



The Holy Spirit

MEETING AIM

To discover that the Holy Spirit is with us all the time and comforts and guides us.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 14:16-17,26; John 15:26

BACKGROUND

The Holy Spirit can be a difficult person to understand for people of all ages, not just children (whose thinking is concrete). And for those new to faith, God the Spirit will be an abstract to wrestle with. However, it never hurts to introduce the idea that God is with us all the time, comforts us and guides us. Many of us know the love shown by family or friends, and we can know that God loves us too – he is with us by his Spirit even when no one else is around.

SIGNING IN

5 MINS

As people join your service, welcome them and ask them about their week.

WELCOME

5 MINS

OPTION ONE: Promises

You will need: volunteers to talk about promises that were (or weren't) kept

Before the session, find some volunteers to talk about a time in their life when someone made them a promise (or they made a promise to someone else) and the happiness about it being kept (or frustration at it not being kept).

Invite your volunteers to tell their story, stopping before they say whether the promise was kept. Ask the congregation to guess what happened next, before the volunteer explains the end of their story. What is it like when promises are kept (or not)?

OPTION TWO: Effects of the Spirit

You will need: videos of high winds

Show the congregation some videos of high winds and the aftermath of storms. Talk about the power of the wind, what it can do. Say how we can't see or touch the wind, but we can see what it does. Ask if the wind is always destructive. Can the congregation think of any other things that we can't see, but we can feel the effects?

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: animated recap (<https://bit.ly/3wwSeRY>); Bibles; pens and paper; volunteer with a testimony of the Spirit at work in their lives

Show the animation to the congregation. This recaps the events of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Explain that today, you're going to explore the promise that Jesus made just before his death about sending the Holy Spirit, and what the Holy Spirit would do for and with the followers of Jesus.

Make sure everyone has access to Bibles and has pens and paper (or put the passages on-screen). Ask people to work in small groups (households if necessary). They should read John 14:16-17,26; John 15:26 and highlight what Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do and be for his friends. Link up those on their own with a messaging app. Encourage the groups to think about what the Holy Spirit does for them today. If you have lots of people who don't have a church background, make sure you include one or two longer-term members of your church in each group to help the conversation along.

Invite your volunteer to the front or highlight their screen. Ask them to tell their story; you might wish to have a few questions ready to prompt them if they get stuck. Help them to unpack their story so that the congregation can see the realities of what Jesus promises.

SMALL GROUPS

10 MINS

If your software allows, send everyone off into different breakout rooms made up of a few households to discuss these questions. If meeting in person, encourage people to discuss these in their household and link up those on their own with others using a messaging or video-calling app:

- What is the most important part of this story?
- What ideas and thoughts do you have about the Holy Spirit?
- Do you have a story, like the volunteer in 'Bible story'?
- What difference might the presence of the Holy Spirit make to you?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

REVIEW

5 MINS

Get some feedback from 'Small groups', encouraging everyone to take part who wants to.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

10 MINS

Invite people to do one of these activities in breakout rooms to respond:

OPTION ONE: Breath of life

You will need: outside space (in your church premises or people's gardens, if you're online); Bibles

Explain that on the day of his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his friends and told them again about the Holy Spirit. Invite people to read John 20:19-23 and then go outside, taking their Bible with them. As they do, ask them to feel the breeze on their face and think about Jesus' breath. Ask them to read Genesis 2:4-7 and reflect on the breath of God that gave Adam life. How do these two passages connect?

OPTION TWO: Art response

You will need: art materials

Ask the group to create a picture or collage who the Holy Spirit is and what they would like him to do for and with them. They might like to illustrate phrases such as "Spirit of truth", "advocate" or "comforter".

OPTION THREE: Reflection

You will need: 'If ye love me' by Thomas Tallis

Play 'If ye love me' and ask everyone to listen to the lyrics. As they do, encourage everyone to reflect on what they have discovered today. They might wish to pray about the Spirit in their lives.

CLOSING

5 MINS

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.



Mr Awoniyi brought up the PowerPoint and turned to the class.

"So, today, we're going to start our creative writing piece," he said. There were groans from some, particularly Freddie, who hated anything that wasn't Marvel. Particularly DC.

Saskia, on the other hand, loved coming up with stories of her own. She'd managed to hang on through instructional writing and Shakespeare, and the wheels had almost come off her wagon with Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. So obscure.

But now the English syllabus had arrived at her favourite subject – storytelling.

"OK, we're going to think about origins stories," Mr Awoniyi continued. "And to get us started we're going to look at how some existing superheroes got their powers."

Freddie did a little whoop, before regaining his cool.

"So, give me the name of a superhero. Anyone?"

"Omega the Unknown!" shouted Freddie.

"Who?" asked Jayesh

"There's a reason he's called Unknown. Never heard of him," added Betsy.

"Perhaps someone a bit more well known?" Mr Awoniyi asked.

Freddie sat back in a sulk.

