



Sparks of the Spirit

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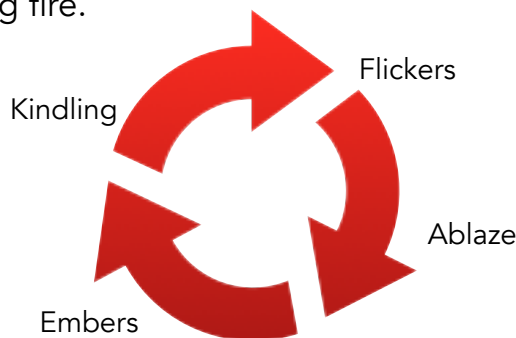
**Theme Resource Pack
Pentecost/May 2024
(5 May - 1 June)**

Introduction

We are Sparks of the Spirit! The Holy Spirit lit us, and tends to us, stokes us and builds us, rakes us and, with the softly glowing embers, kindles us again! So who is the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit work in us? What are the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit? And how do we maintain and sustain the fire given to us, passing on the torch from person to person, ministry to ministry? Group to group, generation to generation, glory to glory? (See 2 Corinthians 3:18)

Fire needs three things to function: fuel, heat and oxygen. Take away one part of the triangle and the fire won't catch. The Holy Spirit empowers us to find the fuel, guides us to build the heat, and then breathes the flame into life! All the fuel in the world won't spark if its cold and lifeless and a torrent of heat won't burst into flames without oxygen.

This May we remember the chemical reaction that started at Pentecost (see Acts 2) and we're still feeling its effect today. But the Holy Spirit is older than Pentecost and integral to God through the Trinity with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit works in us from the inside out maintaining the cycle of a living fire.



Overview

Our theme is divided into four weeks and charts a cycle of an ongoing fire. Week one the fire is kindled, like the hope kindled in Jesus's disciples in John chapters 14-16. In the second week the flames flicker into life like the vivid and haunting promises of Ezekiel in the visions of Ezekiel 36-37. Then at Pentecost in Acts 2, the fire is blazing as we consider the Gifts of the Spirit described in Galatians 5 and the Gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. In our final week we come to the warm embers of the fire, which can start new fires, far from extinct, but steady and ready to be kindled again as we read through the eternal wisdom of Romans 8.

Format

Every month we have a God-given theme delving into different aspects and areas of faith. Over the course of 2024 these themes connect and take us on a faith journey out into the wonders of life with Jesus. Our themes shape our Daily Worship, Sunday Live streams and all sorts of other creative things we get up to! It is broken into four sections that focus on a different topic each week. The weeks run Sunday - Saturday and each has a series of daily Bible readings and prompts for reflection.

First Sparks Who is the Holy Spirit? (Week 1, 5 May)

Introduction: Across chapters 14-16 of the Gospel of John we get to witness an incredible conversation. Jesus speaks to the disciples about what is to come for them and the world. He kindles in them a hope, sparks it into being, fans the flames and builds the fire as he speaks beautifully, enigmatically, and candidly, about the Holy Spirit who will help them keep the fire going!

Setting the scene: Building a campfire.

Seeds to sow: What is sparking into life in our neighbourhood, in our local community?

