants you want.)

How does one get the flowers, fruits, and vegetables to grow that one wants? (Prepare the soil; plant the seeds; feed the new shoots; treat for unwanted pests; make sure they get enough sun and water.)

Is your greatest challenge to get the things you want to grow to grow, or to get the things you don’t want to grow not to grow?

Give the expert a hand and transition with this: As Christians, it is natural to have the fruit of the Spirit grow in our lives if we are walking in the Spirit. If not, our lives are like any other garden that naturally grows all varieties of weeds.

STEP 2

UNWELCOME WEEDS (10-15 MIN)

Exploring What Grows Naturally

As background for a visit to the Spirit’s orchard, have a volunteer read Galatians 3-1-3.

Why did Paul refer to the Galatians as foolish? (They were trying to live the Christian life in their own strength; they failed to realize that just as they could not be saved by their own efforts, they could not live the Christian life by the flesh. As Tony Evans puts it, “the Galatians were being tempted to substitute rules for a dynamic relationship with the Holy Spirit.”)
Have everyone turn to Galatians 5:16-21 and ask a volunteer to read these verses.

Turn to Resource 10A, “The Works of the Flesh,” on page 112 and invite a volunteer to read the top portion.

What makes sin so attractive? (It satisfies the flesh; for a time it feels good, looks good, smells good.)

Using the three headings listed on Resource 10A, ask the group to categorize the deeds of the flesh named in verses 19-21. The finished chart will look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral Sins</th>
<th>Religious Sins</th>
<th>Social Sins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual immorality</td>
<td>Idolatry</td>
<td>Hatred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impurity</td>
<td>Witchcraft</td>
<td>Discord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debauchery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jealousy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orgies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fits of rage</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Selfish ambition</td>
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<td>Dissension</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Factions</td>
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<td>Envy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drunkenness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discuss and define each fleshly deed. Also point out that this is not a comprehensive list. Mention these facts adapted from The Promise:

**Moral Sins**

*Immorality:* Can be private, hidden sin. While others will not know about the sin, they will suffer the effects of it. The Greek word for immorality is *porneia*, which is the root of the English word “pornography.” Read this quote from The Promise: “You are definitely living in the flesh if you are seeking to satisfy your sexual desires either by direct, illegitimate sexual contact with another person outside the boundary of heterosexual marriage or by feeding yourself with illegitimate sexual material.”

*Impurity:* Has to do with the mind that is controlled by nasty thoughts. Lust fits here.

*Debauchery (or sensuality):* Is defined as “extreme sexual indulgence.” This is publicly known sin because there is no attempt to cover it.
Orgies: Sexual indulgence and drunken revelry often in a party scene.

Religious Sins

Idolatry: The act of worshipping other gods. It can be anything from cars and sports to a person and the latest high tech toy.

Witchcraft: Comes from the Greek word *pharmakeia*, which is the root of the English word “pharmacy.” It has to do with the use of drugs in religious ritual.

Social (Or Relational) Sins

Hatred (or enmity): Comes from the same root word as enemy. The result of hatred is being at odds or an enemy of the one you hate.

Discord (or strife): Dissension and factions are similar to this word. All carry the connotation of division rather than unity.

Jealousy: Suggests hostility or suspicion of unfaithfulness.

Fits of rage: Explosions of uncontrolled anger.

Selfish ambition (or disputes): When two people are constantly fussing and arguing, it means one or both of them are walking in the flesh rather than the Spirit.

Envy: Wanting what others have even if it means they have to do without.

Drunkenness: Yielding control to alcohol; in direct opposition to Spirit-control (Ephesians 5:18).

Have group members keep this chart available for use in Step 4.

*Sum up with a comment like this:* These are just some of the weeds that God warns us can spring up in our lives.
STEP 3
THE SPIRIT’S ORCHARD (10-15 MIN)

Exploring What Is Available Through the Spirit

**Turn to Resource 10B, “The Fruit of the Spirit,” on page 113.**

**Have a volunteer read** Galatians 5:22-23 while everyone jots down the name of each fruit on “The Spirit’s Tree.”

What is the major difference between the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit? (All deeds of the flesh are selfish and self-gratifying while the products of the Spirit are God-centered and other-directed.)

What is the significance of the fact that there is only one tree but many kinds of fruit? (All of the attributes of God come from the same source. We do not have to come to the Holy Spirit for love and go somewhere else for joy.)

Discuss each fruit answering these questions:

1. What is the biblical definition? Give Scripture references as known.
2. What is the benefit to others?
3. When this fruit is not present, what deeds of the flesh might be present?

Use the following to supplement the comments of the group:

**Love**

1. The ability to seek the highest good for another regardless of the return on investment. First Corinthians 13:4-8 is an excellent definition of love.
2. They will feel appreciated, cared for, and secure.
3. All deeds of the flesh.

**Joy**

1. The overflow of the life of God within you; inner stability regardless of the circumstances. Psalm 16:11 says we are filled with joy when in God’s presence.
2. They will be uplifted and drawn to God.

3. Idolatry; witchcraft; selfish ambition.

Peace

1. Harmony where there was conflict or potential conflict; returning good for evil. Romans 12:17-19 speaks of being at peace by not repaying evil for evil.

2. Others experience reconciliation.

3. Discord; jealousy; fits of rage; dissension; factions; envy.

Patience

1. Extending grace rather than vengeance.

2. They will not fear your response or withdraw into themselves. In Ecclesiastes 7:8, Solomon says that patience pays in the end.

3. Fits of rage; discord; selfish ambition.

Kindness

1. Thinking of ways to help others; treating others with compassion. This is a command by the Holy Spirit through Paul in Ephesians 4:32.

2. Others will be motivated to act in kind.

3. Jealousy; envy; selfish ambition.

Goodness

1. Deeds that benefit and build up others. In Galatians 6:10, Paul encourages believers to do good to all people, and especially to fellow believers.

2. They are encouraged and blessed.

3. All moral sins; any of the social sins.
Faithfulness

1. The ability to be consistent and dependable. It is as we walk in the truth that we are faithful to God and others (3 John 3).

2. They will have their emotional and relational needs met; they will learn how to trust; they will feel secure.

3. Any of them, since faithfulness affects us morally, spiritually, and relationally.

Gentleness

1. The ability to submit to God and thereby to others. Peter tells us it is those who submit to God who are lifted up by Him (1 Peter 5:5b-6).

2. They can see what biblical submission looks like; they will be more open to Christ.

3. All or any of them.

Self-Control

1. The ability to say no to wrong and yes to right. Paul wrote to Titus that God’s grace teaches us how to stand against ungodliness (Titus 2:11-12).

