The Holy Spirit

Diocese-Based Leadership Training Program
Mennonite Churches of East Africa (KMC/KMT)

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**Lesson 1. Understanding the Trinity**

*Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.* Deuteronomy 6:4

**One God or three Gods?**

- The Father is not the Son or the Spirit, but is completely God.
- The Son is not the Father or the Spirit, but is completely God.
- The Spirit is not the Father or the Son, but is completely God.

- The Bible teaches there is One God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5; 1 Corinthians 8:4)
- We are to worship no other (Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 42:8; 46:9)

**In the Old Testament,** God created by the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1-2). The prophets wrote about Immanuel, “God with us” to comfort and save his people (Isaiah 7:14; 40:1-5; 61:1-2).

**In the New Testament,** our understanding of God is developed further as God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 13:14).

We use the word *trinity* to describe God. But the Bible does not use the word *trinity,* it is a word that was formed by theologians in the fourth century to describe God as they understood the Bible. It expresses who God is according to the Bible, even when it exceeds our ability to understand with our limited minds, but we accept the witness of Scripture.

- Jesus said he is one with the Father. John 10:30; 14:9-11
- The Father sent the Son to save the world. John 3:16-17; 16:5; 17:4
- The Son asked the Father to send the Spirit. John 14:16-17

In the history of the church, theologians have described God as One in nature and purpose, with three persons (faces). They named this understanding of God *Trinity.* Each Person of the Trinity has different functions, but is One with the Almighty.

**Example 1:** The human body is one; many members (head, hands, feet) work in unity.

**Example 2:** Each person is one, but has many relationships (spouse, parent, brother/sister)

**Example 3:** The triangle is one shape with three sides.

![Diagram showing the Trinity]

Each person of the Trinity is separate from the others, but all are one in God.

- We know God as Father, the Giver of Life, Creator, Sending the Son and the Spirit.
- We know God as Son (Jesus), the Word, Final Revelation of God, the Redeemer.
- We know God as Spirit, the Power of God among us and Promise of Complete Salvation.

**Questions for discussion:**

1. Explain in your own words how you experience each of these: Father; Son; Spirit.
2. Do you find one of the Three, Father, Son, and Spirit, to be more meaningful in your life?
3. How will you explain the Holy Trinity to your Muslim neighbor so he understands we believe in one God with three persons, not three gods?
Lesson 2. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament – in Israel

God works in the world through the Holy Spirit, creating, sustaining, guiding, empowering.

In the Old Testament, God gave the Holy Spirit to persons for a special task, such as a king or prophet.

- The Holy Spirit gave them wisdom and power to do God’s work, or to bring God’s message, or to assure them of God’s presence.
- The Holy Spirit was given by God’s choice, not because the person was worthy or holy.

The Holy Spirit is Creator, and the source of life.

Genesis 1:1-2; Job 33:4. What was the work of the Holy Spirit in creation?

The Holy Spirit gives understanding and guidance

Nehemiah 9:20, 30. What people is this referring to? How did the Holy Spirit help them?
Job 32:8. In this verse, what is the source of true wisdom and understanding?

God was present with Israel through the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 139:7. How would you answer the question in this verse?
Haggai 2:4-5. What assurance does this verse give to the people of Israel?

The Holy Spirit empowered people for a special task.

Who did the Holy Spirit come on in each of these verses? What special task were they empowered for?

- Exodus 25:8; 31:1-5
- Deuteronomy 34:9
- Judges 6:34-35
- Judges 14:5-6
- 1 Samuel 10:1, 6-7
- 1 Samuel 16:13
- 1 Chronicles 28:11-12


Isaiah 61:1. Who is this talking about? When was the prophecy fulfilled? (Luke 4:18)
Joel 2:28-32. When was this verse fulfilled? (Acts 2:17-21)

Writers of Scripture (Old Testament) wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20-21. How were people in the Old Testament moved to write the Scriptures?

