

June: Follow the Spirit

Introduction

If you want to know what the Spirit of God is all about, the best place to start is probably with the book of Acts in the Bible. Acts, the sequel to Jesus' story in the gospels, is actually short for "The Acts of the Apostles," but it has often been said that it should really be called "The Acts of the Spirit." Acts is the adventures of Jesus' followers in the early years of the church, and it turns out to be quite a good handbook on how the Spirit works. If you read it through you'll note many ways that God works through his Spirit.

In Acts 2 it's like a surprise party, bursting onto the scene and creating a ruckus. In chapter 3 it's God's healing power to bring a paraplegic to his feet. In Acts 4 it's simple boldness to speak up for Jesus. In Acts 6 it's the calling for some to look after the poor and vulnerable. Sometimes it's like a signpost, directing people to go somewhere or talk to someone or do something else. In Saul's case it was a sudden redirection, along with a brand new identity. For Peter in Acts 10 it was an eye-opening vision, throwing wide the gates so more people can experience the love and wonder of God. In chapter 13 it was wisdom to know what to do in a tricky situation, guiding people to follow Jesus into uncharted territory. Sometimes it was a simple reminder of the way and words of Jesus, sometimes it was a courageous step in an unexpected direction, sometimes it was a change of heart to become more compassionate and generous to the people around them. These are the adventures of people who follow the Spirit.

The challenge for us this month is to practise the art of walking by the Spirit too. And it will require some practise. It's not something that comes naturally to many of us. It didn't for the early church either. But then again, nobody ever sat down at a piano for the first time and played Mozart (well, except maybe Mozart). The good news is following the Spirit is an art that God himself helps us with. It's like if Mozart himself were your piano teacher, guiding your fingers and helping you learn the necessary skills.

So here are a couple of tips as we head into this month.

Firstly, make sure you really are open to the Spirit's leading. Often we think we already know what God wants us to do, but the Spirit doesn't always work like that. Maybe God wants you to do something new and unexpected that has never been done before! The key is to move with the Spirit, keeping our eyes and ears open to God's leading.

Also, look for the places where God is already working and see if you can join in. A key element this month is discovering what God is already doing among your family, friends, schoolmates and workmates, as well as in the rest of the world.

You might also like to read through the book of Acts this month. Take note of the many ways the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Jesus' followers.

And lastly, one of the key jobs of the Holy Spirit is to empower us to change, reform ourselves and live differently. It's the power to help us develop the fruits of the Spirit and live out the way of Jesus: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, humility, compassion, generosity and so on. See if you can develop more of these gifts this month. Are there any you could use God's help with?

Listen well this month to what God might be saying, and ask the Spirit to do its transforming work in your life. Learn the ways of Jesus, follow the Spirit, and may you slowly become a more striking contrast to the values of the world, and a more true representation of Jesus.



FAMILIES



MONK

- Read [Luke 18:35-43](#) as a family and ask God to show each person what He is saying through this story. Then, each go to a quiet place and write about or draw what you think God is saying. Talk about it together afterwards.
- Draw or cut out nine pictures of fruit and write the name of one of the fruits of the Spirit on each and stick them on the wall/fridge - Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-control. Over the next few weeks see if you can spot them in action around you - at school, at work, at home.



CHEERLEADER

- Look for five news articles which you think reflect something of the work of God's Spirit in the world. If you struggle to find examples in the mainstream media, try the [Good News Network](#). Talk together about how you decided whether the Spirit was at work or not.
- Talk about some decisions that family members are facing. Pray for God's guidance for each person and discuss how the verse "It seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit" (Acts 15:28) could help in making a good decision.
- Try this activity. Blow up 6 balloons to half-full. Up-end a table and place it on top of the balloons. Have everyone in the family climb onto the upside-down table. Do you think it will hold you all? You might be surprised. Consider this: even though you can't see God's Spirit, He is amazingly powerful.



ACTIVIST

- If we look closely, we can see God's fingerprints everywhere - in His creation and as He works in the world. Before everyone leaves the house one morning, have each member of the family put their fingerprints on a piece of paper using a stamp pad. As you go through the day use your ink-stained finger as a reminder to keep a look out for God's fingerprints in your world. Later in the day, have everyone write on the paper what they saw.
- Pray this prayer together as a family, "God, please show us what makes you sad and what you want us to do this month to help others". See what happens.