2. They will not have to taste bitter fruit; they can see a life of victory is possible.

3. Any of them.

**Sum up with a comment like:** Now that we have compared and contrasted the bad fruit of the flesh and the good fruit of the Spirit, we need to ask ourselves what those around us find in our “orchard.”
Direct attention to Resource 10B again and ask a volunteer to read each section.

Point out that these three facts are actually good criteria for testing the fruit in our own lives. Ask volunteers to turn each one into a question of evaluation and write them on the board. The questions should be similar to these:

- **Can others see evidence of the Spirit in my actions and attitudes?**
- **Does my life reflect the character and mind of Christ?**
- **Are others better off for having “tasted” the fruit of my life?**

**Have a volunteer read** Galatians 6:7-10.

Direct these two questions to the expert gardener: Do you ever reap crops that you do not sow? (No, although weeds do spring up unless one is diligent to eliminate them.) If you want apples, what do you do? (Plant an apple tree. If you don’t plant an apple tree, you can’t get apples.)

Ask group members to look again at the chart they completed on Resource 10A and at “The Fruit of the Spirit” on Resource 10B. Have them prayerfully consider these questions:

- **Which list best represents my life?**
- **Which deeds of the flesh are evident in my life?**
- **What others do I need to deal with?**
- **Which fruit of the Spirit needs to be developed more in my life?**

Allow a few minutes for the group to process these questions in prayer. Then ask: Besides acknowledging our need for forgiveness and our need for more Spirit fruit to be evident, how do we make sure this will happen?
Read Galatians 5:24-25 for the answer. (As believers we have been crucified with Christ. So we must now walk in the Spirit.)

Read this quote from The Promise: “What you sow is what you reap. So if your life is marked by a conspicuous absence of spiritual fruit, it’s because there has been an absence of sowing to the Spirit. But when you sow the right seed, you get the right result.

In fact, the beautiful thing about sowing to the Spirit is that you always get back more than you put in. You may have some bad things in the ground even now, but the Holy Spirit knows how to plow that field and turn over the soil so you can sow new seeds in the same soil.”

Close with a brief time of individual prayer so group members can reflect on the desires of their hearts to cultivate the Spirit’s fruit.
[These verses] whet our appetite for the juicy, sweet, and satisfying fruit of the Spirit by giving us a taste of the dry, rotten, and unsatisfying deeds of the flesh. Sometimes you don’t develop a real hunger for the good stuff until you’ve gotten your fill of the bad stuff. If you’ve ever tried to live the Christian life in the energy of the flesh, you know what I’m talking about.

We are engaged in a battle between the flesh and the Spirit. The flesh, meaning our unredeemed humanity, is unfixable. It will never change. It cannot be reformed. Our flesh is like a magnet for sin. It attracts sin because it was training to do that in its unredeemed state.

The flesh will desire to sin until it is laid in the grave. But the Holy Spirit gives you the ability not to give in to the cravings, appetites, and demands of the flesh. That’s why we are told to walk by the Spirit.
THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, RESOURCE 10B

By Tony Evans

Spiritual Fruit (Galatians 5:22-23)

**Fruit Is Visible**

The first thing you need to know about fruit is that fruit is always visible. When fruit is ripe and luxurious, you know it. So don’t tell me that you are walking in the Spirit in your heart, or that you are full of the Spirit in your heart, if nothing is evident in your life but the works of the flesh. If you are walking in the Spirit, others will know it.

**Fruit Is Recognizable**

The second thing you need to know about fruit is that fruit always reflects the character of the tree or vine that is bearing it. The fruit that comes from a life controlled by the Holy Spirit will reflect the character of Jesus Christ.

**Fruit Is for Others**

A third fact about fruit is that fruit is always borne for the benefit of others. The seed in a fruit is designed for reproduction. So as you bear the fruit of the Spirit, others not only enjoy the “taste” of your life, but also the seeds of spiritual growth are planted in their lives.
SESSION ELEVEN

Experiencing the Spirit’s Intercession
When it comes to functioning in the spiritual realm, we need someone who has been living there for a while. Somebody who understands the terrain and who can speak the language. Somebody who can point us in the direction we need to go and help us find the things we need. Somebody who can intercede, who can approach another person and make an appeal on our behalf. We need an intercessor.

We need that kind of spiritual help because as believers in Jesus Christ we are living in a world that is utterly foreign to our human nature. It’s a world unlike anything the natural mind can see or understand. It’s foreign terrain, and we need a guide. Paul calls this realm “the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6).

You’re aiming to…

Help group members understand and know how they can experience the Spirit’s intercessory ministry.

You’ll study…

- Psalm 100; Isaiah 29:13; Romans 8:22-28; James 5:16; 1 John 5:14-15
- Major themes from chapter 14 of the book The Promise

You’ll need…

- Bibles
- Copies of Resource 11B, “Four People, Four Prayers”
- Pencils or pens
- Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
If we are really honest with ourselves and each other, none of us have the perfect prayer life.

Write the following names of games on the board. Then read through the list one at a time including the comments in parentheses. Ask how many people feel this could be a description of their prayer life. Make sure the leader answers too! Mention that it is okay to vote more than once.

- *Let’s Make a Deal (I keep hoping God is willing to negotiate.)*
- *Clue (I’m looking for one.)*
- *Outburst (I tell God exactly what I think and what I want.)*
- *Scattergories (I hop around from one thing to another.)*
- *Truth or Consequences (I tell the truth to avoid the consequences.)*
- *What’s My Line? (I often don’t know what to say or how to say it.)*
- *Trivial Pursuit (I stay with the little stuff because I don’t want to bother Him with anything big.)*
- *Wheel of Fortune (I’m amazed by all God does as a result of prayer.)*

Ask if anyone wants to add anything to the list.

Thankfully, God understands that all of us need help in this area.
Have you ever traveled in a non-English-speaking country?

To those who respond yes, ask: How many of you went on a guided tour? Why did you choose to do so? (Responses will vary and should include that they needed someone who knew how to get where they wanted to go and who knew the language.)

God knows that we need a guide and an interpreter as we enter the heavenly realm so He sent the Holy Spirit. This session deals with His ministry of intercession.

Ask a volunteer to read Romans 8:26. Turn to Resource 11A, “The Master Prayer Warrior,” on page 121 and invite a volunteer to read the “Our Need for the Spirit’s Intercession” section.

