



GODCONNECTS™

A COURSE IN CHRISTIANITY



LHM.ORG/GODCONNECTS

DISCUSSION GUIDE - SESSION 6

USING THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

This is an interactive study guide. We designed it to be flexible so it will fit both group and personal use. It includes links, which provide extra information on Internet sites where you can browse and dig as deep as you want.

A PDF discussion guide containing all 12 sessions, as well as single session guides, are available at www.lhm.org/godconnects.

To find the discussion guide on the DVD, load it into your computer (not your DVD player). You can right click the menu. Push "Open" instead of "Play" and you will pull up a list of files, which includes the discussion guide.



ABOUT US

God Connects is a ministry of Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM). As a Christian outreach ministry, LHM supports churches worldwide, producing Christian radio and TV programming for broadcast, Internet and print communications, dramas, music, and outreach materials—all designed to reach unchurched people in the United States and more than 30 countries around the world. Lutheran Hour Ministries' flagship program, **The Lutheran Hour**, airs weekly on more than 1,400 stations and the American Forces Network. To learn more about this long-running Gospel program and LHM's other ministry resources, go to www.lhm.org.

CONTACT US

We would love to connect to you. Call us at **1-855-JOHN316 (1-855-564-6316)** E-mail to lhmresponse@lhm.org.

INTRODUCTION

GodConnects: In a difficult and confusing world, God is connecting to you!

God, are You there?

Everyone, at some point, asks this question. It can come at moments of sterile reflection or in times of deep despair. "God, if You are there, why don't You show Yourself to me?" In this confusing world where authenticity is so elusive, it seems like we cannot connect to God.

We could not connect to God, but the good news is that God connects with us. He has been doing this from the beginning in amazing ways. The most direct way God connected to us is when He became one of us in Jesus Christ. When Jesus was on this earth, He was the very revelation of God as He taught and healed and loved.

Then to restore our connection to God which had been shattered because of sin, on the cross, Jesus willingly paid the penalty for our sins—in His own death! This is the most authentic, startling and determined love the world could have ever imagined.

Now God connects to us by revealing Himself in the Bible. This God-given book has an amazing story. It tells of God's constant and compassionate work to restore our relationship with Him.

GodConnects wants to share that story with you. *GodConnects* is a course that tells this unique, unequalled story. Whether you do not believe in Christ as Savior or want to deepen your faith in Him, as you delve into *GodConnects* you will explore what the Bible says about this remarkably loving God, and how this love gives direction and meaning to your life today and forever.

On this website, you can explore these questions of faith. You will find videos and other up-to-date media that take advantage of today's technology.

So let's get started

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Session 6: A Course on Christianity

Opening Prayer: Lord God, Heavenly Father, You gave Your Son Jesus to save me from my sins. Now I want to learn about the Holy Spirit and what He does for us. Bless my studies in Jesus' Name. Amen.

6.1. WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity—one God with the Father and the Son. He is called God in the Bible:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:17)

He is not just the impersonal power of God or the energy of God. He is truly God—a personal Being. Jesus described the Holy Spirit as our Helper, Comforter and Counselor. He empowers us for living God-pleasing lives. He brings all of Jesus' gifts to us to equip us to accomplish our true purpose as we live on earth.

6.2. HOW LONG HAS THE HOLY SPIRIT BEEN AROUND?

He is the true and eternal God and was present at the creation of the world.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

He also was active in the lives of God's followers from the beginning. Even Joshua, an early figure in the Old Testament was described as someone in whom the Holy Spirit lived.

So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him." (Numbers 27:18)

6.3. WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

God the Father and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to spread the message of salvation through Jesus Christ in various ways.

1. He inspired each of the writers of the Bible, giving them every word that was written. The Bible is not a human invention. It is the product of the Holy Spirit!

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:21)

2. He was present in key ways in the work of the Son, Jesus Christ. He caused the Virgin Mary to become pregnant with the Son of God. The Holy Spirit is a powerful worker of miracles that are instrumental in God's plan of salvation.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with Child from the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18)

The Holy Spirit confirmed Jesus as the true Son of God.

And the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased. (Luke 3:22)

Jesus was called the Christ because He was anointed with the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness. (Luke 4:1)

The Spirit of God lived within Jesus, giving Him strength to accomplish His mission of salvation.

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. (Acts 10:38)

3. The Holy Spirit teaches us Jesus' message and through that message brings us to faith in Him.

(Jesus said) "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me. (John 15:26)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- When we think of our salvation from sin we often focus on the work of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Why is it important to remember how closely the Holy Spirit was involved in everything Jesus did?
- Many people try to cast doubts on the authority of the Bible. Why is it important to remember the Holy Spirit spoke each word of Scripture through its various writers?

6.4. HOW DID THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVE BIRTH TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

(1) The Holy Spirit launched the church on the day of Pentecost. Jesus' disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and given the gift of speaking in many languages.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4)

The listeners, who were from many countries, understood the Good News of salvation in Jesus, confessed their faith in Him, and were baptized. Thousands were brought to faith that day, beginning the era of the New Testament Christian church.

(2) After gathering the Christian church, the Holy Spirit nurtures the community of God's people so the mission of God to save all people continues to be accomplished.

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. (Acts 9:31)

(3) In order to accomplish this mission, the Holy Spirit created the [office of pastor](#). God's plan for the church included servants who represent Him, serve His people, proclaim His Word, and equip all believers for witness and service. The Holy Spirit set men apart to serve as ministers of the Gospel.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- It's easy to see the church as a human organization, filled with hypocrites and sinners. Why is it important for us to remember the Holy Spirit is working within the church?

