



# Sparks of the Spirit

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**Connect Bible Study Questions**  
**Pentecost/May 2024**  
**(5 May - 1 June)**

## Introduction

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. The following discussion questions adapt our theme for small Connect Bible study groups or for individual discipleship and we have additional resources in our monthly resource packs for daily and deeper reflection (check out this month's: [here.](#)).

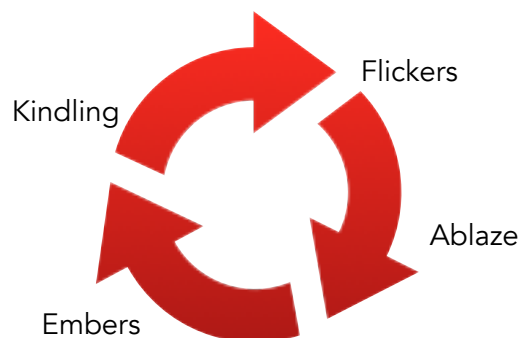
Each weekly session has questions and thoughts which correspond with our **Daily Worship** and **Sunday Live** topics. Our hope is you can use these Connect sessions as best fits your situation and discussions, so as presented or as your conversations lead with all the freedom to pick and adapt as you need. We love to hear how or indeed if, these materials are helping you grow in your faith and walk with Jesus, so please let us know!

## Theme

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.



## **Weekly 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.

## **Seeds to sow**

Each week begins with a seed to sow conversation starter. These are open-ended prompts to inspire creative responses to the themes. Perhaps they will inspire you to write a song or a poem, or to paint, draw, move or explore! They are short and sweet, simply a starting off place for you and your imagination. Expand, tailor and develop as suits you.

## **Format**

Each week is split into three question sections. We imagine the material could be the basis for a 90 minute session but feel free to adapt to your group and rearrange the order or adapt the content to suit you.

# Week 1: First Sparks, Who is the Holy Spirit?

## 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!

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

**Video:** Coming to [www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect](http://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect) soon!

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### 1) 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.

What does the Holy Spirit mean to you in your life?

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### 2) 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 do we think we are being taught this season? What do we need the Holy Spirit to remind us of? Are we listening? And how do we listen?

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### 3) John 16: 1-11

*Building the fire — Advocate.*

In a world that sometimes speaks in terms of hopelessness, short term gain, and selfishness ('What's the point?', 'Let's get what we can, when we can', 'You've got to look after number one...') the Holy Spirit advocates for hope, deep roots, and compassion; challenging conventional wisdom on sin, righteousness, and judgement. This Advocate sent is in close fellowship with us so we might expect to advocate for these issues too.

How can the Holy Spirit guide us to 'prove the world wrong' about hope, long term sustainable thinking, and generosity? Discuss!

# Week 2: Flickering into vision, How the Holy Spirit works in us

## 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.

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

**Video:** Coming to [www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect](http://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect) soon!

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### 1) Ezekiel 37: 1-6

*New sinews.*

In this reading we get to see an incredible, haunting vision of transformation. One that shows us the potential of life unleashed!

Into the horror of a valley jam-packed with lifeless bones, words of life are prophesied promising incredible transformation.

Picture the scene!

Now, where today do we see a senseless mess of different broken parts that no longer fit together — that no longer have life? Like a valley full of jumbled dry bones.

How can the Holy Spirit help us to speak into these situations of brokenness, to reknit, reconnect and reconstruct hope?

As a group you could take time to bring each of these situations to God in prayer afterwards.

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### 2) Ezekiel 37: 7-10

*A Wild Saviour, bringing transformation.*

The Holy Spirit brings restoration as we see vividly enacted in this reading. But this is not the restoration of a museum restorer, preserving static monuments — like roped off art exhibits. No we are restored to move! To flourish! We are not simply transformed FROM something we are transformed FOR something! For new life!

Where do we feel the animation of the Holy Spirit breathing new life and energy?

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### 3) 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. How can we be empowered by The Holy Spirit's hope today?

# Week 3: Ablaze — Pentecost

## Introduction:

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

**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?

**Video:** Coming to [www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect](http://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/connect) soon!

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### 1) Acts 2: 1-13

*Mother tongue.*

At Pentecost there was a multi-lingual explosion of communication that quickly spreads as the crowds heard the wonders of God each in their first language!

What difference does it make to hear things in your 'heart language', in the words you first learnt to speak with?

What experiences have you had in hearing the words of God translated into different languages? Have you heard the Bible in Scots, Gaelic, Welsh, Punjabi, Polish?

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### 2) Galatians 5: 22-26

*A recipe for wonder, following the steps...*

A recipe is not just a list of ingredients. In order to bring a dish to life there are steps to follow. But a recipe is not a strict line of code, or a construction manual that always follows the exact same sequence. It's an 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.

How are we inspired to 'serve' the Fruit of the Spirit today in our local communities?

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### 3) 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11

*Rich diverse expression.*

Here we read about some of the incredible gifts that the Holy Spirit can switch-on in us. These tender and sensitive, interlocking God-given powers give us new insights and strength to work together to serve and help others, just as Jesus did. Are we aware of when and how God has been working in and through us with any of these gifts?

This list isn't exhaustive and the Spirit will often bring different gifts to us depending on who is around us. Which of these gifts do you think might be useful in our community just now and why?

## Week 4: Tending the embers

### 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 it 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!

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

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### 1) 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 belong in God's family and that we can all cry out Abba, Father!

But this fire is to warm more than us. How can we be part of drawing society away from a spirit of fear and towards a spirit of hope?

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### 2) Romans 8: 18-27

*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.

The liberation and freedom at work in us is meant for creation too. How are we working towards renewal not just for ourselves but also for our planet?

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### 3) Romans 8: 28-39

*Keep the flame!*

The fire is never extinguished! While we have a role to play in carrying the flame 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 always carries glowing embers ready for us to share the spark... In our small way we can play a part in keeping the fire going, passing on the warmth and light?

How can we help others catch the spark, feel the warmth, and see the light this week!?