Questions for discussion:

1. How was the giving of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament different from the giving of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament?
2. How is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament similar to his work today? Do you see people today receiving special power for a special task?
Lesson 3. The Holy Spirit in the Life and Teaching of Jesus

- Jesus followed the tradition of the Old Testament prophets in proclaiming God’s word by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit and his ministry was empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus’ ministry demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit, but his teaching mentions the Holy Spirit only a few times.
- The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus. In the same way, we focus on Jesus and his work among us, which he does through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus

- Matthew 1:18-21. How was the child Jesus conceived in his mother Mary?
- Matthew 3:16-17. How did the Holy Spirit confirm Jesus baptism and call to ministry?
- Matthew 4:1. Where did the Holy Spirit lead Jesus?
- Luke 4:18. When Jesus announced his ministry to his hometown Nazareth, what power was on him?
- Matthew 12:28. By what power did Jesus cast out demons?

Teachings of Jesus about the Holy Spirit

- John 3:5-8. Jesus explained to Nicodemus what it means to be “born again.” What does it mean to be “born of the spirit”?
- John 7:37-39. Jesus compared the Holy Spirit to “streams of living water.” How does that describe the life of a person who has received the Holy Spirit?
- John 14:16-17. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit as our Helper, or Counselor. What kind of situations do we need a Helper or Counselor?
- John 14:18. Jesus said, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” How is the presence of the Holy Spirit like the presence of Jesus with his disciples?
- John 15:26. What did Jesus mean when he said the Holy Spirit will testify about Him?
- John 16:13-15. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and guides us into all truth. According to these verses, the Holy Spirit speaks on whose behalf?
- John 16:14. What are some ways the Holy Spirit brings glory to Jesus?

Jesus’ last words to his disciples

- Acts 1:4-5. Jesus warned his disciples that they should not begin their ministry “but wait for the gift my Father promised.” What was the gift God promised?
- Acts 1:8. Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit will give them power to do what?

Questions for discussion:

1. How did Jesus demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit in his life?
2. How is Jesus present in our life? What is the work of the Holy Spirit in our life? Is it the same?
3. Which should we talk about more, the presence of Jesus in our life, or the power of the Holy Spirit in our life?
Lesson 4. The Holy Spirit at Pentecost

- The Day of Pentecost was the birth of the church. On the Day of Pentecost, God made the power and presence of the Holy Spirit available to every believer.
- The Holy Spirit is the mark of a true disciple of Jesus, therefore it is the mark of the true church.
- Because of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the disciples received power to witness, power to suffer, and gathered together for worship, teaching, fellowship, and sharing in love. These are marks of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church.

**The Holy Spirit promised.** Acts 1:4-8, 14-15
- Acts 1:4-5. Before he ascended, what did Jesus tell them to wait for?
- Acts 1:6-8. What will the disciples do when the Holy Spirit comes on them?
- Acts 1:14. What did the disciples do while they were waiting?
- Acts 1:14. Who was included in the group of believers waiting for the Holy Spirit?
- Acts 1:15. How many people were in the group of believers?

**The Holy Spirit comes.** Acts 2:1-13
- Acts 2:1-2. What did the disciples hear?
- Acts 2:3. What did the disciples see?
- Acts 2:4. What did the disciples begin to do?
- Acts 2:5-11. What languages did they began to speak?

- Peter explained that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. Which prophet did he quote in Acts 2:16-21? Which prophet did he quote in verses 25-28?
- What did Peter say about Jesus in Acts 2:24? In verse 32? In verse 36?
- Acts 2:41. How many people were added to church on the Day of Pentecost?

**Life together in the Holy Spirit.** Acts 2:42-47
- What did the believers do when they gathered together?
- How are these activities signs of the Holy Spirit?

Questions for discussion:
1. Discuss the signs of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:41-47. Are some signs more important than others?
2. How is the Holy Spirit needed most in our churches today? What signs of the Holy Spirit do you see?
3. How does our church life compare to the description in Acts 2:42-47? What should we strengthen?
Lesson 5. The Holy Spirit in the Church

As a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, the church praises and worships God and brings forth the fruit of the Spirit. By the gifts of the Holy Spirit, all Christians are called to carry out their particular ministries. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church comes to unity in doctrine and action. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the church preaches, teaches, testifies, heals, loves, and suffers, following the example of Jesus its Lord.

From Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective, article 3.

- The church is believers gathered together in the Holy Spirit.
- The church is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 2:21-22
- The Holy Spirit empowers the church for worship, witness, and ministry.

Marks of the Holy Spirit in the church include:

1. **Worship.** Acts 2:42-47; Colossians 3:15-17. How do you see the Holy Spirit in worship?
3. **Spiritual gifts.** 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11.
   - What gifts are mentioned in these verses?
   - What is the purpose of spiritual gifts in the church? (see 1 Corinthians 14:12)
4. **Unity.** Ephesians 4:3-6. Why is peace and unity important to the church?
5. **Sending into ministry.** Acts 13:2-4. What ministry did the Holy Spirit send Barnabas and Saul to do?
6. **Strength in suffering.**
   - Acts 4:21-31. How did the Holy Spirit strengthen Peter and John when they were threatened by Jewish leaders? (verse 31)
   - Acts 5:40-42. Why did the apostles rejoice when they were beaten?
   - What were the apostles discussing in Acts 15? (verses 1-2).
   - In their decision, what did it mean, *it seemed good to the Holy Spirit*? (verse 28).
8. **Warning and counsel to remain faithful.** Revelation 2:1-3:22.
   - Who spoke warnings and counsel to the churches? (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29)
   - What were they warned about? (Revelation 2:4, 9, 14, 20; 3:2, 15-17)

Questions for discussion:

1. How did the Holy Spirit work in the church in Acts?
2. How is the church a *dwelling place in which God lives by his Spirit*? (Ephesians 2:21-22)
3. How have you seen the Holy Spirit guide decisions in the church?
4. What words of warning and counsel would the Holy Spirit say to your church?
Lesson 6. The Holy Spirit in the Believer – Gifts of the Spirit

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. 1 Corinthians 12:1

- Gifts of the Holy Spirit are abilities given to believers and empowered by the Holy Spirit for leadership and ministry. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were important in the early church. The apostles served the church by their spiritual gifts, and wrote about spiritual gifts to help believers to understand and use their gifts.
- The gifts of the Holy Spirit include gifts for leadership, gifts for ministry, and gifts that are signs of the Kingdom of God. The purpose of all gifts is to build up the people of God in a spirit of love.

4 Kinds of gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Acts 2:43

1) There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:4)
   - Gifts – ability given by God to each believer to serve others
   - Includes teaching, encouraging, leading, showing mercy (Romans 12:6-8)

2) There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. (1 Corinthians 12:5)
   - Serving – positions of church leadership and ministry
   - Includes apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher (Ephesians 4:11)

3) There are different kinds of working, but the same God. (1 Corinthians 12:6)
   - Working – the ways believers and the church are strengthened through our ministry
   - Includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, discernment, deliverance

4) Many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. (Acts 2:43)
   - Signs of the Kingdom of God – to show God’s power to unbelievers
   - Includes tongues, healing, casting out evil spirits (Luke 6:17-19; 1 Corinthians 12:28)

Concerning tongues: Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14 that we should not forbid speaking in tongues (v.39), but preaching (prophesying) is preferred in worship because it builds up the church more than tongues (v.3-4). Tongues are a sign to unbelievers (v.22). Paul does not teach that all believers speak in tongues.