Ask group members if they have ever had any of the following thoughts about prayer:

- I don’t know exactly what to pray.
- I don’t know exactly how to pray.
- I feel like my prayers get only as far as the ceiling.
- Why should I pray if God knows everything already?

Each individual positive response to these questions underscores why the Holy Spirit is needed as an intercessor.

What is the role of an intercessor? (To mediate or intervene between two parties or people and reconcile differences; to approach someone and make an appeal on behalf of someone else.)

What are the two conditions of the Spirit’s intercession? (That we are “saints” or Christians and that we pray—even if it is a weak attempt.)
In what ways does the Spirit help us in our prayers? (He knows our hearts and the heart of God so He can bring the two together; He knows how to express the things we are unable to put into words.)

**Ask a group member to read Romans 8:22-27. Have another person read “The Nature of the Spirit’s Intercession” section of Resource 11A.**

What is the key ingredient of the Spirit’s prayers on our behalf? (He intercedes in accordance with God’s will.)

What is the comparison of our groaning in prayer and the groaning of a woman in childbirth? (Both situations include pain and anticipation or hope of better things to come.)

How does God respond to our deepest yearnings? (He understands them and does not discount or ignore them; he feels our pain.)

**Invite a volunteer to read Romans 8:28.**

How is this verse often misquoted? (“God works all things together for good.”) Point out that this stops short of the whole truth as this verse applies to believers, not the world.

**Have someone read “The Results of the Spirit’s Intercession” from Resource 11A.**

What new thoughts does this section include?

How do they change your perception of prayer?

What happens when God’s people pray? (God is compelled by His very nature to grant the request or conform the ones praying; in the process He also conforms those who are praying to the nature of Christ.)
**STEP 3**

**PRAYER CHECKPOINT (15-20 MIN)**

**Exploring Four Examples of Prayer**

**Turn to Resource 11B, “Four People, Four Prayers,” on page 122.**

Ask group members to get into four small groups (with anyone other than their spouses, if married.)

*Read Isaiah 29:13: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”*

Based on this verse, what do we need to guard against when we pray? (Insincere prayers that come from our heads, not our hearts; lip service rather than heartfelt communication.)

Assign each small group one of the prayer scenarios from the resource sheet. Have each group discuss the question at the bottom of the resource as it relates to the assigned prayer.

After several minutes reconvene the whole group and have a person from each group share their findings. After each report, ask if anyone else has additional insights they want to share.

Point out that even when we don’t have all the information we need—like Stephen—or we don’t understand everything about a situation—like Shauna—we can still pray effectively because of the Holy Spirit’s intercession for us.

**STEP 4**

**DIVINE PRAYER (5 MIN)**

**Praying in God’s Will**

What things keep us from prayer? (Lack of faith; fear of God’s response; lack of discipline; lack of obedience; busyness.)

What do you think Satan’s view of prayer is? (He doesn’t like it because he knows that “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” [James 5:16].)
Ask a volunteer to read 1 John 5:14-15.

If God grants only the prayers that are in agreement with His will, how can we be certain we are praying in accordance with His will? (We need to know His will and the way we do that is to be in His Word.)

Read this quote from The Promise: “Two things need to be included in our prayer lives that very few of us use regularly… the Word of God and the discipline of meditation.

See, when you groan about something, you are thinking about it. You are feeling it. It’s experiential. [God] wants to hear from us from deep down within so that the Holy Spirit can take those desires and do something with them.

But for that to happen, there must first be the regular intake of God’s Word. If you are not praying based on God’s Word, then you are praying out of His will. God must speak to you before you are ready to speak with Him.

Once you have taken in Scripture, meditation needs to begin. If you skip meditation, you are just blurtling out words to God. To meditate is to think deeply about who God is and where you are and what you need Him to do.”

Close with a time of meditation. Have group members read Psalm 100 silently and reflect on what it says about God and about them. Then ask a volunteer to read this psalm aloud as a closing prayer.
Our Need for the Spirit’s Intercession (Romans 8:26)

When it comes to functioning in the spiritual realm, we need someone who has been living there a while. Somebody who understands the terrain and can speak the language. Somebody who can intercede, who can approach another person and make an appeal on our behalf. We need an intercessor.

We need that kind of spiritual help because as believers in Jesus Christ, we are living in a world that is utterly foreign to our human nature. It’s a world unlike anything the natural mind can see or understand. It’s foreign terrain, and we need a guide. Paul calls this realm “the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6).

The Spirit has the ability to take your cares and needs and hurts and confusion and so clarify, correct, and focus them that by the time they get to heaven, they have been fixed. We must give the Spirit something to interpret by praying. If not, we will live unassisted, defeated Christian lives. The Spirit is there to help us in our weakness, not in our absence.

The Nature of the Spirit’s Intercession (Romans 8:26B-27)

Imagine the Holy Spirit engaged so deeply in prayer on your behalf that He enters into yearnings and groanings that cannot be expressed in words. Paul is talking about the deep, quiet, inaudible prayer groanings of the Spirit.

Now that we all know what it is to feel something so deeply that we groan under the burden of it. Creation groans, the people of God groan, and the Holy Spirit groans. What’s the connection? Creation groans to be relieved from the curse of sin. We groan because of sin’s effects upon us. The SpiritGroans in prayer in order to identify with our groaning, deliver them to God, and deliver to us from God what we need to be sustained in a world that produces pain.
The Promise STUDY GUIDE

FOUR PEOPLE, FOUR PRAYERS, RESOURCE 11B

1. (Shauna walks into the den and closes the door behind her.) Let’s see. I’ve got my Bible and journal. I guess I’m all set. (She sits on the couch and plumps a pillow behind her. She shakes her head, gets down on her knees, and closes her eyes.) “Father.” No, that sounds too familiar. “Lord.” Yes, that’s better. “Thou art great and Thou art good.” No, that sounds too formal. Let’s see. Okay. “Thank you for this day. It’s been pretty good.” Oh, boy, does that sound lame. “What I mean is, I’m glad I’m alive. And I need your help. I’m really having trouble getting along with my new boss.” (Long silence.) “I don’t even know how to pray about this. Thanks, Lord.” (As she opens her eyes, a tear rolls down her face.)

Discuss: What is this person’s perspective of prayer?

2. (Stephen awakes in the night. He tosses and turns for almost half an hour thinking about the business negotiations he’s involved in. His wife wakes up and asks him if he’s still so worried about the stuff at work. He admits he is.

The Results of the Spirit’s Intercession (Romans 8:28)

What does this [verse 26] mean? Well, it means that the people on whose behalf God is working all things together for good are the same people on whose behalf the Holy Spirit is interceding according to God’s will. And these are the same people whose prayers the Spirit interprets with deep groanings as He prays according to God’s will.

