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W I N T E R 2 0 2 5 - 2 6

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

In your opinion, what does it take for a person to get to heaven and have eternal life?

The Bible answers this question in one word—**FAITH**.

F is for FORGIVENESS

- Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness: *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).
- God's forgiveness is in Jesus only: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

A is for AVAILABLE

- God's forgiveness is available for all: *"God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).
- God's forgiveness is available but not automatic: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

I is for IMPOSSIBLE

- It is impossible to get to heaven on our own: *"You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

T is for TURN

- Turn means repent. Turn away from sin and self and turn to Jesus alone as your Savior and Lord: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6); *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:9-10).

H is for HEAVEN

- Here . . . Eternal life begins now with Jesus: *"I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance"* (John 10:10).
- Hereafter . . . Heaven is a place where we will live with God forever: *"If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also"* (John 14:3).
- How . . . How can a person have God's forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven? By trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can do this right now by praying and asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and inviting Jesus into your heart.

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of a wonderful adventure with God! Follow Christ's command in baptism. Join a church where you can worship God and grow in your faith. Get involved in Sunday School and Bible study. Begin a daily personal worship time in which you study the Bible and pray.

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MasterWork: Essential Messages from God's Servants

Winter 2025–2026

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Books of Study

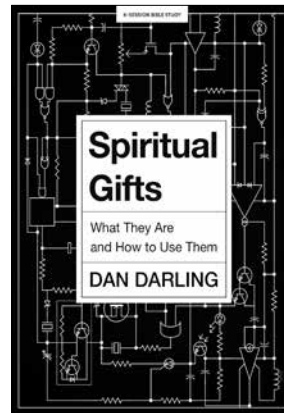
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God, Gift, and Guide

Gregg R. Allison

B&H Publishing Group
ISBN: 978-1-0877-6685-0



Spiritual Gifts

Dan Darling

Lifeway Press
ISBN: 978-1-0877-4265-6

How to Use

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

Group Members

1. Read Day One through Day Five prior to attending the group time. Complete the personal learning activities in bold type. Record your notes and questions.
2. Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group.
3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time.

Group Leader

1. Complete step 1 above.
2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the session. The main point of the session and the goal are printed on the leader guide pages at the end of each session. (See p. 19.) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session.

The main point of this session is: God's grace through Jesus's sacrifice transforms our spiritual ruin into righteousness through faith.

Focus on this goal: Salvation is not earned by works but is a free gift available to all through faith in Christ.

Key Bible Passage: Romans 3:23-24

Leader Guide

3. Read and study the key Bible passages listed at the top of the teaching plan.
4. Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book.

- One option is to follow the leader guide at the end of each session.
- A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the sessions. Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.

Written by forty authors over 1,600 years, sixty-six books tell one seamless story about how God redeems us, and has a future for us. Let's explore the full story of Scripture.

How does this story fit with Christians who live in a world of chaos and suffering?

DISCUSS

When might a visit to a library be overwhelming? When might it be exciting?

Discussion Questions

5. Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at masterwork.lifeway.com to fit your group.
6. Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
7. Arrive early, praying for the group time.

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this session is: God's grace through Jesus' sacrificial love redeems us and calls us to live righteously through faith.

Focus on this goal: Salvation is not earned by works but it is a free gift available to all through faith in Christ.

Key Bible Passage: Romans 3:23-24

Before the Session

1. You'll continue to use the large paper labeled "Grace" throughout this session. Today you'll add it to Step 1 and add it to Step 2.
2. Bring an item from home that has been restored or refurbished. If the item is too large, take a photo and be ready to show that with your class. You'll do that in Step 1.
3. Bring hymns to sing again, or have lyrics to "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus" ready for Step 2.

During the Session

STEP 1: Create Interest / Jungtari Discussion

Open class by drawing members' attention to the restored item (or photo of an item you brought to class).

Share how the work was accomplished, how long it took, and so on.

With encouragement, **point out** that the item itself did not do any of the work; it was you (or your passion, whatever took on the project) that is 100% responsible for the transformation.

Point to the large "Grace" poster: your words on last week and today reveal what you discussed.