What the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts

- Who decides what gifts are given to each believer? 1 Corinthians 12:11
- How do the spiritual gifts help the body of Christ? Ephesians 4:12
- What character is needed to make spiritual gifts effective? 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
- What is our main purpose in using spiritual gifts? 1 Corinthians 14:12

Questions for discussion:
1. Are some spiritual gifts more important than others?
2. Why is love needed to make spiritual gifts effective? 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
3. Why do some groups experience conflict and division about spiritual gifts, instead of unity?
4. How do we know if a person is empowered by the Holy Spirit, or is acting in his own strength to be seen and honored by others?
Lesson 7. The Holy Spirit in the Believer – Fruit of the Spirit

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature, but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. Romans 8:9

The Fruit of the Spirit:
- The fruit of the Spirit is to develop godly character in the believer.
- The fruit of the Spirit was demonstrated in the life of Jesus.
- The fruit of the Spirit is in contrast to the acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21), which is disobedience and rebellion against God.
- Redemption sets us free from the bondage of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:1).

Galatians 5:22-23. Fruit of the Spirit. How do these verses describe each of the qualities?
- Love. 1 John 4:18
- Joy. Nehemiah 8:10
- Peace. Philippians 4:7
- Patience. James 1:4
- Kindness. Ephesians 4:32
- Goodness. Galatians 6:10
- Faithfulness. Luke 16:10
- Gentleness. Colossians 3:12
- Self-control. 1 Corinthians 9:27

- What are the acts of the sinful nature?
- How do these verses describe living by the sinful nature?

Questions for discussion:
1. Give examples of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of Jesus.
2. Explain the teaching in Romans 8:5-9.
3. How can the believer overcome the desires of the sinful nature? (Galatians 5:16)
4. Read Romans 12:2. What is the meaning of "renewing of your mind"? How does the mind affect a person's whole life?
5. How does the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.) build up the church?
6. What is the difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit?
7. Is it possible to have gifts of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit?
Lesson 8. The Holy Spirit in Evangelism and Church Growth

**Evangelism** is announcing the **gospel**, the **good news** of Jesus Christ to those who have not believed. It is witnessing to the new life in Jesus Christ.

The **goal of evangelism** is to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who are growing in maturity.

**Evangelism in the New Testament:**

  - Why did Jesus ask first for a drink of water, and waited to tell her about living water?
- **Philip and the Ethiopian.** Acts 8:26-39
  - How did the Holy Spirit prepare the Ethiopian?
  - How did the Holy Spirit prepare Philip?
- **Peter and Cornelius.** Acts 10:1-48
  - What attitude did Peter need to overcome before he could share the gospel with Cornelius, a Gentile?

**The Holy Spirit calls to evangelism.** Act 13:2-4

- What was the work Barnabas and Saul were called to do?

**The Holy Spirit empowers for witness.** Acts 4:31-33

- How do these verses describe the power of the Holy Spirit in the apostles?

**The Holy Spirit gives joy in suffering for the gospel.** Acts 5:41-42

- What kind of persecution did the apostles suffer? (see Acts 5:40)

**The Holy Spirit convicts of sin.** John 16:7-8

- Who is the **Counselor** promised by Jesus?

**The Holy Spirit gives new life.** John 3:5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17

- How is physical birth an example of salvation?

**The Holy Spirit leads believers to maturity.**

- 2 Corinthians 3:18. Whose likeness are we being transformed into?
- John 16:13. How does the Holy Spirit lead us to maturity?

**The Holy Spirit adds to the church and dwells in the church.**

- Acts 2:46-47; 4:31-35. How did their fellowship attract new believers to the church?
- Ephesians 2:19-22. Who is the foundation for the church? Who dwells in the church?

**Questions for discussion:**

1. Why did Jesus tell the disciples to wait until they received the Holy Spirit? (Acts 1:4)
2. How did the Holy Spirit empower the disciples for evangelism?
3. What is the message we give when we do evangelism?
4. When we witness, should we tell people about their sins, or should we let the Holy Spirit bring conviction?
5. Read Matthew 5:16. How are we the “salt of the earth”? How do we “let our light shine”? How is being “salt” and “light” an act of evangelism?
Lesson 9. The Holy Spirit in the World

When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement. John 16:8

- The Bible talks about the world that is under the control of Satan, the deceiver, called the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).
- The evil world includes daily living, cultures, leaders, organizations, and governments (for example, read Revelation 18:2-3).
- The world is controlled by evil thoughts, desires, and actions. But even in the evil world, God is present through the Holy Spirit, guiding, empowering and redeeming.
- Jesus defeated the power and authority of the world through his death (John 12:31-33).