God’s optimum goal is to conform us to the character of Christ, and God is so passionate about this that He will stop at nothing to achieve it. So God is always doing something. He is either doing what you ask, or doing what He wants done by changing you so you will want what He wants.

If we were to give prayer the importance God gives it, we would see prayer as our normal routine and the other stuff we do as interruptions to prayer.
Then she asks, “Have you prayed about it?” and rolls over. About ten minutes later, Stephen begins to pray.) “Okay, God, here I am. This situation at work has gotten out of hand. I’ve talked to Joe and he thinks we’re too far out on a limb. Then Michelle says it is no time to be conservative. And good old Carl is no help at all. He says we just need to wait it out until the big guns over at XYZ Communications come around. I keep thinking about all the stuff I’ve learned in seminars and books about negotiations. I need something practical. If You have the answer, I sure wouldn’t mind if You’d share it with me.”

Discuss: What is this person’s perspective of prayer?

3. (Kris hurries to her desk chair and glances at her watch. She quickly bows her head.) “Hey Lord, how’s it going? Listen I’ve been real busy. But thanks for all you do.” (She stares out the window for about ten minutes.) “Bless Michael and the kids. And forgive me if I’ve sinned lately. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

Discuss: What is this person’s perspective of prayer?

4. (Keith is seated in his parked car in a quiet part of a small park.) Lord, You are so good and so faithful. Each day is such a gift to enjoy Your creation. I see Your creativity everywhere. Who am I, that you even think of me? To think that You know everything about me and love me anyway. Thank You, Father. You are slow to anger. How grateful I am. I praise You for Your patience. I need it so badly. Oh, Lord… I feel so bad. (Holds his head in his hands.) I did it again. I really hurt Judy’s feelings. She got a letter from her friend Edith saying Juan wants a divorce. Judy was going on and on with all these details, and I was in a hurry to get to my game. Oh, God. I am so selfish. I just blurted out, “Judy, get to the point. I’m late.” As soon as I saw the look in her eyes, I knew I had blown it again. Oh, Lord. I can’t even love my wife the way she deserves to be loved. (He looks up and groans.)

Discuss: What is this person’s perspective of prayer?
SESSION
TWELVE
Experiencing the Spirit’s Gifts
We can’t talk long about the ministry of the Holy Spirit without coming to the subject of this chapter. Now if it were just a matter of figuring out what gifts the Holy Spirit wanted to give us and then receiving them, our task would be easy.

But few topics generate more confusion, crisis, and criticism than the issue of the Spirit’s work in gifting the church. Churches have split over issues such as which of the Spirit’s gifts are for today and which, if any, have ceased. Libraries are filled with books written in an attempt to make sense of this thing called the gifts of the Spirit.

Now my purpose in this chapter is not to try to settle the argument. My purpose is to help you experience the reality of a truth the Bible is crystal clear about: The gifts of the Holy Spirit are for every member of Christ’s body, the church. That includes you and me.

You’re aiming to…
Help group members understand God’s intended purpose and use of spiritual gifts.

You’ll study…
- Major themes from chapters 16 and 17 of the book The Promise

You’ll need…
- Bibles
- Copies of Resource 12B, “Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts”
- Pencils or pens
- Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
Distribute copies of the four seasons below to four volunteers. Have each person read the situation and as a group answer this question about it: What perceptions or misperceptions are expressed about spiritual gifts? (At this point you do not want to evaluate the merit of each view or correct any of them. You are just looking at typical views of spiritual gifts.)

1. **Carole Reynolds, Director of Children’s Ministries, is recruiting Sunday school teachers for the upcoming year. She has approached Gwen to consider teaching fourth grade. Carole knows that Gwen enjoys children, has pretty good Bible knowledge, and is a strong Christian. She’s always wondered why Gwen has not been actively serving in any of the ministries at Faith Fellowship. There’s a place and need for everyone. When Carole contacts Gwen by phone, she is rather surprised at the quick response she gets: “Teach Sunday school? I could never do that. It’s just not my gift. And besides, I’ve never taught before.”

2. **Pastor Bachrach is talking with the deacon board about the church’s need for a new music director. Someone mentions Jose, a relatively new, but talented, Christian. As a matter of fact, Jose has starred in several musicals with the community theater and has written several songs that have been recorded. Another deacon agrees with the idea by saying, “He’d be perfect. He is so talented.”

3. **The pastoral staff is holding its annual retreat. As usual all five pastors are sharing war stories of how overworked and exhausted they are. But they all agree that it has been a very fruitful year. So much so that the congregation sees the need to add several new ministries. Now the staff has to figure out how to accomplish this. They see only two options: (1) The ministries will be added to the responsibilities of the already maxed-out staff; (2) Hire another pastor.”
4. Beth Ann and Sonia are talking about people and their various involve-
ments at church. Sonia says, “I am so glad I’m not stuck in the kitchen or
doing other menial tasks like Gert. How can she stand being asked to be in
charge of food and serving for just about every church event? It’s amazing
how she always seems to enjoy it so much. And what about Anne’s latest
coup? Here she is head of all the women’s ministries. Who does she think
she is anyway, always taking the showy jobs? She does do a good job,
but really. Who has to be in charge that much? No one ever asks me to do
anything. I guess God skipped me when the gifts were passed out.”

If the following ideas aren’t mentioned in the discussion, add them.

1. Carole thinks everyone is gifted to serve in some capacity; Gwen thinks
she will know her spiritual gift before she ever tries serving; she is not
willing to try something new and to trust God to equip her for the task.

2. The deacons equate natural talents or human abilities with spiritual gifts.

3. Both the church and staff think the job of the church leaders is to do all
the ministry; they do not think lay people would have the ability to serve
in ministry.

4. Sonia thinks that people choose their own gifts; that some gifts are bet-
ter or more important than others; she doesn’t realize that when someone
is using his or her spiritual gift, there is joy and fulfillment; perhaps she
doesn’t understand that all Christians receive gifts from the Holy Spirit.
When you hear the phrase “spiritual gift,” what comes to mind?

What about natural abilities or human talent? What are some examples? (Athletic, musical, academic, creative, artistic.)