- 1. John 14: 1-7 Kindling hope.** 'Do not let your hearts be troubled' Jesus says to his disciples 2,000 years ago... and today! To the restless and uneasy, the discontent and anxious, Jesus says: there is room for you, and I'm not abandoning you. Into their uneasiness and apprehension he is about to introduce them to someone who will guide and comfort them...
- 2. John 14: 15-17 Catching the spark — Helper.** Sparks of encouragement fly as Jesus introduces the disciples to the Holy Spirit, their comforter, counsellor, helper, intercessor, and strengthener! Our recognisable helper who lives in us and is always with us – a constant presence of God's help.
- 3. John 14: 18-27 Feeding the flame — Teacher.** The Holy Spirit reminds us of everything Jesus teaches us. How beautiful is that? The Holy Spirit represents Jesus and helps us to remember, calls out to us, leads us to the love of Christ. What are we being taught this season? What do we need the Holy Spirit to remind us of?
- 4. John 15: 26-27 Sheltering the fire — Spirit of Truth.** The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, advocating for truth and encouraging us to shelter in the truth of God. The truth of the peace, love, protection and salvation of God as witness Jesus is the only way to the Father and an eternal, full life – a fire fully ablaze!
- 5. John 16: 1-11 Building the fire — Advocate.** In a world that often speaks in hopelessness, short term gain and selfishness the Holy Spirit advocates for hope, deep roots, and compassion; challenging conventional wisdom on sin, righteousness, and judgement. And the Advocate sent is in close fellowship with us so we might expect to advocate for these issues too.
- 6. John 16: 12-15 Maintaining the fire — Guide.** "...he will guide you into all the truth". The Holy Spirit is not a loose cannon or a runaway train with a disconnected message sent to misguide the Church. The Spirit is of God just as Jesus is. They are three notes of the same chord. The three people of Trinity complement each other. As such the Holy Spirit knows what is to come and announces this message from God to us, guiding us in God's plans.
- 7. John 16: 20-33 Spreading the fire...** Jesus does not promise his disciples they will never face opposition, hardship and adversity — indeed those in that room were about to face persecution — but he does promise them they will not be alone and that the world is already conquered. Take courage and be confident, you have the tender Comforter, Helper, Teacher, Advocate, Guide and Spirit of Truth on your side!

Flickering into vision, How the Holy Spirit works in us (Week 2, 12 May)

Introduction: We are instilled, imbued, infused, and enthused by the Spirit! The Holy Spirit is not some vague abstract energy that we have to try and grab hold of. The promised Holy Spirit already lives with us. From the inside out we catch light as we are drawn to hope! This week the beautiful and haunting imagery in Ezekiel gives us a compelling picture for thinking about the fundamental transformation the Holy Spirit brings to our lives.

Setting the scene: Glowing flames flickering in a fire.

Seeds to sow: What light is burning in the world that we can catch on to this week?

- 1. Ezekiel 36: 25-26 A new heart.** In the midst of this dark and vivid sequence with its strange and ornate language comes this detail about transformation that comes from within — a heart of flesh rather than a heart of stone. The Holy Spirit works on us from the inside out, making our hard hearts pliable and workable.
- 2. Ezekiel 37: 1-6 New sinews.** An incredible, haunting vision of transformation – the potential of life unleashed. Into the horror of a valley jam-packed with lifeless bones, words of life are prophesied promising incredible transformation. Where today do we see a senseless mess of different broken parts that no longer fit together — that no longer have life? How can the Holy Spirit help us to speak into that brokenness, to reknit, reconnect and reconstruct hope?
- 3. Ezekiel 37: 7-10 A new breath.** The Holy Spirit brings restoration, but not to preserve us as static monuments — like museum exhibits. But rather to breathe newness of life into us! How are we being animated by the breath of the Spirit today?
- 4. Ezekiel 37: 11-14 A spine-tingling vision.** The Holy Spirit reconnects us to hope as we are transformed from the inside out. This Spirit given hope is utterly game changing.
- 5. Ephesians 1: 15-23 The eyes of our heart.** The Holy Spirit works on us from the inside-out helping us to hold on to hope. In Ezekiel 37: 14 God declares He will put His Spirit in us, this Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation of insight into mysteries and secrets in the deep and intimate knowledge of Him. When the eyes of our heart are flooded with this light what do we see?!
- 6. Ephesians 3: 16-17 Strengthened in your inner being!** The fire of the Holy Spirit is not a flash in the pan, the flame catches light and then roots and grounds us.
- 7. Genesis 1: 1-2 On the move.** Like flames dancing in the fire, the Holy Spirit is always — has always been — on the move, inspiring and empowering us.

Ablaze — Pentecost (Week 3, 19 May)

Introduction: From the flames of Pentecost, to the fruit and then the gifts of the Holy Spirit!

Setting the scene: Flames dancing in a fire.

Seeds to sow: The flames of the Spirit bring heat *and* light, passion and insight! How do we ensure we don't just focus on the heat without light, or light instead of the heat?

