

A bonfire at night with sparks flying into the dark sky. The fire is bright orange and yellow, with many small sparks rising from it. The background is a dark, deep blue night sky.

ELEMENTARY

Book 3 - Understanding The Holy Spirit

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*A discipleship resource prepared by
Mount Gambier Baptist Church*

CONTENTS

About this series	6
Before you begin	7
Study 1:	
<i>This Person called the Holy Spirit</i>	9
Study 2:	
<i>The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament</i>	15
Study 3:	
<i>The role of the Holy Spirit</i>	23
Study 4:	
<i>The Work of the Holy Spirit in us (Part 1)</i>	31
Study 5:	
<i>The Work of the Holy Spirit in us (Part 2)</i>	35
Where to next?	42

ABOUT THIS SERIES

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others”

Paul in a letter to a young pastor (2 Timothy 2:2)

We are shown in the gospels that Jesus calls us to a deliberate journey of spiritual formation once we have become aware of his reign and accepted his Lordship over our lives. It calls for a sense of active belief in him, and a lifetime of following him in an intentional arrangement called *discipleship*.

The *Elementary* series has been developed to assist those who are taking their first steps into this discipleship journey. It will help you to explore some key things that Christians need to know somewhat early in their discipleship journey. It's our prayer that these studies help you to really grow in your faith and understanding of what it takes to be a follower of Jesus.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Here's a few quick tips to help you get started:

1. You'll need a Bible - either in print or in an app.
2. You'll need a *disciple-maker!* You could do this study on your own, but we believe in the greater value in going through this material with other experienced Christians who have worked through these ideas themselves. (In keeping with the Bible verse quoted above).
3. You'll need some dedicated time. There will be parts of these studies that need to be thought through, processed and even revisited. Take all the time you need, and don't overwhelm yourself by going too fast through them.
4. It's highly likely that you'll end up telling somebody else about what you've learnt, so we invite you to use the spaces provided to help you articulate things in your own words.

1

This Person called the Holy Spirit

In this series, we are going to be introduced to what the Bible calls the Holy Spirit. This is something that we believe every Christian should have some understanding of, but often this is a subject that has been taught in extreme ways by some, and avoided altogether by others.

The aim of this series of studies is to bring a brief but balanced presentation of what the scriptures teach us about the Holy Spirit and will familiarise us with some basics of the doctrine of the Spirit.

In the studies to follow, we'll explore the role the Holy Spirit plays in our lives from a few different perspectives. In this first study we will explore some important scriptures which give us clues about the identity of the Holy spirit.

First, some Opening Questions

(It might be a good exercise to revisit these at the end of the module)

When you first hear the words Holy Spirit, what do you immediately think of?

Up to this point in your faith journey, what are some of the things that you have been taught about the Holy Spirit? Does anything specific come to mind?

How do you interact with the Holy Spirit in your life now? Is it a little or a lot?

What do you expect the Holy Spirit to do for you? What effect do you expect the Holy Spirit to have on your life?

Before this study series commences, on a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you think you understand the doctrine of the Holy Spirit?

Idea 1: The Holy Spirit is a PERSON.

Bible Reading: Read each passage carefully. In each passage, what things can the Holy Spirit do, which are things you know a Person can do?

John 14:26

John 16:13-14

Acts 5:3-4

Acts 13:2

1 Corinthians 12:11

Ephesians 4:30

Hebrews 10:29

If the Holy Spirit is in fact a person, how are we supposed to interact with Him?

The Spirit appears to be described in male form in the words of Jesus. Is it appropriate to assign a gender to the Holy Spirit?

Why do you think it's important to describe the Holy Spirit as a person? Why would the writers of the New Testament take care to write in such a way?

Some religious groups try to describe the Spirit as "God's active force." What do you make of this sort of description? Does it do the Spirit justice, or does it diminish who the Spirit is?

Idea 2: The Holy Spirit is a DIVINE PERSON.

Bible Reading: Read each passage carefully. In each passage, what things can the Holy Spirit do, which are things you know only God can do?

Matthew 12:28-32

Acts 16:6-10

1 Corinthians 2:10-11

Hebrews 9:14

Psalms 139:7-8

1 Peter 1:2; Romans 15:16

Acts 5:3

Acts 13:2

How easy or difficult is it for you to think of, and interact with the Holy Spirit with the understanding that He is as much God as the Father and Christ?

The Bible doesn't seem to give direct examples of praying or worship towards the Holy Spirit, but He is clearly involved anyway! Why do you think this is so? What might worship and prayer directly towards Him look like? Is it appropriate to do that?

Your own reflections:

You are now invited to summarise what you've learned in the space below, in particular considering how you might explain these things to another person if they asked you.

2

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

We've briefly established that the Holy Spirit is a divine person. There is a number of instances where the scriptures describe the Spirit with the traits of a person, and we've seen a number of places where the divinity of the Holy Spirit becomes apparent. In some ways this is by association – where the Spirit is spoken of in equal terms with the rest of the Godhead. In other places, we've seen Him be described in ways that can really only apply to God.