What are the differences between spiritual gifts and natural abilities (or human talents)? (As group members share, write their responses under the appropriate heading on the board. Responses should resemble the following.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiritual Gifts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given by God to Christians because of spiritual birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to build up the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given as they are needed for service in church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift develops as it is exercised with faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring church to maturity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given by God to everyone at birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used for personal enjoyment; for others outside the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given for life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability increases with natural development and with practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operates independently of natural maturity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summarize by reading this quote from The Promise: “What do we mean by the term spiritual gifts? A spiritual gift is a divinely bestowed ability given to every true believer in Jesus Christ in order to serve the church. The reason the Spirit bestows His gifts on the church is that we are the ones charged with carrying out God’s program in this age.

A spiritual gift is more than a human talent. All of us have talents, things we do well. Some of us are multi-talented. But you don’t have to be a Christian
to be talented. All of us know very talented sinners. They don’t know God, but they can do many things well.

When you become a Christian, you bring your talents with you. But they are not the same as spiritual gifts. As we’ll see, spiritual gifts are the sovereign choice of the Spirit. A natural talent may be involved in your spiritual gift, but the focus is not on your ability. The one overriding purpose of spiritual gifts is to serve the family of God, to enhance the body of Christ, to move the church forward.

The distinguishing feature of a spiritual gift is the blessing and empowering of God on it when it is used for Him. Spiritual gifts differ from natural abilities in the results they produce."

STEP 3  SCRIPTURE TREASURE HUNT (15-20 MIN)

Exploring the Scriptures for Teaching on Spiritual Gifts

Divide into four groups. Assign one of the passages below to each group.

- **Group 1:** 1 Corinthians 12:1-31
- **Group 2:** Ephesians 4:1-16
- **Group 3:** Romans 12:1-8
- **Group 4:** 1 Peter 4:10-11

Tell the groups they are on a treasure hunt looking for all the gems about spiritual gifts they can find. Once they find them, have them word them as principles. For example, 1 Corinthians 12:1 reads: “Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.” This could be stated as a principle that “God wants us to understand spiritual gifts.”

After about five minutes, reconvene the whole group and ask the lead hunter to share the gems his or her group found. When a principle is mentioned that another group also found, have the leader of that group share the reference and wording of their “gem.” Supplement the group findings with the information listed below.
Group 1: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31
• Verse 1: God wants us to understand spiritual gifts.
• 4-6: A variety of spiritual gifts are all given by the same Spirit.
• 7: Spiritual gifts are given for the common good of the church.
• 11: The Spirit sovereignly determines who gets what gift.
• 12-20: Gifts are to work together in unity.
• 21-26: All gifts are of equal importance.
• 27-30: While all Christians have spiritual gifts, not all Christians have all the gifts.

Group 2: Ephesians 4:1-16
• Verses 1-7: The body needs to work toward unity coming out of diversity of gifts.
• 11: God determines what gift each person receives.
• 12: Gifts are given to prepare God’s people for service.
• 13-16: Gifts are given to bring the church to maturity.

Group 3: Romans 12:1-8
• Verse 1-2: Yielding to God is worship which leads to service.
• 3-4: All Christians are equal in the body, so we should be humble and appreciate everyone regardless of his or her gift.
• 5: We need to experience unity since we all belong to the same body.
• 6: Through God’s grace every Christian has a spiritual gift.
• 7-8: Whatever our gift is, we need to use it.

Group 4: 1 Peter 4:10-11
• Verse 10: Spiritual gifts are given to enable Christians to serve each other in the body.
• 11: Spiritual gifts are to be used in a way that God gets the glory and praise. In other words, the use of a spiritual gift draws attention to the giver, not the receiver.
Turn to Resource 12A, “Scriptural Principles of Spiritual Gifts,” on page 133 as a summary of this section. Read through them as a group and discuss as time allows.

STEP 4 PERSONAL RESPONSE (10-15 MIN)
Applying the Principles to Real Life

Summarize this session up to this point:

We have discovered that spiritual gifts can be distinguished from natural talents based on the results they produce. We have also seen that spiritual gifts are given to build the body to maturity in Christ. As believers we are to be good stewards of the gifts God has given us. This means sharing or using our gifts for the good of the church. If we do not use our gifts, the body will experience stunted spiritual growth, disunity, a lack of love, and spiritual pride.

Point out that while God tells us to desire and pursue spiritual gifts by living godly lives, He does not exhort us to discover our spiritual gifts.

*Read this quote of Dr. Evans: “The discovery of spiritual gifts flows out of service.”*

What do you think Dr. Evans means by this statement? (It is as we go about the business of ministry opportunities that we will see the gifts manifested.)

Take a very brief look at two examples in the Old Testament. You will look at these more in the final session, so just stay on the issue of spiritual giftedness as you look at these verses.

The first example is from the life of Moses. Explain that God had appeared and spoken to Moses from a burning bush, telling him that God Himself was sending Moses to go to the Pharaoh of Egypt to bring the Israelites out of bondage. Moses did not feel he was the man for the job. Ask a volunteer to quickly read Exodus 4:14-17.

What was God’s response to Moses’s fears and sense of inadequacy? (He was angry and made it very clear that the mission was not dependent on Moses’s natural abilities, but on God’s equipping him.)
Have another volunteer read Exodus 6:28; 7:6-10.

At what point did Moses and Aaron experience God’s provision or gift? (Not until they obeyed God and went before Pharaoh.)

The second example is also from the life of Moses related to the building of the tabernacle. Invite a volunteer to read Exodus 31:1-6; 35:30-35.

When were Bezalel and Oholiab given the gifts to design work for the tabernacle? (As they were being given a specific task, they were filled with the Spirit and given the gifts they needed to do that task.)

Turn to Resource 12B, “Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts, on page 134. Ask one or more volunteers to read Part 1, “Keys to Finding God’s Task.”

What are the three keys to knowing the task God has for you? (1: The Spirit moves us to do it and it brings joy; 2: The skill comes when the task must be done; 3: God’s glory will always be evident.)

How did Dr. Evans know he had the spiritual gift of teaching? (Even though he naturally stuttered, when he became a Christian and began sharing his faith, he spoke without the stutter.)

Ask if anyone has had a similar experience of discovering the Spirit’s gift almost by surprise. As time allows, have people share.

Then ask everyone to focus on Part 2 of Resource 12B, “Suggestions for Discerning Your Gift.” Allow several minutes for group members to complete this section privately.

Close in prayer, inviting anyone who would like to ask God for discernment in the area of spiritual gifts to do so. Thank God that “The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).
1. **There is no necessary correlation between being gifted and being spiritually mature.** The more mature you are, the closer you are to Christ, the more your relationship to Him determines your spiritual clarity, and the less you will need to depend on miraculous gifts to become mature.

2. **The reason God gifts the church is to mature her so she can pull off His one agenda.** God does not gift you and me so we can do our thing. He gifts us so we can do His thing.

