

Open

Life Group Leaders Guide

Objective

This guide contains the information and questions you will need to lead a life group study during our current sermon series. Our aim is to spark Spirit-led, Bible-centered conversations that anyone can participate in regardless of how biblically literate they may or may not be. **The win** that we want you to experience is when your group members **connect** more closely with each other and with God so that they are encouraged to move forward in living out their faith.

Directions

The *Purpose* and *Move* sections are for the leader to read to the group to provide clarity. **Do not feel pressured to cover all the questions.** Decide which ones may work best for your group. You will see brief notes interspersed between groups of questions to help give the group context for their answers. The *Notes and Commentary* section (when included) is optional reading for the leader to get background information and better understanding of the passages before leading the discussion.

Series Overview

The Holy Spirit is present in the life of every Christ-follower. He wants to transform us into persons who reflect the love, grace, and justice of Jesus. He wants to empower us to restore God's dream for this world. The question is: Are we open to the Holy Spirit?

To be "open" means both that we are receptive to the transforming presence of God and willing to be empowered by God. This three-week series challenges us to be open to all God wants to do in us and through us.

Open Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic
1	5/17	Open to the God in Us
2	5/24	Open to the God Who Transforms
3	5/31	Open to the God Who Empowers

The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

Open to the God Who Empowers

The Big Idea

The Holy Spirit empowers us to effectively join God in his mission.

Note to leader: Be sure to make time for the Next Steps at the end!

Flow of Study

Icebreaker: What super power have you secretly (or not so secretly) dreamed of having, and why?

Move #1: Let's begin by reflecting on this week's sermon.

1. What stood out to you most from this sermon on being empowered by the Holy Spirit?
2. How has this sermon series affected your relationship with the Holy Spirit?

Move #2: Next, let's look back at what the gospels say about the power behind Jesus' ministry.

Read Luke 4:14-15 (NIV)

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set the oppressed free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

3. What does this text suggest about the source of Jesus' power once he took human form?
4. What specific aspects of Jesus' ministry did the Holy Spirit empower him in, according to this text?

Move #3: Now, let's relate all of that to Jesus' promise and commission to his followers.

Read Acts 1:4-5, 8 (NIV)

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." ...

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

5. What was the mission that Jesus sent his followers to do? And how broad was its scope?
6. Though we haven't seen Jesus, in what ways are we still to be his witnesses today?
7. In what ways do you feel inadequate as a witness to others of Jesus' saving love?
8. Where did Jesus' apostles and first followers find the power to accomplish their mission? Why was this necessary?
9. If Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit's power to accomplish his mission, and the apostles depended on the Holy Spirit's power to accomplish theirs, whose power are you relying on to fulfill yours?

Read Acts 2:36-39 (NIV)

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

10. Who is promised the gift of the Holy Spirit?
11. How might embracing and relying on the Holy Spirit's empowerment be a game changer for you?

Next Steps: Let's conclude this discussion very practically. Accessing the Holy Spirit's empowerment requires opening yourself up to him. To do that, implement these things on a daily basis: (**Leader**, you might want to print and distribute or email the separate handout we created that outlines these steps.)

1. Ask him to guide you to people that he wants to touch through you (Acts 8:29).
2. Ask him to give you courage when you feel afraid to talk about Jesus and your faith (Acts 4:31).
3. Ask him to open the hearts of lost people that you know (Acts 10:44).
4. Ask him for the wisdom to know what to do, what to say, and how to say it (Acts 6:10).
5. Ask him to work miraculously in others' lives (Acts 9:17-18).
6. Trust him to do all of the above and seize the day (Acts 9:31)!

Prayer: End your study with a time of praying with and for each other. Take requests, but begin by praying this prayer together again:

Holy Spirit, I am OPEN to you. Thank you for sealing me as a child of God and giving me access to him. Make me ever-aware of your presence dwelling in me. Speak to me, transform me, empower me to be a witness for Jesus. I open myself up to you. Amen.

Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

On Acts 1

8 Instead of the political power which had once been the object of their ambitions, a power far greater and nobler would be theirs. When the Holy Spirit came upon them, Jesus assured them, they would be vested with heavenly power—that power by which, in the event, their mighty works were accomplished and their preaching made effective. As Jesus had been anointed at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and power, so his followers were now to be similarly anointed and enabled to carry on his work. This work would be a work of witness-bearing—a theme which is prominent in the apostolic preaching throughout Acts. An Old Testament prophet had called the people of Israel to be God’s witnesses in the world (Isa. 43:10; 44:8); the task which Israel had not fulfilled was taken on by Jesus, the perfect Servant of the Lord, and shared by him with his disciples. The close relation between God’s call to Israel, “you are my witnesses,” and the risen Lord’s commission to his apostles, “you will be my witnesses,” can be appreciated the more if we consider the implications of Paul’s quotation of Isa. 49:6 in Acts 13:47. There the heralds of the gospel are spoken of as a light for the Gentiles, bearing God’s salvation “to the end of the earth”; here “the end of the earth” and nothing short of that is to be the limit of the apostolic witness.

On Acts 2

38 Baptism in the Spirit is an inward work; baptism in water now becomes its external token. Baptism in water is thus given a richer significance than it formerly had, thanks to the saving work of Christ and the reception of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit which it was our Lord’s prerogative to bestow was, strictly speaking, something that took place once for all on the day of Pentecost when he poured out the promised gift on his disciples and thus constituted them the people of God in the new age; baptism in water continued to be the visible sign by which those who believed the gospel, repented of their sins, and acknowledged Jesus as Lord were publicly incorporated into the Spirit-baptized fellowship of the new people of God. ...

The gift of the Spirit is to be distinguished from the *gifts* of the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is the Spirit himself, bestowed by the exalted Lord under the Father’s authority; the gifts of the Spirit are those spiritual faculties which the Spirit imparts, as he “apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor. 12:11). ...This gift may comprehend a variety of *gifts* of the Spirit, but first and foremost “the saving benefits of Christ’s work as applied to the believer by the Spirit.” (F.F. Bruce, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of Acts*)