DIGGING DEEPER

- "Of the Church" (<http://lcms.org/doctrine/doctrinalposition#church>) from A Brief Statement on the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod

6.5. WHAT ROLE DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT HAVE IN THE LIVES OF BELIEVERS IN JESUS?

The Holy Spirit causes us to believe in Jesus Christ. We have no ability to come to faith in Jesus ourselves, but the Holy Spirit creates faith in us and allows us to confess the Name of Jesus.

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

The Holy Spirit is the supernatural presence of God, doing what He wants, where He wants, and giving us new life in Him—a gift we could only receive from Him.

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-9)

The Holy Spirit gives you certainty of your salvation in Jesus Christ. This certainty comes through the promises of the Bible and through the tangible work of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:13)

The Holy Spirit changes hearts and lives. Jesus taught clearly that Holy Spirit, called "the Helper," "the Counselor," and "the Comforter," would be the One who convicts us of sin and who directs us to new life in Jesus.

Jesus said, "But now I am going to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." (John 16:5-11)

6.6. HOW DO YOU KNOW THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN YOU?

God promises that the Holy Spirit lives in you because Jesus purchased and won you when He paid the price for sin by dying on the cross.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

God promises that the Holy Spirit cleanses your life from sin; it's called "sanctification." The Holy Spirit, working through the Word, Baptism, and the gift of the Lord's Supper, empowers you to live a life that pleases God and follows His ways.

And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

God promises that the Holy Spirit brings you the forgiveness of sins in Baptism. God works through ordinary water, blessing you with forgiveness and new life.

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself." (Acts 2:38-39)

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3-7)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- What are some times in life when God feels very far away?
- Why is it comforting to know the Holy Spirit works through things we can hear (the Bible), see, touch and taste (water of Baptism, bread and wine of Holy Communion) to reassure us of His presence and the forgiveness of our sins?

6.7. HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT HELP YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN?

A clip from the movie *Hugo* illustrates how each of us seeks our purpose in life:

As you wonder about your purpose, the Holy Spirit gives you gifts and shows you why you are important to God here on earth and into eternity. The many spiritual gifts given by God work together to serve and build up the church. Every person in God's family is given spiritual gifts. These gifts are intended for humble service. Each person, as a unique child of God, has an important role in God's work here on earth.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. (1 Corinthians 12:4-14)

The Holy Spirit brings all that is good to your life. He grows God's character in you and causes you to do good works for the glory of God and for the blessing of His people.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no Law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

The Holy Spirit leads you to live a new life. You are no longer a slave to sin and darkness. Instead, you belong to Christ and are a new creation in Him.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. (Romans 8:9)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The Holy Spirit prays for you in ways that are deeper than you can understand. If you are overcome with trouble and pain and cannot think of words that express your needs to God, the Holy Spirit understands those deep feelings and lifts them before God for you.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)

The Holy Spirit gives you words to say when you tell others the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ and when you face persecution because of your faith.

(Jesus said) "And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." (Luke 12:11-12)

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the Word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- What are some of the talents and abilities God has given you?
- How can they fit into the work of your congregation?
- Many Christians feel they must find the strength and motivation within to change their lives for Christ. How does it liberate you to know the Holy Spirit Himself changes you and provides all the strength and motivation you need to live for God?

6.8. WHAT IS THE VALUE OF GOOD WORKS?

As the Holy Spirit works in your life, He causes everything you do to glorify God. In addition to your acts of kindness and service, your normal day-to-day routines bring glory to God. These good works bring praise to God and bear witness to His love. However, good works do not earn favor from God. He gives His favor as a gift.

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

(Jesus said) "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

6.9. IS ANYONE ABLE TO LIVE A PERFECTLY HOLY LIFE?

Only Jesus lived a perfect life. No matter how good we are, we are stained by sin in our thoughts, words and deeds. But God doesn't want us to sin more so we can receive more of His grace. He calls us to live lives that serve Him and bear witness to His goodness and love. *"None is righteous, no, not one."* (Romans 3:10b)

6.10. HOW DO YOU KNOW IF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS REALLY AT WORK?

You know the Holy Spirit is really at work because He always directs us to Jesus as true God and Savior. The ultimate test of the Spirit's presence is whether or not what is happening is pointing to Jesus Christ.

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. (1 John 4:2)

God truly wants your life to be united with Him now and forever. He demonstrated that by sending His Son, and seals that by sending the Holy Spirit to live within you. He's not about to take the Spirit away from you on a whim. As the Spirit leads you to daily confess your sins to God and ask for His forgiveness through Jesus, the Spirit Himself makes you confident He will always remain in your life.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-12)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Why is it important to remember the Holy Spirit empowers your faith and repentance and never leaves you to your own resources?

DIGGING DEEPER

- [Signs of the Holy Spirit](http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7840PD.mp3) (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7840PD.mp3>)

6.11. WHAT BLESSING DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVE YOU?

The Holy Spirit's presence in your life gives you everlasting hope. This hope is founded on God's loving sacrifice for you in Jesus. It is hope that endures—even as you face trial, struggle, doubt and uncertainty. The Holy Spirit fills you with certain hope in God who saved you, cares for you, and walks with you each and every day.

And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. (Romans 15:13)

When we use the word “hope” we are usually uncertain about the thing for which we hope as in “I hope it doesn’t rain this weekend.” The Bible uses “hope” differently. When the things we hope for are sure promises of God, they are certain. We must simply wait until the time God fulfils them.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- When the uncertainty is removed from God’s promises, how does that give us patience as we wait for our hopes to be realized?
- How does this hope carry us through trials, difficult times, and even our approaching death?

Closing Prayer: Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of life, thank You for inspiring the writers of the Bible and for working through Your Word to bring me to faith in Jesus Christ. Continue to work through Your Word to keep me in this faith until Jesus returns. I pray in Jesus’ Name. Amen.