3. **The job of church leaders is not to do all the ministry, but to equip the saints for ministry by helping them to understand and use their gifts.**

4. **The question is not whether the Holy Spirit has given you any gifts or whether He wants you to use them for the good of the body.** The question is how badly you want to experience the gifts He has given you.

5. **Worship must always lead to service, and service means exercising spiritual gifts.**

6. **We serve one another as good stewards because spiritual gifts are God’s gifts.** We are to employ our gifts for God’s glory as recipients of God’s grace so that God’s Son might be glorified.

7. **You will never be fulfilled in your Christian life until you are serving God and using the Spirit’s supernatural equipment, His gifts.**

8. **Unless the gifts of the church are unleashed for the building up of the body, the church will limp along with a marginal influence on our world.**

9. **If it is of the Spirit, it’s going to be orderly.** If it produces chaos and confusion, it is not the work of the Holy Spirit.
Part 1: Keys to Finding God’s Task

So the question now is, how do we know what task the Spirit is assigning to us? First, the Spirit stirs our hearts toward fulfilling an area of need. This is what happened in the building of the tabernacle. The people wanted to be involved because their hearts were stirred (Exodus 35:21-22, 26, 29). When you are operating in concert with the Spirit, He brings joy along with the job.

Second, when the Spirit is leading there will be skill in the execution of the task (Exodus 36:1-2, 8).

Third, when the Spirit is leading in the assignment of the task, God’s glory will always be manifested through its execution (Exodus 40:34-38; 1 Peter 4:11).

In none of the passages we studied will you find a comprehensive list of the spiritual gifts. Why? Because giving you a “shopping list” of gifts is not the point. The point is to get us right with the Spirit of God, because when we are right with the Spirit, His gifts will find us. We will not have to find them. They will track us down.

Maybe sharing my experience will help you see how it can happen. My gift is that of teaching. It is the ability to expound the Word of God in such a way that people understand and are motivated to respond to the proclamation.

Now as a kid growing up, I couldn’t speak very well. I had to take special speech classes in school. I would stutter and have trouble even getting a sound to come out. But when God saved me, something happened to my tongue. My stammering tongue smoothed out.

I can recall as a high school student stammering to get a word out. But when I went
to witness to somebody, that all changed. Somehow, something supernatural took over. I was using a gift that I did not possess in my normal speech because the Spirit was gifting me for His purpose.

The Holy Spirit has a gift for every believer, and the way you know it is a gift is that it is benefiting somebody else in the body of Christ. God saved you to be a conduit of His blessings, not a cul-de-sac.

**Part 2: Suggestions for Discerning Your Gift**

1. **Seek input and counsel from spiritually mature Christians about where you can serve in the church. Whose opinion can you seek?**

2. **Ask yourself: What particular ministry or passion makes my heart cheerful just thinking about it? What ministry have I done that brings me the greatest joy? What really gets me excited about serving the Lord?**

3. **If you are aware of your spiritual gift or gifts, in what way are you now using them to serve the body? Are you using them for the benefit of the body, or have you neglected them? Have you appropriated them for your own benefit?**

Challenge: Is your church better because you are in it?
SESSION
THIRTEEN

Experiencing the Spirit’s Guidance
When you open a road map to plan the route of your vacation or some other trip, it quickly becomes obvious that there are multiple ways to get to your destination. The map shows all the possibilities because the mapmaker has access to the big picture. He knows all the major highways, state roads, farm roads, and side roads.

The Christian life is like that. God is leading you from Point A to Point B, but He has the big picture in front of Him and He knows all the roads that can take you there. The problem is that you can’t see the big picture, and more often than not, God doesn’t issue detailed maps. So it’s easy to get confused, even lost, when you’re trying to get to Point B, because there are many ways to get there.

Being able to determine the Holy Spirit’s leading as we navigate through life’s choices and decisions is a challenge for all of us. Every sincere Christian wants to find God’s will, to know that He is guiding in the decisions we make.

You’re aiming to…

Help group members learn and apply basic principles in determining God’s will.

You’ll study…

- Major themes from chapter 15 of the book The Promise

You’ll need…

- Bibles
- Pencils or pens
- Board or newsprint and chalk or marker
STEP 1  
THE METHODS (10 MIN)  
Brainstorming (Biblical and Other) Ways of Seeking Guidance

Write these two phrases on the board.

1. *Where the world looks for spiritual guidance*

2. *Methods Christians use to discern God’s will*

Divide into two teams based on this question: Are you better at misplacing things or finding things other people have misplaced? (If teams are unequal, have volunteers switch to even the teams.)

**Distribute paper and pencils.** Have each team write down as many responses as possible for the above two categories related to the topic of spiritual guidance. Allow a total of three minutes.

When time is up, ask the “Misplacers” team to quickly call out their answers for category one. Then have the “Finders” team add anything different they came up with. Then read the list below under “World.” Beginning with the “Finders,” repeat the process for category two.

After each round, tally points these two ways:

- *Each team receives a point for each unique response.*
- *Each team receives a point for each match with the responses listed below.*

1. **World**
   - Astrology
   - Crystals
   - Fortune tellers
   - Friends
   - Horoscopes
   - Mediums
   - Ouija boards

2. **Christians**
   - Bible Study
   - Christian friends
   - “Closed doors”
   - Conviction
   - Fleece (putting out)
   - God’s voice
   - Inner peace
Palm readers
Tarot cards
Tea leaves
Miracles
Pastoral counseling
Prayer

Read any responses that were not mentioned. Make sure to congratulate the winning team.

Transition to the next activity with comments like these: There are many other ways that people seek spiritual answers. All of these efforts are evidence that each person has a hunger for the things of God. Sadly, if they are seeking in any direction other than toward the person of Jesus Christ, they will reap a spiritual death rather than spiritual life. But God has given us all we need to know how to please and serve Him.

STEP 2

Exploring How Christians Approach Decision Making

Have two men volunteer to do a short skit. Give them each a copy of Resource 13A, “The Move,” on page 146. Give them a minute or two to prepare.

As they are preparing, ask other group members to jot down their answers to this question: When I have to make a major decision, what steps do I take to get God’s input?

Have the volunteer actors sit side-by-side in front of the group as they perform.

When they’re finished give a round of applause.

Distribute copies of Resource 13A to the entire group for use during discussion. Use these questions:

- What approaches to spiritual guidance does each character take in this skit? How effective is each approach?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach?
Discuss each character individually. Supplement the group’s responses with the information below.