Leader Guide

masterwork.lifeway.com

masterwork

Study Series: Scounders
Author: Angie Smith

Lesson Title: "The Beginning" (pp. 6-13)
Session 1
September 4, 2022

The main point of this lesson is: God begins to create the universe and the plan for the redemption of the world.

Focus on this goal: To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning to their walk with Christ.

Key Bible Passages: Genesis 1-11

Before the Session

1. Prepare TBB (Step 1).
2. Gather TBB (Step 2).

During the Session

Step 1: Title

Scripture is the foundation of our faith. It's the word of God that we turn to for guidance and inspiration. It's the word of God that we turn to for guidance and inspiration. It's the word of God that we turn to for guidance and inspiration.

Note: Reading or watching and listening to the scriptures, and to help us see how all the stories fit together. **Goal:** That's the goal of Scripture as well. We can know God best without Bible.

Customizable Teaching Plan



GOD, GIFT, AND GUIDE: KNOWING THE HOLY SPIRIT

ABOUT THE WRITERS

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Leslie Hudson

contributed learning activities, discussion prompts, and teaching plans for this study. A member of First Baptist Church, Dickson, Tennessee, Hudson helps others find “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” in God’s Word.

The Holy Spirit is God, gift, and guide. We are to worship the Holy Spirit, who is the third Person of the Trinity, fully God, equal in nature to the Father and the Son. Still, He is distinct from them, being characterized by eternal procession from the Father and the Son. In concert with those two, He engages in mighty acts.

His works include speaking, convicting, saving, illuminating, interceding, working in the church, and perfecting all the acts of the triune God. Together with the Father and the Son, He is to be worshiped for who He is and for what He does.

We are to walk with the Holy Spirit moment by moment. He fills us with the presence of the triune God, the fulfillment of promises given long ago. He gives us life as we are filled with the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, and keep in step with the Spirit. He guides us to do God’s will. Our posture of yielding to the Spirit prepares and empowers us to resist the lure of our flesh, or sinful nature, and thus to please God fully.

We are to work with the Holy Spirit by using His gifts. These include (among many others) serving, teaching, leading, showing mercy, prophecy, speaking in tongues, and healing.

I began this book with a claim: The greatest gift that God the Father gives to those who follow His Son is the Holy Spirit. I pray and hope that you agree. More important, I pray and hope you have made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life. Most important, I pray and hope you will love and adore the Holy Spirit for His presence and not just for His speaking, salvation, power, and gifts. To God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—be the glory in Christ Jesus and in the church!

DISCOVERING THE HOLY SPIRIT

Day 1

The Wonderful Discovery

As I made my way to the meeting, I wondered what the evening had in store for me. Little did I know that the Holy Spirit would transform my life forever.

I had become a Christian about a year and a half earlier. Though raised in a church, I had never believed the gospel: that Jesus Christ had died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins and had risen from the dead to accomplish my salvation.

While that experience in embracing Christ was quite dramatic, the feelings that arose from my conversion wore off several months later. This disappointment was true not only for me but for the sixty or so other high school friends who had made professions of faith that same weekend in October. We concluded that we had tried Christianity, and it had failed us.

We went our separate ways to different universities the following fall. One of my friends, Jim, who had become a Christian the same weekend I had, wrote me a series of letters—eleven unanswered letters. He urged me to check out a group called Campus Crusade for Christ (now Cru) because it had helped him to live for Jesus Christ.

My first semester of freshman year, I had no interest in heeding the encouragement of my friend. At the start of my second semester, however, mired in a typical freshman crisis, I determined I needed to find Cru and attend one of its meetings. When I spied a flyer with information about a Thursday evening Cru get together in one of the residence halls, my interest was piqued.

As I made my way to the meeting, my introverted nature began to kick in. I had strong doubts that Cru would be for me. Still, I continued on,

DISCUSS

Consider one moment in your past that you point to in your life and say, “That! That moment changed me forever.” Can you share that time?

