

How the Spirit Acts

Scripture, page 1, 25 minutes.

Objective The candidates will practice discerning who they want to be.

1 Have your candidates and adult facilitators gather in small groups. Read aloud the first paragraph to recall what the confirmation candidates have learned about the Holy Spirit in the first session and introduce the topic of this second session—what scripture tells us about how the Spirit acts in us.

2 Read aloud the second paragraph to introducing the concept of naming. *The activity of naming refers to the work of struggling to put into words what happens in our lives and reflect on its meaning or to put into words our hopes and goals.*

3 Read aloud the next two paragraphs, which introduce the biblical patriarch Jacob. Direct volunteers in the small groups to read aloud the rest of Jacob's story and discuss the question at bottom right.

a. Ask candidates how wrestling fits as an image of their own discerning who they want to become. Appreciate the illustration of Jacob wrestling with God. Make sure your young people recognize this story is describing an inner struggle like their own. Ask for other images that express what discerning one's future and identity feels like.

b. Ask candidates what changing Jacob's name indicates. *Jacob is no longer the schemer but faces up to his past choices and shares his wealth with his brother. Note that he is the father of the twelve tribes that become Israel. His name is the name of the nation of Israel today.*



How the Spirit Acts

In the sacrament of confirmation a bishop seals the Christian with the gift of the Spirit of God. The Spirit who acts in us is the same Spirit who in the beginning stirs nothingness into life. This is the same Spirit who raises up leaders and speaks through prophets in Israel and who moves Jesus to begin his mission.

With new brainpower in the high school years comes increasing ability to name our experience. We put experiences and goals into words. What we can't put into words we may be unaware is happening. The work of finding words to describe our experiences—of naming our feelings, longings, gifts, and dreams—goes on throughout our lives.

The Old and New Testaments hold memories of how the Spirit has acted in the lives of our ancestors in faith. We inherit their stories to help us name the Spirit's activity in us.

From our ancestor Jacob we learn that we must wrestle with God and

struggle with ourselves to become the persons we want to be.

Jacob is a younger twin with no right to inherit his father's land or receive his blessing. But Jacob is shrewd. He gets his twin, Esau, to sell his birthright for a meal of lentil stew. Later with his mother's help Jacob tricks his nearly blind father into blessing him instead of Esau. Jacob's name means *he supplants, he tricks*.

Jacob goes north to find a wife. He sees a young woman named Rachel, bringing her father's sheep to a well. To marry her, Jacob works for Rachel's father seven years. But the trickster gets tricked. Rachel's father gives Jacob her older sister Leah to marry and demands that Jacob work seven more years to marry Rachel.

Jacob has twelve sons and a daughter with his wives Leah and Rachel and their serving women, Bilhah and Zilpah.

To support his large family, Jacob tricks his father-in-law. As wages, Jacob asks for the spotted and striped goats and the black sheep. Then he carefully breeds the flocks so his animals multiply and grow strong.

When God urges Jacob in a dream to return to his home in the south with all his flocks, he sets out. His father-in-law chases

Jacob and accuses him of stealing his daughters and flocks. Jacob insists he has worked 20 years for all he has. They work out a peaceful covenant.

Jacob must still face his brother. Messengers bring news that Esau is coming with 400 men. Jacob prays and reminds God, "You said, 'Return to your country.' ... Deliver me from the hand of my brother." Jacob sends droves of sheep ahead as gifts to his brother and has his family cross the river to camp for the night. Then:

Jacob was left alone. A man wrestled with him until daybreak.

When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved" (Genesis 32:24-30).

● What does this story about Jacob tell you about yourself?



c. Suggest as the Candidate Journal does that your young people read Genesis 33 to find out how Jacob/Israel's encounter with his brother goes.

d. Invite group members to share an experience as the question asks.

The Spirit Raises up Leaders

Scripture, page 2, 5 minutes.

Objective The candidates will explore the gifts the Spirit gives for making wise and fair decisions.

1 Have candidates read, study, and reflect on Isaiah 11.1-3 in groups with their adult leaders.

a. Leaders remind candidates that, as Christians, we inherit Israel's traditional understandings of the Spirit's activity in the world and in people.

b. The Old Testament describes the Spirit as the breath of all creation in its creation stories.

c. The prophet Isaiah describes seven gifts of the Spirit in leaders like David and in Israel's hoped-for messiah.