The believer and the world
- Believers are in the world (John 17:11), but do not belong to the world. (John 17:14)
- Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). When the devil offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, he did not accept them. (Matthew 4:8-10)
- Believers are warned to not love the world or anything in it. (1 John 2:15)
- Believers live in the world but do not act as the world acts. (2 Corinthians 10:3)
- Believers are salt and light in the world. (Matthew 5:13-16)

- The Holy Spirit will convince the world of Sin, because men do not believe in me. The Holy Spirit exposes unbelief in Jesus as Messiah and redeemer.
- The Holy Spirit will convince the world of Righteousness, because I am going to the Father. Jesus’ life and ministry demonstrates true righteousness, rejected by the world but affirmed by his resurrection and ascension.
- The Holy Spirit will convince the world of Judgement, because the prince of this world stands condemned. Satan and all evil is judged and defeated by Jesus’ life and death.

The Holy Spirit’s work in the world
1) The Holy Spirit gives power to do what? (Acts 1:8)
2) The Holy Spirit equips believers to stand against what powers? (Ephesians 6:11-18)
3) Who does God set up and bring down? (Psalm 75:7; Daniel 2:19-21)
4) What kind of rulers and leaders does the Holy Spirit empower? (Romans 13:3-4).

Questions for discussion:
1. What does it mean that we are “in the world,” but not “of the world”?
2. Why is it important to remember that we are in the world, but not of the world?
3. What does it mean to “not love the world or anything in it”?
4. Are all governments evil? What is God’s will for government?
5. How does the Holy Spirit use believers to change the world?
Lesson 10. Living in the Holy Spirit

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.* Ezekiel 36:26-27

- God’s purpose for us is to live in peace with God and each other, and to have a full life.
- Since Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, people live according to the desires of their sinful nature, and experience pain, sorrow, and sweat.
- God gave laws to his people Israel to guide their life, but they often disobeyed.
- Since Pentecost, God gives the Holy Spirit to live within the believer. Those who live by the Holy Spirit are not just guided by laws, but by the Spirit that lives in their heart. They are guided by love for God and love for other believers.
- The greatest sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life is not miracles or mighty works; it is to be led by the Spirit and to produce fruit of the Spirit in life.

**What it means to live in the Holy Spirit.** Romans 8:1-17

1. **Holy character.** ... *not live according to the sinful nature, but according to the Spirit.* (1-4)
   - The sinful nature leads to death; the Spirit gives life.
   - How can we be set free from the law of sin and death? (read verses 2-3)
2. **Spiritual thinking.** ...*have their minds set on what the Spirit desires* (5-8)
   - Spiritual thinking is having God’s thoughts about ourselves and others.
   - Describe the nature of the *mind controlled by the Spirit.* (read verse 6)
   - Describe the nature of the *sinful mind.* (read verse 7).
3. **Victory over sin.** ... *by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body* (9-13)
   - If the Spirit of God lives in us, what controls our actions? (read verse 9)
   - What does it mean to *put to death the misdeeds of the body?* (read verse 13)
4. **Guidance in truth.** ... *who are led by the Spirit of God* (14)
   - What does it mean to be *led by the Spirit of God?*
   - Read John 126:13. What does the Holy Spirit lead us into? What is truth?
5. **Children of God.** *The Spirit testifies... that we are God’s children* (15-17)
   - How does the Holy Spirit give testimony that we are God’s children? (read verse 16)
   - What do we share with Christ, as children of God? (17)
   - Living in the Holy Spirit is a life of *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*

**Questions for discussion:**

1) How is the resurrection of Jesus an example of our new life in the Spirit? (Romans 8:11)
2) How is life controlled by the Holy Spirit better than life controlled by the sinful nature?
3) What hinders people from living in the Holy Spirit?
4) How can we know if a person is filled with the Holy Spirit?