DISCUSS

Have you ever “tried” Christianity and found it lacking? What changed in your life and heart?

eventually entering the doors of the dorm. What I saw only confirmed my suspicions: a bunch of weird-looking students were milling around, talking and smiling. They had huge crosses hanging from their necks and strange pins attached to their shirts and blouses that read: “one way,” “Jesus is a bridge over troubled waters,” “in case of rapture,” “my leader is a Jewish carpenter.” Definitely strange!

About ready to pivot and exit the door from which I had just entered, I glanced at a hulk of a man, Chris, standing near me. He had a flaming red afro and a long red beard. Spying me, and perhaps sensing my doubts, he beckoned with his index finger for me to come his way. Mesmerized, I drew near to him and, mysteriously, entered into the meeting room where Cru was about to start its worship time.

After a few songs, prayers, and announcements, the leader of Cru, Steve, directed us to choose one of several breakout sessions to attend. One session title intrigued me because I wanted to find out the answer to its question: “Have you ever made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life?” What “Spirit-filled” meant, I had no idea. But it sounded interesting, so I moved to the room in which the session was being held.

1. What does “Spirit-filled” mean to you today?

Write your description here.

An hour later, I had come to the realization that God never intended for me to try to live the Christian life in my own power and by my own efforts. Following Jesus was impossible by trying hard by myself. Quite the contrary: God had provided all the resources for me to live for Jesus, and I needed to rely on what He had provided. One essential resource was the Holy Spirit. Not only had He been key in my conversion. He had come to dwell within me, and through relying on Him, I would be able to live a life that is fully pleasing to God. So, at the end of that session, I asked the Holy Spirit to fill me.

I made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life! That critical moment was the turning point in my Christian life. It propelled me, together with the woman who would later become my wife, to work on Cru staff for eighteen years. To this day, it compels me to teach, speak, and

write on the Holy Spirit. If you have not already done so, maybe you, too, will make the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life!

2. On a scale of one to ten, what would you rate the filling of the Spirit in your own life today?

1. None, nada, zilch Spirit.

3. I feel the Spirit move sometimes, in passionate worship or at a funeral.

5. When all is going well, I am aware of the Spirit on a somewhat regular basis.

7. The Spirit's presence is with me when I pray, worship, and study the Bible.

10. I feel the Spirit with me pretty much all the time.

Day 2

The Good Gift

What would we be missing if there were no Holy Spirit? In a word: everything! In my experience, this answer is not the one many Christians would give to that question. I find much confusion about the Holy Spirit, along with a lot of fear of the Holy Spirit. But why? Why is there confusion, hesitancy, ignorance, anxiety, worry, and fear when it comes to the Spirit of God?

To start with, some Christians wonder who the Holy Spirit is. Is the Spirit fully God, equal to God the Father and God the Son? Or is He less than the Father and the Son, a kind of junior god hoping to one day be called from the developmental squad to be on the pro team along with the Father and the Son?

Is the Spirit a person—not a human person, but a divine person? Or is the Spirit a force, a power, an influence? After all, it's fairly easy to understand the personhood of the other two simply by considering

DISCUSS

How important is the Holy Spirit to a Christian?

How important is the Spirit in your own life?

DISCUSS

Has anyone ever explained the Holy Spirit to you in a way that makes sense and is memorable? What was that explanation?

their names: Father (clearly a person) and Son (clearly a person). But what about the Spirit? Not clearly a person, perhaps closer to a strength (we often say, “Yeah, that’s the spirit”) or closer to vigor (we may say, “She’s in good spirits!”). And (without wishing to offend anyone) the traditional name “Holy Ghost” conjures up visits from ghouls and spooks on Halloween. They are certainly not divine! So, is the Holy Spirit just the power of God?

If we believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal to God the Father and God the Son, then should we worship the Holy Spirit? In the same way and to the same extent that we worship the Father and the Son? Should we trust and obey the Holy Spirit? In the same way and to the same extent that we trust and obey the Father and the Son? Should we pray to the Holy Spirit? In the same way and to the same extent that we pray to the Father and the Son? Should we seek to glorify the Holy Spirit? In the same way and to the same extent that we seek to glorify the Father and the Son?

1: There are several questions about the Holy Spirit in the above paragraphs. What are some additional questions you may have about Him? Write them in the space below.