"Spider-Man," came a call from the back.

"Right, that's better," said Mr Awoniyi. "How did Spider-Man get his powers?"

"Wasn't he bitten by a spider?"

"A radioactive spider?"

"That's right," said Mr Awoniyi. "Another hero."

"Captain America," said Saskia.

"Boring..." Freddie said. "You only said that 'cos you fancy Chris Evans."

"I think he's a very good actor," said Saskia with a knowing smile.

"Wasn't he given a super-soldier drug?" Betsy asked.

"It was a serum," corrected Freddie.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Betsy, looking annoyed at Freddie. "A serum."

"That's right, you're getting the idea. So, your task is to either select an existing superhero or create a new one, and come up with an idea of how they got their powers. You can work on your own, or with a partner."

Right, thought Saskia, what can I do?

She sketched out a few ideas, but none of them seemed very good. Then she thought of a group of ordinary people, fairly poor people, scared and oppressed. What would happen if you gave those people supernatural power? What would happen if you gave those people the secret of life?

She set to work. This would be a good story.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chat about the story, what everyone liked and didn't like. You could use some of these questions in your discussion:

- What do you think of the origins of superheroes?
- Can superheroes tell us anything about our lives or faith?

This story is a lead in to Acts 2:1-13. Read the Bible passage and chat about these questions:

- What difference did the power of the Spirit make?
- What might you expect the followers of Jesus to do next?
- Is the power of the Holy Spirit with us now? Why? Why not?

ALEX TAYLOR

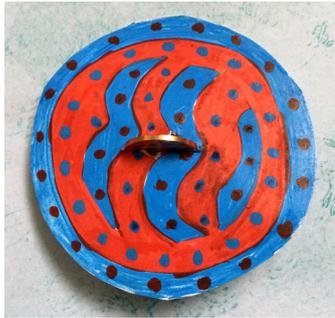
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The Holy Spirit

Use these craft ideas to help children to reflect on and explore the idea of the Holy Spirit in their lives. As you work, chat about the children's ideas and maybe tell some stories of the Spirit's work in your own life.

TOGETHER SESSION ONE

Spirit spinner



You will need: paper or card; scissors; felt-tip pens; one-pence coins; a cup or glass

This craft reflects the relationship between God's people and the Holy Spirit expressed in Isaiah 59:21. God says that the Spirit will not leave the people. As the circle spins, the two colours blur together to show their partnership.

Draw around the cup or glass to make circles out of the paper or card. Choose a colour to represent the Holy Spirit and a colour to represent yourself. Use the two colours to make a design on the top of the card circle. You might divide the circle into segments and colour them alternately or you might do something else entirely with the two colours! Cut a small slit in the centre of the circle and push the coin through so that half is above the circle and half is below it. Use the coin to spin the circle and watch the colours combine into one to illustrate the close relationship between the Spirit and the person. What must it have felt like to hear that God's Spirit would be with you?

TOGETHER SESSION TWO AND FOUR

Paper Windmills



You will need: squares of paper 15cm by 15cm; scissors; drawing or push pins; pencils with rubbers at the end

This craft fits with the theme of the Spirit's power coming on the breath of Jesus in John 20 and also with the power of the wind when the Spirit comes in Acts 2.

Fold the square in half diagonally and then in half diagonally again. Open it up again. Your square should now be divided into four triangles. Cut along each of the lines, stopping about 2cm before the centre of the square. Put some glue in the centre of the paper and fold one of the points of each triangle into the centre, gluing it in place. Stick a drawing pin through the centre point and stick this pin to the rubber at the top of the pencil. Now blow on the blades of your windmill and see the power of your breath turning the wheel. Think about how the power of breath and wind brings movement. How does the power of the Holy Spirit move and change things, sending the disciples out into the world?

TOGETHER SESSION TWO

Spirit Flames



You will need: laminator pouches; laminator; red, yellow and red crepe or tissue paper; stapler; scissors

This is a classic craft to help bring alive the story of the Holy Spirit appearing to the disciples in Acts 2. Use transparent plastic to really get the picture of flames hovering over heads.

Open the laminator pouch and imagine that it is split in half, with a top half and a bottom half. In the top half of the pouch, lay some strips of the orange, red and yellow crepe or tissue paper. Make sure that the bottom half of the pouch is empty. Close the pouch and run it through the laminator.

Split the laminated sheet in half lengthways, so that you can get two 'flames' from each pouch. Cut flame shapes in the coloured section, but don't cut the transparent bottom section. Laminate some empty pouches and cut them lengthways into transparent strips. Take one of your 'flames' and fold over the bottom of the transparent section. Staple two laminated strips inside this folded section so that you have an upright flame with a transparent space underneath it and two transparent strips either side. Put the flame on your head and use the transparent strips to form a crown around your head. Staple in place. It should now look as if a flame is appearing on top of your head, but not actually touching it!