In this study, we are going to take a brief look at what the Holy Spirit had been doing before the Christian Church became aware of Him. There are many references to the Spirit in the Old Testament, and we can explore this in a few ways. First, there is the work that the Holy Spirit did in that time. Second, there is the promise of what would be coming. This study will look at both of these things.

A: The Holy Spirit and creation

Read: Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:27-30; John 6:63

How do these verses build on the ground we covered in the last study?

What do these verses suggest about the relationship between God the Creator and the Holy Spirit?

B: Interactions with humanity

Read: Genesis 6:1-3; Psalm 51:11; Psalm 139:7

How do you think the Spirit was 'striving' with mankind? What would you imagine He would be doing in this time?

What does an awareness of the Spirit's presence look or feel like? How would David have known if it was there or not?

How close to the Holy Spirit do you think the Old Testament writers got? Was their interaction similar to what you might expect today? Would it be greater, or less, or about the same?

C: The Spirit as an Instructor to His people:

Read: Nehemiah 9:20, 30; Psalm 143:10; Isaiah 63:10-14

What seems to be the process by which the Spirit instructed the nation of Israel? How was His instruction given?

David seems to also invite a personal form of instruction as well. How do you think this would have looked?

What are some of the apparent benefits when the Holy Spirit was present among the people of Israel?

D: God's people empowered by the Spirit

Bible Reading: Each passage gives a different example of the Holy Spirit empowering and gifting people. There's a number of ways this seems to occur. Discuss the specific gifts that you find in each passage. How does each gift operate?

Exodus 31:1-5

Genesis 41:8

Numbers 27:18

1 Samuel 16:13-14

Judges 15:14-15

Ezekiel 2:1-3

What might the scriptures mean when the Spirit 'departs' from a person?

Would it be fair to say that each of these gifts or empowerments came with a clear external expression? Are there more 'internal' examples we could draw from in the Old Testament?

How permanent would each of these Spirit-given skillsets be?

E: The Spirit's work in the writing of the Old Testament

Read: 1 Peter 1:10-12; 1 Tim 3:16; Matthew 22:43

The following is a Baptist Statement of Belief regarding the Bible: "The Scriptures, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are the infallible Word of God. They were written by holy people of God inspired by the Holy Spirit and have supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct."

How does this statement influence your own view of scripture, and what part does the Holy Spirit play in your view?

F: The Spirit's future work:

Bible: Isaiah 11:1-3; 42:1; 61:1-3 Joel 2:28

The verses in Isaiah speak about the Spirit working in the life and ministry of Christ. Discuss what that will achieve based on these verses.

Joel speaks of the further work beyond the cross. What does the ministry of the Holy Spirit look like for us in the last days?

Your own reflections:

You are now invited to summarise what you've learned in the space below, in particular considering how you might explain these things to another person if they asked you.

3

The role of the Holy Spirit

We've briefly established that the Holy Spirit is a Person we can relate to, and that he is Divine, the third person of the Trinity. We have explored a number of ways the Holy Spirit was present and active in the Old Testament.

In this third study, we are going to explore a key piece of scripture where Jesus describes the main role of the Spirit in the time that would come after his own earthly ministry comes to an end. This could actually be a Role Description for the Holy Spirit in the New Testament era! Jesus' teaching on the Holy Spirit is actually focused on just 3 chapters in John...

The Role of the Holy Spirit

Read: John 13:1–38

Take some time to consider the 'context' of these passages. What is the time and setting where Jesus is speaking these things? What would be going through the mind of Jesus in this time? What might the disciples be thinking at this time?

Read: John 14:1—16:15

In 14:16 we are introduced to a new word: the Counsellor, the Advocate, the Helper, or the Comforter (depending on the Bible version you use). What do these words indicate the Spirit is being sent to do?

We also read early in these passages that the Spirit is described as *another* Advocate. What does Jesus mean by this?

How does Jesus describe the relationship they would have with the Spirit? What sort of proximity do we see mentioned? (See 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:12-15)

What is the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit? How will the ministry of the Spirit compliment the ministry of Christ? (See 14:15-20; 15:26; 16:12-15)

What appears to be the motivation of Jesus in this teaching on the Spirit? What does he want for the disciples? (See 14:18; 15:4-5; 16:12-13)

What is one of the major things the believers are to experience because of the ministry of the Spirit? (See 14:19-20; 16:16)

Considering 14:28 and 16:7, why should the disciples be *happy* that Christ would be returning to the Father at that particular time?

Why is Jesus' departure from earth important for the Spirit/ Advocate to come?

What is the nature of the ministry of the Spirit to the world? At what point do we 'co-labour' with that agenda? Is it even possible for us to do that? Or do we leave that work entirely to Him? (See 15:26-27)

Considering 16:13, what major trait should we be expecting from the Spirit? How does this reassure us?

Your own reflections:

You are now invited to summarise what you've learned in the space below, in particular considering how you might explain these things to another person if they asked you.

4

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Us (Part 1)

We've briefly established that the Holy Spirit is a Person we can relate to, and that he is Divine, the third person of the Trinity. We have explored a number of ways the Holy Spirit was present and active in the Old Testament.

