

BiG IDEA SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Small groups that focus on the Big Idea for the week can use this guide to apply the message to life and take action. Feel free to use whatever parts of this guide best fit your group personality and time frame. All verses, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).

2.14/2.15.09 // THE STORY OF EVERYTHING – CHAPTER IV: HOLY SPIRIT

BiG iDEA: The Holy Spirit is Christ dwelling in us to empower us to live for God. So keep on being “filled with the Spirit.” Ephesians 5:18

// Ice Breaker _____

Option 1: The commercial said, “Be Like Mike. Drink Gatorade.” When you were a kid, who did you want to be like?

Option 2: What do you “fill” yourself with to get more energy or power? Coffee? Energy Drinks? Vitamins? Steroids (let’s hope not!)? Protein bars? Sugar? Something else?

// Questions for Discussion _____

While many people have heard a lot about God the Father and Jesus the Son, the Holy Spirit often remains an unknown “entity”, an “it”, and can often cause lots of confusion and even controversy. There is a tendency to go in one of two different directions: either people emphasize the miraculous outpourings of the Spirit to the exclusion of all else, or they act like the ministry of the Holy Spirit ended nearly 2,000 years ago and His work is mostly a relic of the past, and they assume nothing that miraculous could ever happen today.

What has been your experience or thoughts about the Holy Spirit before now? Did He play much of a part in whatever spiritual upbringing you have had?

We think that it would be so great to get to be with Jesus in the flesh—to see him face-to-face, listen to his voice, and walk side-by-side with the greatest man of all time! Every day would be a life-changing, history-making day! He’d be there to teach you, and help you live for God. But Jesus taught that we’re better off when He is absent and the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. What do you think about Jesus’ statement? How is it better to live in the era of the Spirit?

Read John 16:7-8

“I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”

Read Acts 1:8

“...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses...”

When we receive Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives. How do you feel about the idea of God being “in you”?

Read John 14:16-17, 26

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Read I Corinthians 6:19

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

When tempted to sin, we can remember God is within me giving me the strength to do the right thing. I can constantly ask God what He thinks and look for prompting from Him when seeking guidance. As we continue on our spiritual journey we learn to listen and recognize God’s voice.

Just as we recognize a friend's voice on the phone, we get to know the inner voice of God speaking to us. Can you describe how you recognize God speaking to you? If you can't, what do you think it would look like to "hear" Him?

Read John 10:4

[Jesus said] "...His [the shepherd] sheep follow him because they know his voice.

Read Galatians 5:25

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

There is a distinction made here between living and walking. It is possible to live and yet not walk with God. When we try to live a Christ-following life without the Holy Spirit, we fail. We need the Spirit in our lives to live as true Christ-followers. We can have the Spirit within us, and yet, not be headed in His direction—following His will. What are the biggest difficulties or obstacles you find to living a Christian life? Which fruit of the Spirit do you have the most trouble producing?

Read Galatians 5:16-17, 19-23

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.

We are also given gifts (Spirit-given abilities), but it is up to us whether we will choose to unwrap these gifts and use them for the good of the Church. What gift or gifts do you believe God has given you? Below is a partial list of these gifts...but there are many more. Have you ever sensed God using you, working through you in a way that went beyond what you could do naturally? Have you done something for God that would have or could have never done before?

Romans 12:6-8

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

When we receive Christ, we also receive the gift of the Spirit. But Ephesians 5:18 tells us to keep on being filled with the Spirit—the verb tense indicates a process. It is possible to be more "full" at some times than others. Imagine having a brand new 52-inch, LCD, flat-screen, HD TV attached to your family room wall. It's March Madness, it's the NHL playoffs, but it's not plugged in. Too many Christ-followers are missing out because we aren't plugging into the incredible power source we've received through the Holy Spirit living in us. Instead we try to follow Jesus with our own natural efforts...just trying harder...and then wonder why we aren't growing at all. How can we be filled with the Spirit?

Read 2 Peter 1:21

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Read Ephesians 6:17-18

17 Take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

With the Spirit IN US we can do what Jesus did and more. What do you think of Jesus' bold statement in John 14:12? What keeps us from experiencing that? What are some great things you,

and our church, can do for God?

Read John 14:12

[Jesus said] "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

// Application_____

Commit to memory Ephesians 5:18

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

In his book *Too Busy Not to Pray*, Bill Hybels wrote,

"People who make opportunities for the Holy Spirit to speak to them know that the Christian life is a continual adventure. It is full of surprises, thrills, challenges and mysteries. If you open your mind and heart to God's leadings, you will be amazed at what He will do. He is attempting to communicate with you more often than you know."

God wants to guide and lead you as you walk in the Holy Spirit. When you wake up each day this week declare, "I want to walk with You today. Lead me where You want me to go." When you are in a situation that is more than you can handle on your own say, "Holy Spirit, do what only You can do." As you ask, be ready to receive all God wants to give you. Journal the ways you feel the Holy Spirit at work in your life as you seek to live with Him. Be ready to share your experiences with others in your Christian community so that the whole body will be built up and encouraged.

"I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe Him. This is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 1:19-20)

// Prayer_____

Pray that you understand God's greatness.

Pray your will and desires are those of God.

Pray that you be sensitive to the Spirit's promptings.

Pray that God does powerful, supernatural works through us!