**Robert**  
**Approach:** God’s Word is all that’s needed for discerning God’s will.  
**Effectiveness:** Robert’s way of just reading disconnected Bible verses is not very effective.  
**Strength:** It is good to know God’s Word and to seek God’s input by reading it.  
**Weakness:** Just reading the Word rather than reading, studying, and meditating on it can lead to taking verses out of context and extracting principles that aren’t intended. (In *The Promise*, Tony Evans says: “If you sit down with the Bible without the influence of the Spirit, you won’t truly grasp the meaning of the passage or how to apply the specific biblical text to your life.”)

**Marsha**  
**Approach:** Presence of good feelings or inner peace.  
**Effectiveness:** This case is somewhat effective, since it caused Robert to think further about his decision. Trusting feelings alone, however, is risky business.  
**Strength:** Sensitivity within one’s spirit to the Holy Spirit can help one make good decisions in line with God’s Word.

*Use this quote from The Promise: “We experience the Spirit’s guidance when there is a compelling inner conviction about a decision that is within the scope of God’s moral will, be that decision large or small. The Spirit is guiding when my heart is gripped and stirred to make a certain decision or move in a particular direction.”*

**Weakness:** Feelings are fickle. Therefore, as long as you feel good about a course of action, you think it is God’s will. What happens if circumstances get tough and you don’t feel good? Does that mean God’s will changed or that you misunderstood God? Also, good feelings can result from things other than agreement with God’s will. As
we’ve said in earlier sessions, the reason sin is so appealing is that it can feel good.

**Approach:** Closed doors.

**Effectiveness:** If this method is the only one used, it is not reliable.

**Strength:** Suggests a willingness to go wherever God may lead.

**Weakness:** Some closed doors may be Satan’s opposition. Without the aid of other input, how does one know the source of the closed door?

**Jared and Jill**

**Approach:** Studying and meditating on the Word.

**Effectiveness:** Even better when coupled with prayer.

**Strength:** Acknowledges God’s authority; recognizes the Word as the source of truth; study enables one to put things in context and to consider the whole counsel of God; meditating allows for the Word to permeate one’s thoughts with truth over time and thereby conform that person’s thinking and desires to God’s will. Paul calls this the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2).

*Use this quote from The Promise:* “[Hebrews] 4:12 is so vital. [T]he word can split the ‘unsplittable’ soul and spirit. It can clarify what is coming from your humanness, which is the soul, and what is coming from God, which is the Holy Spirit. That’s why you want to muse and meditate on Scripture so the Spirit can clarify it to you.”

**Weakness:** The Word does not specifically address many of life’s circumstances. So if you are looking for divine guidance on issues outside God’s moral will, you won’t find it. You will find principles to follow, however.
STEP 3  

BIBLICAL PRECEDENCE (10-15 MIN)

Taking a Look at Five Biblical Examples of the Spirit’s Guidance


Divide into five small groups (if your group is small, five individuals work fine) and assign a set of Scriptures (which you have written on the board) to each one.

1. *Exodus 31:1-6; 35:1-5, 10, 20; 36:2*
2. *Exodus 5:1, 6-9, 22-23; 6:1-2, 12; 7:1-5*
3. *1 Samuel 30:1-20*
4. *Daniel 2:1-23*
5. *Acts 15:1-29*

Have them answer these questions (also written on the board):

a. **What is the situation or need?**

b. **Through which vehicle(s) did the Spirit lead?**

c. **What was the result?**

After four or five minutes, reconvene the whole group and ask a volunteer to report the findings for each group. Supplement their answers with the following:

1. *Exodus 31:1-6; 35:1-5, 10, 20; 36:2*

   a. **Building of the tabernacle.** God spoke directly to Moses and told him He had chosen Bezalel and Oholiab and filled them with the Spirit and ability to do fine craftsmanship. Moses gave the people God’s commands.

   b. **God’s Word and the inner witness of the Spirit.**
c. The tabernacle was built; those “whose hearts moved him” gave offerings for the building of the tabernacle.

2. *Exodus 5:1, 6-9, 22-23; 6:1-2, 12; 7:1-5*
   
a. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt; Moses and Aaron appealed to Pharaoh to allow them to have a three-day festival and sacrifice; Pharaoh refused and increased their work. Moses appealed to God for His direction.

   b. Circumstances—at first the situation got worse. But Moses knew what God’s objective Word had commanded and promised.

   c. Pharaoh eventually let the Israelites go and God was glorified.

3. *1 Samuel 30:1-20*
   
a. David and his men returned to Ziklag in the land of the Philistines to find that the Amalekites had taken their wives and children. David had no idea where to look for them.

   b. Prayer—he asked God if he should pursue the raiding party.

   c. God told him to go and he would succeed. David found a servant of the Amalekites who led them to the families. David and his men defeated the Amalekites and recovered their families and belongings.

4. *Daniel 2:1-23*
   
a. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and no one could interpret it so he ordered the death of all the wise men in Babylon. Daniel needed to know the meaning of the dream.

   b. Prayer—Daniel prayed and urged his friends to do so.

   c. God gave Daniel the interpretation. God was glorified. Daniel was placed as second in command over all of Babylon.

5. *Acts 15:1-29*
a. Some Judean Christians came to Antioch and began teaching a mixture of the gospel and old law saying Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be saved. Paul and Barnabas were sent by the church to Jerusalem to decide what should be done about the problem.

b. Church—a council of leaders met. James used the Word to determine God’s will; the inner witness—the council agreed and decided together; “it seemed good to us” (Acts 15:28).

c. A letter was composed and sent to Gentile believers telling them “to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and sexual immorality.” There was no mention of circumcision.

STEP 4 PRINCIPLES OF GUIDANCE (10 MIN)

Establishing Biblical Guidelines for Discerning God’s Will

Read this quote from Tony Evans in The Promise:

“The overarching goal of the Holy Spirit’s guidance is to help us discover and do the will of God. To help us better understand God’s will, let me give you what I call the three tiers of the will of God.

The first tier is God’s sovereign will. This is the will by which God mysteriously and majestically manages all the details of the universe. I say mysteriously because we have no absolute knowledge of much of God’s sovereign will as it unfolds in history.

God also has a moral will, which He has clearly revealed to us. God’s moral will is the Scripture. Scripture gives us the specifics out of God’s sovereign will that He definitely wants us to know.

The third tier of God’s will is His individual will for each of His children. This is where the problem comes because it involves what God wants us to do in a particular situation, decision, relationship, career choice, etc. Since God’s sovereign will is often hidden and the Bible doesn’t tell us which job to take or where to live or which person to marry, we need His individual guidance.”
Ask: What are some examples of what might be God’s sovereign will? (Why we live in a country with religious freedom; why God chose Israel to be a witness to the world of the one true God; why God selected Saul [later Paul] as the witness to the Gentiles.)