Sadly, more than just confusion and ignorance reigns in regard to the Holy Spirit’s work among God’s people. Fear sometimes grips Christians’ hearts as well. It may be fear of themselves—that they will be manipulated or, worse, may offend God. Or it may be fear of giving up control of their life—because they doubt that God is good.

It is this fear of what it may cost that paralyzes many Christians and prevents them from yielding fully to the Holy Spirit. So, we ignore the Spirit’s tugging at our heart or close off ourselves from seeking His direction.

2. Consider your own “fear of what it may cost” to yield fully to the Holy Spirit. What are some elements of your life that the Spirit may ask of you that you don’t want to give up?

There is confusion, hesitancy, ignorance, anxiety, worry, and fear when it comes to the Spirit of God. Rather than surrender consistently and continuously to Him, we quench the Holy Spirit, in disobedience to Paul's warning (1 Thess. 5:19 ESV).

If we think about Jesus's teaching about the Holy Spirit, such a posture doesn't make any sense. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses the goodness of His Father—who is our Father too. Jesus starts with an analogy with earthly—even evil—parents: they would never give their children a stone rather than bread or a serpent rather than a fish. He then extends the point to our heavenly Father: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him” (Matt. 7:11).

Interestingly, Luke's Gospel switches up the last promise about giving “good things”: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” (Luke 11:13).

Give good gifts. Give the Holy Spirit. Here's my claim: The greatest gift that God the Father gives to those who follow His Son is the Holy Spirit. That is, at the very top of the list of the “good gifts” that the Father gives to us Christians is the Holy Spirit.

Day 3

Three-in-One

The church, from its very beginning, has been Trinitarian, affirming that God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We find this Trinitarian orientation on the pages of the New Testament, such as Paul's apostolic blessing: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:13).

Salvation begins with the Trinity and brings Christians home to the Trinity, as Paul rehearses: “When the time came to completion, God sent

his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Gal. 4:4-6).

DISCUSS

According to Galatians 4:4-6, how do we receive the Holy Spirit?

Here, the three-in-one saves us: God (the Father), the Father-sent Son, and the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of the Father’s Son). Baptism of new believers is administered “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). God is triune.

1. What does the phrase “*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (Matt. 28:19, *italics added*) mean? Did this make sense to you when you were baptized?

The church, from its very beginning, has also been conscious of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. As an example, one of the earliest Christian writings outside of the New Testament offered this praise of church members: “a profound and abundant peace was given to you all, and you had an insatiable desire for doing good, while a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit was upon you all.”¹

Fittingly, then, the earliest church creeds, or confession of the Christian faith, had a Trinitarian structure to them: they affirm belief in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Perhaps you are familiar with the Apostles’ Creed, which confesses belief “in God the Father Almighty . . . and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord . . . and in the Holy Spirit.” Another early creed, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, expands on the church’s affirmation of the Holy Spirit:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.²

DISCUSS

Have you ever been taught that the Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son? How do the passages in this session point to the truth of that theology?

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, equal in terms of nature, power, and glory with the Father (the first person) and the Son (the second person).

Thus, whatever we may affirm of the Father:

He is all-powerful, everywhere present, all-knowing, eternal, independent, loving, just, unchanging, truthful, faithful, wise, holy, good, and more; we may equally affirm of the Son: he is all-powerful, everywhere present, all-knowing, eternal, independent, loving, just, unchanging, truthful, faithful, wise, holy, good, and more; and we may equally affirm of the Holy Spirit: he is all-powerful, everywhere present, all-knowing, eternal, independent, loving, just, unchanging, truthful, faithful, wise, holy, good, and more.³

Wait a minute! Isn't the Father just a little more powerful than the Son and the Spirit? Isn't the Son just a little more loving than the Father and the Spirit? Isn't the Spirit just a little more holy than the Father and the Son? No.

There is NO difference whatsoever between the three persons of the Trinity in terms of their nature, their attributes, or their divine characteristics. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit cannot be distinguished in any way according to their power, truthfulness, knowledge, justice, independence, and more. They are the three co-eminent persons of the Trinity.

2. Does your reading of Scripture honor the Spirit as much as it does God the Father and God the Son? Why?

Do your prayers honor the Spirit as God? Why?