2 Have a candidate read the left-hand column aloud in small group about how the Spirit raises up and gifts leaders.

The Spirit Gives Seven Gifts

Scripture, page 2, 20 minutes

Objective The candidates will explore the gifts the Spirit gives for making wise and fair decisions.

1 Have candidates take turns in small groups reading aloud the descriptions of each gift of the Spirit. Discuss each after the reading. Invite candidates to help each other understand the gifts.

2 Read aloud the introduction and activity directions. The activity will help candidates see how each of the seven gifts contributes toward making wise and fair decisions.

a. Give your teens time to identify the challenge each wants to consider.

b. Have them work in pairs to consider how they will use each gift in making a decision.

c. Call candidates back into their small groups. Discuss each of the seven questions in relation of the example of deciding on a college. Here is a sample of how the gifts of the Spirit work together in making this decision:

The HOLY SPIRIT...

Raises UP Leaders

When the judge Samuel anoints the shepherd boy David with oil to make him Israel's king,

"The Spirit of God came mightily upon David from that day forward" (1 Samuel 16.13-14). David leads his people in battle and worship, unites the 12 tribes, writes psalms of praise we still pray, and repents when he sins. God promises to be with David's descendants as a royal house forever (2 Samuel 7.9-17).

None of his descendants reign as mightily in the Spirit as David. The prophet Isaiah laments the faithless rulers of his day. He also trusts God will never give up on Israel but will someday send a leader greater than David—the messiah. The Spirit will anoint this leader with gifts for making wise and fair decisions.

The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and courage, the spirit of knowledge and awe in God's presence. His delight shall be awe in God's presence.
Isaiah 11.1-3

Gives Seven Gifts



In the sacrament of confirmation the bishop prays that these same seven gifts of the Spirit will come upon each Christian. These gifts help us name and discern the stirrings of the Spirit within our spirits; they help us make wise and fair decisions.

Read below about each of the Spirit's seven gifts. Then think of a challenge you face in your life, such as choosing what college to attend or helping your class or youth group deal with an issue. Write in the spaces ways each gift of the Spirit can help you.



Wisdom is a gift people build up through practical experience. A wise person knows what to do in many situations and can place happenings in the big picture. A wise believer sees the people and events of human history fitting together in the large plan of God's love for us.

How can the gift of wisdom help me?



Understanding is the gift of thinking and reflecting on experience. People with understanding think things through for themselves and act on their experience and insights.

The gift of understanding?



Right Judgment is a willingness to consider the insights and understandings of others about a problem and to plan with them.

The gift of right judgment?



Courage is the strength to do what isn't always easy, to stand up for the unpopular, to speak the truth, to put one's self on the line to do what is right.

The gift of courage?



Knowledge is a gift for seeking out the facts and information necessary to make wise and fair decisions and for developing practical and technical expertise.

The gift of knowledge?



Reverence is a gift for honoring God and others. The pious person reveres and worships God. The pious person respects every neighbor with the respect we want for ourselves.

The gift of reverence?



Awe in God's Presence is the gift of revering God, not fearing God. It is the gift of awe at God's life-giving and life-sustaining presence in creation and in us.

The gift of awe in God's presence?

The gift of wisdom helps the teen look at the whole picture, to find out what each college has to offer, what their specialities are, what benefits or scholarships each has. It will help teens identify the kind of foundation they want to lay for their whole lives.

The gift of understanding will help candidates trust their experience and think through which college seems best.

The gift of right judgment will help candidates seek the advice of others who know about various colleges or how to apply or find a major or decide between two good choices.

The gift of courage will help a candidate stand up for his or her own

decision even if it isn't popular with parents, relatives, or friends.

The gift of knowledge will help the candidate accumulate the facts and information necessary to make a decision.

The gift of reverence will help candidates respect others in the process of making a decision, not get down on those who disagree with their choices, and recognize each person wants to be treated with respect just as they do.

The gift of awe in God's presence, also called fear of the Lord, will help candidates stay open to God in their decision making, accept God's sustaining presence in their lives, and ask for the Spirit's help in prayer.

Take a 10-minute, mid-point break.

The Spirit Anoints Jesus for Ministry

Scripture, page 3, 25 minutes.

Objective The candidates will interpret Jesus' anointing with the Spirit at his baptism.