- 1. Acts 2: 1-4 Tongues of fire.** Wonder and awe as the disciples receive power and gifts from the Holy Spirit.
- 2. Acts 2: 5-13 Mother tongue.** A multi-lingual explosion of communication that quickly spreads as the crowds hear the wonders of God in their own 'heart language'. What does it mean to hear things in your heart language, your mother tongue?
- 3. Galatians 5: 22-23 Taste the fruit!** The Holy Spirit always bears fruit! The Spirit may work in us from the inside, but that doesn't mean he stays there. There is an outworking from the inside out with the grace of the Spirit, blossoming and bearing fruit in the world. What are we manifesting of the Holy Spirit?
- 4. Galatians 5: 24-26 A recipe for wonder, following the steps.** A recipe is not simply a list of ingredients — in order to bring a dish to life there are steps to follow. But a recipe is not a line of code, or a construction manual — that always follows the exact same sequence — it's a living organic tradition that evolves and adapts to new ingredients and conditions. Keeping in step with the Spirit is a bit like holding on to a beloved family recipe and learning how, with the Spirit's expert help, to bring it to life with what you've got in the fridge today!
- 5. 1 Corinthians 12: 1-7 Straight from the source for the good of all.** The Holy Spirit is not a rogue agent, or a lone operative working to a mysterious agenda. Neither is he a mild fuzzy entity floating around the universe aimlessly channeling energy. The Holy Spirit, as part of the Trinity with Father and Son, is of God and acts entirely in accord with what we know of our Creator God and Messiah Jesus. One of the beauties of the Trinity is it shows us through God a beautiful vision of community with the three persons being distinct but complementary. One of the Spirit's complementary roles is to empower and activate the God-given gifts in us that are for our communal, shared benefit.
- 6. 1 Corinthians 12: 8-9 Rich diverse expression.** Here we read about some of the gifts the Holy Spirit can switch-on in us: Words of Wisdom bringing insight into the mysteries of God, Words of Knowledge offering understanding into the lives of others, wonder-working faith where we have absolute certainty God is at work in the world around us in specific situations, and the gift of healing to our minds, bodies and souls. Incredible God-powers activated by the Holy Spirit within us through interlocking gifts that work together to help others.
- 7. 1 Corinthians 12: 10-11 Wonder and awe.** Here we see miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues and interpretation! Incredible powerful, tender and sensitive gifts affording new insights and strength to serve within our united, multi-faceted communities.

Tending the embers (Week 4, 26 May)

Introduction: The glowing embers of a fire are not the beginning of it dying out, in fact they are very hot — the sign of a steady fire ready to flame again. The fire can be built up once more with fresh kindling. In many parts of the world including in the Scottish Highlands and Islands it was traditional for a long time to keep fires continually burning, never letting them go out. Part of maintaining the fire of the Holy Spirit in our lives is recognising the need for fresh kindling. To maintain a fire you can't simply block up the coals without adding new fuel and air. Without more fuel and oxygen the embers will eventually cool into ash. This week through Romans 8 we look to the deep heat of the glowing embers of the Holy Spirit's power.

Setting the scene: The glowing embers of a fire.

Seeds to sow: How can we use the embers of one ministry/project to spark the kindling of a new ministry/project?

- 1. Romans 8: 1-8 Freedom fire.** Just as fire frees up humanity's capacity — bringing light and warmth and food — the Spirit also brings us the fire of freedom, giving us insight, compassion and sustenance!
- 2. Romans 8: 9-11 Inner fire.** The inner fire that the Spirit gives us is not dependent on money, resources, status, or connections! There is a fire burning within us no one can take away.
- 3. Romans 8: 12-17 Heirs to the hearth.** The home fire burns within us, The Holy Spirit tends it, keeping us warm, reminding us we are in God's family with the Holy Spirit and that we can all cry out Abba! This fire is to warm more than us, who else can come?
- 4. Romans 8: 18-25 Hope burns.** Hope burns within us, even in the midst of darkness and trial. A Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life brings blissful things to creation too.
- 5. Romans 8: 26-27 Breathing into the fire.** Just as a fire needs oxygen, the Holy Spirit sighs, breathing out for us; sometimes bringing a heavenly language to pray with.
- 6. Romans 8: 28-36 Keep the flame!** With this powerful Spirit of God tenderly at work in us to serve those around us with the good news of Christ, how are we playing our part in keeping the flame burning?
- 7. Romans 8: 37-39 Never extinguished.** While we have a role to play in carrying the fire it is not our sole responsibility — the burden is not on us as individuals, or even as a community — for the inseparable, inextinguishable love of God cannot burn out. The Holy Spirit carries the glowing embers ready for us to share the spark...