**How can you elevate your understanding of the Spirit's identity?
Don't rush into this answer!**

Day 4

The Holy Spirit Is Fully God

The New Testament affirms the deity of the Holy Spirit when it attributes the divine actions of Yahweh (recounted in the Old Testament) to the Holy Spirit. For example, the transformation from spiritual blindness to freely seeing the Lord is, in Exodus 34:29-35, ascribed to Yahweh.

In 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, restoration of spiritual sight is ascribed to “the Lord who is the Spirit” (v. 18). As another example, Jeremiah 31:31-34 attributes the establishment of the new covenant to Yahweh, yet the writer to the Hebrews (Heb. 10:15-18) attributes its establishment to the Holy Spirit. Divine actions of Yahweh are divine actions of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is God.

1. Choose one of the above pairs (Ex. 34:29-35 and 2 Cor. 3:12-18 or Jer. 31:31-34 and Heb. 10:15-18) and read both carefully. In the space below, summarize both verses and how Scripture also supports the Creed’s confession that the Holy Spirit is “the Giver of Life,” that is, the Creator.

Scripture also supports the Creed’s confession that the Holy Spirit is “the Giver of Life,” that is, the Creator. Commonly, we associate creation with the first person of the Trinity. God the Father is the one who spoke, and the universe and everything that it contains came into existence. For example, “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). This truth leads us to affirm also that creation took place through the second person of the Trinity. That is, the Father spoke creation into existence through His Word, who is God the Son: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created” (John 1:1-3). Paul confirms the Son’s active role in creation:

Everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him. (Col. 1:16; also Heb. 1:2)

The Father and the Son were engaged in the creation of heaven, earth, visible things, and invisible things. But what of the third person and His role in creation? The Bible begins with an affirmation of the Spirit's creative work: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters" (Gen. 1:1-2). The original state of the world as spoken by the Father through His Word, the Son, was formless (unstructured), empty (void of life), dark (pitch black so nothing could be seen), and watery (without a solid surface).

To say the least, the original creation was unready to host living things, especially human beings. The role of the Spirit—the one "hovering over" this undefined mass—was to ready it for the upcoming work of the six-day creation. As the Father spoke through His Word, the Spirit spurred on the raw materials to respond obediently to the creation commands. So, for example, "God said, 'Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so" (Gen. 1:9). The water was gathered, and the land appeared, by God's spoken Word and prepared by the Spirit of God to carry out His will for creation.⁴

As "the Lord and Giver of Life," the Spirit is fully God. The Holy Spirit is Creator. He is to be worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son (who are divine persons). He spoke by the prophets. These truths that the church confesses imply that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, not a power, a force, or an influence. The same can be concluded by considering the personal characteristics exhibited by the Spirit:

intelligence: He knows all things, including the depths of God and the future (1 Cor. 2:10-11; John 16:13).
emotions: the Spirit can be grieved (Eph. 4:30).
will: the Spirit sovereignly distributes spiritual gifts to church members (1 Cor. 12:11).

DISCUSS

Had you ever noticed the presence of the Spirit (Gen. 1:2) at creation? How does this shape your understanding of this third person of the Trinity?

DISCUSS

Why does it matter that we see the Spirit as a person and not as a force?

2. Look up one of the verses above. How does understanding the Spirit help you recognize that He is a person and not a force?

Additionally, the activities in which the Holy Spirit engages—teaching (John 14:26), praying (Rom. 8:26-27), speaking (John 16:13), bearing witness (John 15:26)—point to His personhood. A power doesn't teach. A force doesn't pray. An influence doesn't speak. A vigor doesn't bear witness. The Holy Spirit is a divine person, fully God.

Day 5

Back to God

You may be wondering at this point how the Holy Spirit is different from God the Father and God the Son. We have been emphasizing the common nature of the three persons, explaining there is no distinction in terms of their divine attributes of all-powerfulness, love, holiness, unchangeableness, and the like.

And we have affirmed with the early creeds that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are together to be worshiped and glorified. So, how are there three persons? How do we distinguish between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Specifically, for our purposes, how is the Spirit different from the other two divine persons?