1 Move the candidates' focus from Old to New Testament by reading the headlines on pages 2-3, which summarize the Spirit's activity.

2 Introduce the study of Jesus' baptism, a highly symbolic narrative. Help your teens use the knowledge they have to define a symbol.

a. Have teens recall familiar symbols—school team name, the two-fingered V sign for peace. Help them define a symbol. *Something that points to something else, or makes an invisible reality visible.*

b. Explain that the story of Jesus' baptism contains three symbols: a tear in the heavens, a dove, and a voice.

3 Have teens read this feature and answer the questions.

a. Discuss with a partner the reality to which each symbol points.

b. Share answers with the whole group.

The tear is an opening in the heavens. In Jesus, God is loose in the world. The Spirit comes through the opening upon Jesus. At Jesus' crucifixion Mark uses the same word to describe the veil that hung before the holy of holies in the temple. It is torn (15.38) to symbolize that nothing veils human beings from God after Jesus' death and resurrection.

The dove symbolizes spiritual motion between heaven and earth. The dove symbolizes the coming of the Spirit upon Jesus. It symbolizes hope and a time of peace like the dove that brought back an olive branch to Noah.

The voice is God's voice. Calling Jesus "my Son" identifies him as king or messiah, God's anointed. Psalm 2.7-9 describes the moment in the enthronement of Israel's kings when God claims them as sons.

Anoints Jesus for Ministry

In Mark's gospel the Spirit rips open the heaven to come upon Jesus at his baptism. A voice from heaven claims Jesus is "my Son." This scene pictures Jesus blessed with the Spirit and beloved by God. It shows us Jesus living in communion with God. In Jesus God becomes one of us to make known with a human heart and human hands that God is love.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn open and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. A voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." Mark 1.9-11

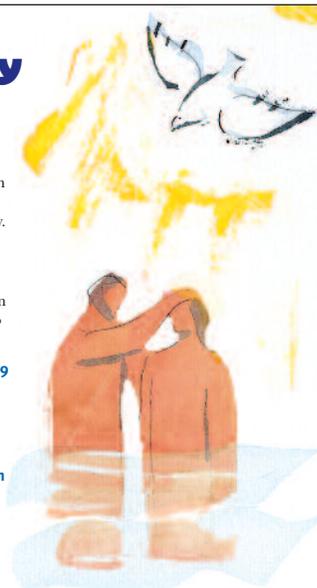
The baptism story has three symbols—a tear in the heavens, a dove, and a voice. A symbol points to something else, making visible an invisible reality. A flag symbolizes the spirit of the people of a country.

● What do you think the tear symbolizes? The dove? The voice?

Mark's gospel echoes stories from Israel's holy writings to express who Jesus is.

● See 2 Samuel 7.14 and Psalm 2.7-9 to find whom God addresses as "my son." See Genesis 22.2 to find a beloved son. How is Jesus like this son?

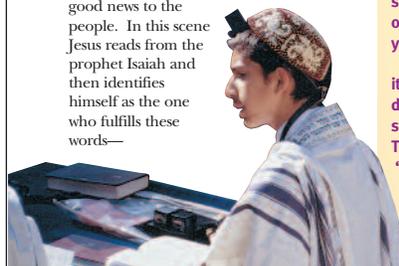
● See Isaiah 42.1 to find someone in whom God is well pleased. If Jesus is like this person, who is he?



Anoints Jesus for Prophecy

In his gospel Luke sees the Spirit of God at work in Jesus from beginning to end. In Luke's first chapter Mary asks the angel how she will conceive a child when she knows no man. The angel answers, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1.35). Only Luke has Jesus say as he dies on the cross, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23.46).

In chapter four Luke pictures Jesus as God's prophet anointed to bring good news to the people. In this scene Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah and then identifies himself as the one who fulfills these words—



When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Spirit has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of the God's favor."

He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4.16-21



The Spirit acts in Jesus to bring the poor good news. If the Spirit acts in us the same way, the Spirit will urge us to identify people who need healing and justice and respond to them.

● How can I expect the Spirit will act in me?

c. Summarize. The symbols show the Spirit anointing Jesus as messiah and the voice claiming Jesus as beloved Son, who will suffer.

The Spirit Anoints Jesus for Prophecy

Scripture, page 3, 15 minutes

Objective The candidates will recognize the Spirit anoints them to bring good news to the poor.