We have also explored some significant passages where Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit's role once Jesus had ascended into heaven.

In this study, we are going to look at the first of two major ways the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives. We believe the Spirit plays a major role in our salvation, and this study is going to explore this idea.

Read: John 20:19-23

Like we did last time, think about the timing involved in this passage. When has this conversation taken place, and what has taken place since the teachings of Chapters 14 and 16?

What things are the disciples experiencing here, and how might they mirror our own modern faith experience?

What roles does the Holy Spirit play in this passage? How does Jesus interact with Him? How are things different for the disciples now?

How would you think verse 23 was intended to play out in the disciples' ministry?

Read: Galatians 3:1-5; 5:16-26; Romans 8:1-17

What is the relationship and the nature of interaction between Christ and the Spirit in these passages?

In Galatians, Paul speaks a number of times about the time of 'receiving the Spirit,' including the verses you read in Galatians 3. What does this phrase mean in these passages?

What does life in the Spirit look like in these passages? What relationships change? What changes take place? How is life supposed to be different?

Are these elements of 'life in the Spirit' designed to be for all disciples; or just a few to whom it is 'gifted?'

Read: 2 Cor 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:12-14

What do these verses tell us about our current position with God?

What do these verses indicate about our future hope?

What is the work of the Holy Spirit in these two passages?

With all these verses in mind, how should all believers expect the Holy Spirit to be working in their lives? What clear differences should be taking place in us as a result?

Your own reflections:

You are now invited to summarise what you've learned in the space below, in particular considering how you might explain these things to another person if they asked you.

5

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Us (Part 2)

We've briefly established that the Holy Spirit is a Person we can relate to, and that he is Divine, the third person of the Trinity. We have explored a number of ways the Holy Spirit was present and active in the Old Testament. We have also explored some significant passages where Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit's role once Jesus had ascended into heaven. And we have looked at the way the Holy Spirit works in our salvation.

In this final study on the Holy Spirit, we are going to look at the other major way the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives. In addition to the work of our salvation, there is an empowerment taking place which brings interesting things out in us. Today's study is going to explore this idea in a bit more depth.

Read: Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-11

These passages describe events and discussion *after* the resurrection, as does the verse in John 20 we looked at last time. How are today's passages similar to what John wrote? How distinctly different are these as well?

Beyond simply being saved, how is the Holy Spirit going to be interacting with believers in these passages?

What does being 'baptised' with the Holy Spirit mean? How does it compare with John's use of the word 'receive' the Spirit (John 20:22)? Are they one and the same idea, or is something else being spoken of here?

What are believers supposed to be able to do as a result of this interaction with the Holy Spirit?

Read: Acts 2:1-8

Note: The Day of Pentecost is 50 days after Passover.

There are a number of things going on in this passage. What do you think some of these things mean or represent?

What is the significance of the sudden ability to speak in different languages that the believers now temporarily had?

How does this event feed into the promise Jesus made in chapter 1? How does it fulfil the Spirit's purpose that Jesus described?

Read: Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-48; 6:8-15; 8:26-31; 13:1-5; 11:27-30

These passages were selected to show a number of ways that the Holy Spirit is at work in the early church. As you read through these, take some time to explore and discuss the things you find. How would you expect to see these things taking place today? *Do we have any evidence of these things happening today?*

Read: Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12

Make a note of the many spiritual gifts that are listed in these passage, and briefly discuss in your group any that you might want to have clarified further.

How do these many gifts help to fulfil the promise Jesus made in Acts 1? How do these things help in the area of witness and living in power?

After taking all these verses in, and considering what you have covered in the four previous studies, discuss or consider these questions either as a group or in your own study time:

1. Is there a difference between 'receiving the Spirit' and a later 'baptism' in the Spirit? Should some of these gifts be apparent immediately in us after salvation, or is there an additional experience to be had?

2. What should you expect from the Spirit when you come into faith in Christ; and when should you expect to see “charismatic gifts” becoming evident in a believer’s life?

Note: If you elect to do this in your own time, we strongly advise you to take some time to discuss your findings and conclusions with someone afterwards!

Your own reflections:

You are now invited to summarise what you've learned in the space below, in particular considering how you might explain these things to another person if they asked you.

Now for some reflection on the whole topic of the Holy Spirit...

Take some time to look over all 5 summary notes pages in this study. When you are ready, take some time to write down a summary of the person, work and identity of the Holy Spirit that you might share with another person if you were given a few minutes to do so. While this is a massive topic, try to stay within the space provided here in this booklet, as a way of limiting your reflection to a few significant things.

Where to from here?

This third book is a pretty important one, and you have done well if you have now completed all three in the series thus far!

There is an amazing invitation in scripture to know God in a really powerful, unique and healing way, and our next book in the series looks in detail at this topic. So, *Book 4: Understanding the Father* is a powerful next step. We wish you well as you go on to know God in a really profound way!

The Elementary Series

Book 1:

Understanding Jesus

Book 2:

Understanding Salvation

Book 3:

Understanding the Holy Spirit

Book 4:

Understanding the Father

Book 5:

Understanding Christian Life & Community

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