Let me take a brief detour and offer a basic primer on the Trinity. (Warning: this topic is the deepest and most difficult doctrine there is, so don't despair if it takes you a few passes through this material!) By the end, you'll see the payoff: how God the Holy Spirit engages in a mission to rescue us from sin and death. Beautifully, His mission is linked to the

mission of God the Son incarnate, and together they bring us back to God the Father—that God may be all in all!

There are seven points in our primer:⁵

1. There was never a time in which God did not exist.
2. There was never a time in which there existed a generic god.
3. There was never a time in which God was only the Father.
4. There was never a time in which God was only the Father and the Son.
5. There was never a time in which God was not the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
6. God eternally exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
7. So how are the three persons distinct? (Here's where we take a deep dive.) The three persons differ according to their eternal relations.⁶

1. Can you summarize the above seven points into one sentence?

Write it in the space below.

Specifically, there are two relations of the triune God: these are called relations of origin (we'll see the reason for this name shortly) or processions.

The first procession is the relation of the Father and the Son. This is called *eternal generation* (or *eternal begottenness*). Put very simply, there has forever been a unique, special relationship between the Father and the Son.

The second procession is the relation of the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit; this is called *eternal procession* (or *eternal spiration*).⁷ Put very simply, there has forever been a unique, special relationship between the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These two processions distinguish the three persons of the Trinity within the triune God Himself:

- Procession 1: the Father and the Son
- Procession 2: the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit

You will note there is no procession in regard to the Father: He is not eternally generated. He does not eternally proceed. This is due to the Father being first in order, the source of the two processions. Indeed, the eternal characteristic that is unique to the Father is *paternity*. As the

DISCUSS

Why are the above seven points important for us to understand? How do the shared characteristics of the Trinity propel or shape our faith?

first person in relation to the second person, He is eternally *the Father* of the Son.

As the source of the eternal processions, the Father is the originator of the processions. Thus, the processions are also called “relations of *origin*.”

The first procession—*eternal generation*—is the relation of origin with respect to the Father and the Son. The eternal characteristic that is unique to the Son is *generation*. The first person eternally generates the second person. This does not mean that the Father created the Son. The Son is not created by the Father. It does not mean that the Son borrows deity from the Father. The Father does not lend “godness” to the Son. Rather, it means that the first person eternally grants the second person His person-of-the-divine-Son. He is *the Son* of the Father.

The second procession—*eternal procession*—is the relation of origin with respect to the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The eternal characteristic that is unique to the Holy Spirit is procession. The third person eternally proceeds from the first person and the second person. This does not mean that the Father and the Son created the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not created by the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit does not borrow deity from the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son do not lend “godness” to the Spirit. Rather, it means that the first person and second person eternally grant the third person His person-of-the-divine Spirit. The Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father and the Son.

DISCUSS

Can we boil these sentences down into the main points? What should we take away from this explanation?

1. Clement of Rome, *First Letter to the Corinthians*, ch. 2. ANF 1:5.
2. Nicene-Constantinople Creed (381), with the addition of “and the Son” from the Third Synod of Toledo (Spain) in 589. The Western church—the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches—affirms the addition “and the Son,” while Eastern Orthodox churches do not.
3. Adapted from Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Holy Spirit: Theology for the People of God* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 238.
4. For support for this role of the Holy Spirit in the original creation, see my fuller discussion in Allison and Kostenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 296–301.
5. These ideas are developed in Allison and Kostenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 255–64.
6. The distinction in eternal relations is one of two ways of distinguishing between the three persons. The distinction in roles with respect to creation, providence, salvation, and other divine works is the second way. It will not be discussed in this book, which concentrates on the works of the Holy Spirit.
7. *Spiration* has the idea of breathing. You will note that the word *procession* is used in two different ways. *Procession* in the first sense refers to both the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. *Procession* in the second sense refers only to the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit. The language of “procession” comes from Jesus’s teaching about the Holy Spirit: “When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who *proceeds* from the Father—he will testify about me” (John 15:26).

LEADER GUIDE

The main point of this session is: The Holy Spirit empowers believers to follow Jesus, live in obedience, and experience true transformation.