1 Introduce Luke's description of Jesus as God's Spirit-filled prophet by explaining that Mark and Luke give us different pictures of Jesus. In

Mark's story of Jesus' baptism the Spirit anoints Jesus as God's Son, who is the king or messiah. In his gospel Luke presents Jesus more as a prophet, a liberator of the poor and oppressed.

a. Read aloud the two paragraphs describing the Spirit's activity in Luke.

b. Invite a candidate to read Luke 4.16-21 for the whole group.

2 Read aloud the final paragraph on page 3. Ask candidates to respond to the question—How can I expect the Spirit will act in me? Their responses will introduce the page-4 activity.

Name Ways the Spirit Acts in Us

Scripture, page 4, 20 minutes.

Objective The candidates will recognize ways the Spirit of God acts in them.

1 Use the photos and accompanying questions to lead into faith sharing. Students interact and teach each other through insights in school. A young man bends to a child's height to talk and help. A young woman serves a meal at a homeless shelter. Craig Kielburger tells the story of Iqbal Masih, whose commitment to education inspired Craig to start Free the Children. Craig's story appears in session 5.

a. Have teens gather in twos or threes and share their personal responses to the four questions.

b. Watch the time and help teens move through all the questions.

2 Bring teens together to share responses, which should be actions candidates can take individually or as a group.

Who Are We?

Scripture, page 4, 10 minutes

Objective The candidates will recognize ways the Spirit of God acts in them.

1 Direct the candidates in small groups to read aloud and discuss the two parts of this activity—one from the missionary Paul and one from a young adult without a father. Direct teens to listen to how Paul's description of the Spirit's activity in Christians and Chris Morris's experience are alike. *Chris makes very real and personal the experience of Jesus and God as his Father in the absence of a human father.*

Closing Prayer

Leader Manual, "Names of God," page 62.

Preparation

1 Reproduce and distribute Leader Manual, page 62. Cut up the names of God on this page, at least one for each candidate.

Name Ways the SPIRIT Acts in Us



♦ What is an insight your classmates or family have appreciated you sharing?



♦ What is one way someone you know is held captive, for example, by drugs or fear or not knowing a language? What is one way you can help?



♦ What is one way you can be a prophet who works to end an oppression, such as child labor?



♦ What is one way you can bring good news to someone who is poor?

Who Are We?

The apostle Paul writes to the Christians in Rome about how the Spirit cries out in them. Read Romans 8.14-17 below. Then read Chris Morris's story at right.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!," it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

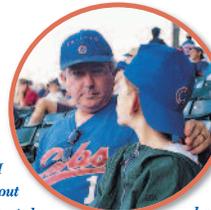
Romans 8.14-17



"My dad left when my mother was pregnant with me. My scout master, my pastor, friends of the family were role models for me, but you can't replace the father figure. I started to bond with my scout master, and I know he respected and liked me, but when his own son came around, I saw how differently he treated him. I had to deal with it.

"For nine months when I was 14, I cried myself to sleep every night. In this time I found the best father in the world, and that's Jesus Christ, God. I've turned to him many times.

"I went to Boy Scouts every Monday night. The guys in the troop might not have really



liked me, but they treated me as part of the group. I changed. A year later I had 10,000 friends. But I would not have survived without

God. I put my life in his hands. "It's amazing how God works in my life. For some reason I told my weightlifting partner about my crisis at 14. It turns out that he was going through almost the exact same thing. His parents were both sick, and he had no one to talk to."

♦ How is what Paul writes to the Romans like Chris's experience? Like your own?

2 Move to a space for prayer, where teens can sit on the floor.

3 Give each candidate a name of God you have cut out.

4 Listen to "Do Not Let Your Heart Be Troubled," David Haas, *With You by My Side*. Or, repeat your opening musical selection.

Prayer

1 Confirmation director plays a song or meditative instrumental music.

2 Leader prays as follows:
*Life-giving Spirit,
In you we live and move
and have our being.*

*Each day you show us the love
mothers and fathers
show their children.
We belong to you.
You pour out gifts in us
for making wise and fair decisions
and for becoming good news
to those in need among us.
Your names are our inheritance from
Israel, Jesus, and the first Christians.
Your names help us recognize
your presence with us now.
We call them out.*

Candidates call out the names of God you have given them.

All join hands to pray the *Our Father*.