His moral will? (There are far too many to list, but responses will include things like: sexual purity in mind and body; honesty; the Ten Commandments; etc.)

Have group members look at “Principles of the Holy Spirit’s Guidance” on Resource 13B for some pointers on determining God’s will in individual situations. As a group, read through this section. Encourage group members to keep this list handy for future reference.

This leads to one final question. What must you do to position yourself to experience the Holy Spirit’s guidance?

Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22. Point out that these are imperatives:

- Verse 16: “Be joyful always.”
- Verse 17: “Pray continually.”
- Verse 18: “Give thanks in all circumstances.”
- Verse 19: “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.”
- Verse 20: “Do not treat prophecies with contempt.”
- Verse 21: “Test everything. Hold on to good.”
- Verse 22: “Avoid every kind of evil.”

Summarize with these closing comments: As we abide in Christ through obedience to His commands, we put ourselves in the position to experience the promise of the Holy Spirit and all His ministries in our lives. Walking with the Spirit is an ongoing, daily task for as long as we call this earth home.

Close with the prayer from 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”
Jared and Robert are driving home from work. A month ago they received the news that the company they both work for is relocating out of state in another six months. Both have been offered positions at the new location and have another thirty days to give notice of their decision.

Jared: Hey, how are you and Marsha doing with the big decision about the move?
Robert: I don’t know. I keep going back and forth. How about you?

Jared: Jill and I haven’t decided. But we are spending a lot of time in the Scriptures and meditating on them. We’ve set aside time to pray alone and together every day. You said you’re going back and forth? What are you feeling at this point?

Robert: I’m not sure feelings have much to do with it. It doesn’t matter what I feel. It matters what God feels and what He says in His Word. So I’ve been combing the Scriptures to see what they say. Two weeks ago I read about Abraham and Sarah. Remember when God came to him and said, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you”? Abraham didn’t have a clue where he was supposed to go, but he packed his bags and went. So I told Marsha to plan on moving and start getting things ready to put the house on the market.

Jared (with a look of surprise): How’d she take that?

Robert: For two days she was fine. You know, cleaning out stuff and planning on a garage sale. But then she threw in one of her “I don’t have peace about this” statements. You’d think she had a direct line to God’s 911 number.

Jared: I’m not sure I’d have peace either. So, what did you say?

Robert: I didn’t say anything. I just went to my study and pulled out my Bible to see what God says. I was reading in Acts where Jesus told the disciples, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about” (Acts 1:4). I thought, this is it! I’m supposed to stay right here in Monument...
Falls because God has something waiting for me here. So I told Marsha we aren’t going to move.

*Jared:* Gee, Robert, I’m not sure that’s what that verse is all about. Wasn’t that promise about the Holy Spirit? (Robert lets out a sign and looks a bit miffed.) So what did Marsha say?

*Robert:* She said I’m driving her nuts. She wants us to decide one way or the other and go that way until God closes the door. So I went back to the Scriptures and I think I got the answer. Remember when Naomi told her daughters-in-law to return home after their husbands died and Ruth said, “Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay” (Ruth 1:16). So I told Marsha that we’ll do whatever you and Jill decide to do. (He gives Jared a look of satisfaction.)

*Jared* (slowly shaking his head): Thanks loads, Robert. So now Jill and I have the responsibility of making the right decision for you too? No thanks. As far as my family, I figure that God has given us good minds, His Word, and His Spirit. I may not know the right answer yet, but I do know that God will give us wisdom. The bottom line is, whatever draws us closer to Him and gives the most opportunity to serve Him is what we need to do. It’s like until I’m at the place that I’m willing to do whatever He wants, I’m not sure He’ll tell me what “whatever” is. So I’m praying for willingness to obey regardless of which way things go. Back to you and Marsha. What is she saying now?

*Robert:* She says I just need to spend more time in prayer and when I reach the right decision I’ll just know it.

*Jared:* I agree about the prayer part.
EXPERIENCING THE SPIRIT’S GUIDANCE, RESOURCE 13B

By Tony Evans

Vehicles of the Holy Spirit’s Guidance

• **God’s Word**: The Bible is sufficient because it gives all believers everywhere the underlying principles God wants them to predicate their decisions on. The Spirit guides us through the Scriptures by clarifying and communicating to us God’s moral will.

• **The Inner Witness**: The witness of the Spirit is the inner confirmation in your spirit of His direction.

• **Prayer**: The simplest definition of prayer is communion and communication with God. But I’m thinking particularly of an almost lost art in prayer: the discipline of listening. Next time you pray, try beginning with total, focused silence. It may help to open your Bible and let your mind muse on Scripture as you seek the face of God.

• **Circumstances**: Circumstances are to confirm the Spirit’s inner witness, not determine it.

• **Church**: God brings people into your life who love the Lord and whose spirit witnesses with your spirit.

Principles of the Holy Spirit’s Guidance

1. **The Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word He inspired** (2 Peter 1:20-21).

2. **The Spirit is not going to reveal God’s will to you so you can debate**
whether you want to obey it.

3. Spiritual guidance occurs when there has been a wedding between the objective revelation of Scripture and the subjective witness of the Holy Spirit—the witness of the Holy Spirit to our individual human spirits.

4. When the Holy Spirit takes up His residence within you (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19), He does His talking inside of you, in your spirit, either confirming or convincing or convicting.

5. The witness of the Spirit is the inner confirmation in your spirit of His direction (Romans 8:14, 16).

6. He applies different verses to different Christians in different ways at different times. As long as we are both within the boundaries of Scripture, don’t try to make what the Holy Spirit is telling you work for me, because God leads people differently.

7. The more intimate your relationship with Christ, the clearer you will hear the voice of the Spirit.

8. The greater the kingdom implications of the decision, the louder He speaks.

9. If the Holy Spirit does not provide a specific inner conviction or stirring of the heart regarding a matter, then He can speak through your personal preference.

10. Circumstances are to confirm the Spirit’s inner witness, not determine it.

Lord, not my will, but Yours be done, because You are sovereign. I will search the Scriptures to know the parts of Your will that You have revealed to me. But I am also going to depend on You for guidance in my individual choices in life. Amen.
YOUR GROUP'S NEXT STUDY GUIDE FROM TONY EVANS AND THE URBAN ALTERNATIVE

FURTHER RESOURCES

Find these and more resources at: TonyEvans.org