Focus on this goal: The Holy Spirit helps believers understand who He is, embrace His presence and power, and learn to depend on Him daily.

Key Bible Passage: Galatians 4:6

Before the Session

1. **Write** “Empowers” on the board. You’ll use this as a focal word for the entire session.
2. **Enlist** a studious class member to be prepared to give a five-minute explanation of Day 5 in layman’s terms. You’ll do this in Step 6.

During the Session

STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

As learners arrive, **instruct** them to consider the word “empowers” on the board.

As class begins, **ask:** *What are some things that power your house? What powers your morning? What powers your car? Computer? Phone?*

Summarize the activity by guiding learners to see that there are a variety of power sources in their lives, making it possible to do all the things they need to do every day.

Ask: *What happens when one or more power sources is gone? How does that affect your life?*

Explain that you’re beginning a new book today, *God, Gift, and Guide: Knowing the Holy Spirit* by Gregg R. Allison. This session focuses on how the Holy Spirit empowers us.

Open with prayer.

STEP 2 - The Wonderful Discovery

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the opening two paragraphs of Day 1. If you have a similar experience, in which you “tried” Christianity and found it lacking, briefly share that.

Be prepared to **summarize** the rest of the Day 1, specifically that our author attended a class on the Spirit-filled life in college and it completely changed his life and his faith.

Ask: *What do you know about the Holy Spirit?* Provide a few moments for learners to share their answers.

STEP 3 - The Good Gift

Instruct learners to silently read paragraphs two and three from Day 2. (Both paragraphs contain lots of questions about the Holy Spirit.)

Engage learners in sharing their answers to the questions as well as adding some of their own.

Read aloud the paragraph that starts with the phrase “It is this fear” from Day 2.

Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11:13 aloud, noting that the phrase “good gifts” from Matthew is replaced with “Holy Spirit” in Luke.

Stress that God’s good gift is the Holy Spirit.

STEP 4 - Three-in-One

Read 2 Corinthians 13:13 and Galatians 4:4-6 aloud, pointing to the presence of all three persons of the Trinity in both passages.

Ask: *According to these passages, is there a hierarchy in the Trinity? Do we see the Father, Son, and Spirit as different in terms of their position or their actions?*

Read aloud the paragraph from the Day 3 that begins with the phrase “He is all-powerful.”

As a group, **consider** where your understanding of the Father, Son, and Spirit falls short of believing that the Spirit is equal with God the Father and Jesus (God the Son).

Read 2 Corinthians 13:13 and Galatians 4:4-6 again.

Ask: *How do these verses reveal the co-eminent persons of the Trinity?*

STEP 5 - The Holy Spirit Is Fully God

Enlist two volunteers to read Exodus 34:29-35 and 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 aloud. **Engage** your group in considering how these two passages, side by side, reveal that the Father is the Spirit.

Repeat the exercise with Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 10:15-18.

Repeat it one more time using Genesis 1:1-4 and John 1:1-3.

Ask: *After seeing the Bible's explanation of the Spirit's role in blindness, covenant, and creation, how do you see Him differently?*

Read the paragraph from the Day 4 that begins "As 'the Lord and Giver of Life,'" and the definitions following, aloud.

STEP 6 - Back to God

Say something along the lines of, *Day 5 was quite scholarly. So I've invited _____ (your pre-enlisted volunteer) to give us a simple explanation.*

Point out that Christians need not understand every element of our author's explanation, but we certainly should strive to be knowledgeable in our understanding of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

Engage learners in asking questions. Be sure to **say:** *"I don't know"* if you don't know the answer.

Write down the unanswered questions and challenge yourself to find the answers in the coming weeks.

STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Session

Instruct all learners to close their books and Bibles.

Ask: *Now, what did we learn today about the Holy Spirit?*

Stress the word "Empowers" on the board to kick-start learners' memories.

Ask: *Who is the Holy Spirit? Who is He not?*

Challenge learners to be diligent in their daily readings throughout this series, digging deeply and seeking knowledge from God's Word.

Close with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to continue revealing Himself to the group through the Word as they seek Him in Bible study and prayer.