TOGETHER SESSION FOUR

Nature Designs



You will need: paper or a flat piece of ground; leaves; twigs; petals; stones; picture frames (optional)

In John 20, Jesus blesses the disciples with peace as he breathes the Holy Spirit among them. This craft is intended to be open-ended with time for reflection on what 'peace' might mean.

Use the natural objects to make a picture or pattern. If you have a picture frame, it gives a focus area for the artwork, but this is not compulsory! Sit in silence while doing it, or play some gentle music in the background. How peaceful did you find this activity? What helps to bring you peace?

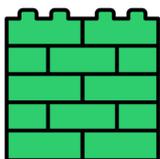
MINA MUNNS

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Games for younger children

Distribute these games to the families you have contact with who have younger children. As restrictions ease and you restart groups in person, you'll be able to play these games in your groups. They are simple but fun, and will help children develop their skills as well as enjoy themselves..

ALL THE COLOURS



You will need: lots of plastic bricks in different colours (for example Duplo); buckets or big bowls

Before the session, put an equal amount of bricks into the different buckets. If you're at home, you can work in pairs; if you're in a

children's group, children may have to work on their own (depending on restrictions).

Give each pair or player a bucket and challenge them to sort out all the bricks into piles of the same colour. Vary the game by asking for the children to pick out just the green bricks or the blue. Have races to see who can sort the fastest. Challenge the children to sort into shape rather than colour.

BALLOON KEEPY-UPPY



You will need: balloons; music and the means to play it (optional)

Before the session, blow up the balloons. Make sure you have one per child, plus a few spares in case any pop. Be aware that some

younger children will be scared by popping balloons, so make sure you know how your group or family might react.

Give each child a balloon and challenge them to keep it in the air as long as possible. They can use their hands, feet, head or even breath.

Adapt this game by putting on some music and dancing around while keeping the balloon in the air, or by holding a race where all the children have to keep the balloon in the air as they run or walk from one side of the room to the other.

BALANCE BEAM



You will need: chalk or masking tape

Mark a line on the floor using masking tape or chalk (if you're playing this outside).

Challenge the children to walk carefully along the line, placing one foot in front of the other.

Help them to balance if they need it by holding their hand. Once they have got the hang of it, see if they can walk along the line in different ways – for example, like a ballet dancer or a rabbit.

MINI-BASKETBALL



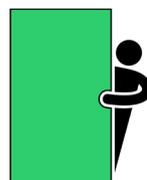
You will need: rolled-up socks; buckets

Place the buckets around your space – you can have two and play in two teams (as in basketball), or have several buckets around the room. Give the children some rolled-up socks. Practise throwing the socks to each other and catching them, before trying to

throw the socks in the bucket.

If you're still under restrictions, then children can play with one pair of socks (have different colours so children know which pair of socks is theirs). They can throw the socks in the air and catch them, before throwing them into a bucket.

WHERE ARE YOU?



You will need: a distinctive outfit (such as Wally wears in Where's Wally); smartphone or camera

Find a location that has lots of hiding places, and where there are lots of 'things' (such as a church, a garden with lots of plants, or a park – not an empty church hall!). Dress up in the

distinctive outfit and hide yourself somewhere in your location. Get someone else to take a photo of that location – you need to be slightly visible in the picture, but not obvious. Take several photos of you in different places.

Show the children your photos and challenge them to find you. If you're online, share your screen; if you're in person, print out the photos. You could give each child a set of photos so that they can work at their own speed.

Alternatively, ask the children to come dressed in distinctive costume. You can then create pictures together as a group, with the children taking turns to hide themselves away in your location. Make sure you have risk-assessed your venue and that you have permission from parents or carers to take photos of the children.

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The Mitchells vs. the Machines (U)

Watch the whole film together or concentrate on the clip: 00:42:54 to 00:47:52

SYNOPSIS

An animated action-comedy about an ordinary family who find themselves in the middle of their biggest family challenge yet... saving the world from the robot apocalypse. It all starts when creative outsider Katie Mitchell is accepted into the film school of her dreams and is eager to leave home and find 'her people', when her nature-loving dad insists on having the whole family drive her to school and bond during one last totally-not-awkward-or-forced road trip. But just when the trip can't get any worse, the family suddenly finds itself in the middle of the robot uprising. Everything from smartphones to evil Furbies are employed to capture every human on the planet. Now it's up to the Mitchells, including upbeat mum Linda, quirky little brother Aaron, their squishy pug Monchi and two friendly but simple-minded robots to save humanity.

I'll admit that I may have popped this film on for my daughter as a classic distraction while I did some tidying up. What I didn't expect was the funniest film I've seen so far this year. Based around an average dysfunctional family, this had me snorting in my coffee as they tried – and failed – to be the perfect family, all while fighting a machine apocalypse. With an excellent soundtrack ('Live your life' has become my daughter's favourite song), *The Mitchells vs. The Machines* is a surprisingly cutting deconstruction of the modern family, our relationship with technology and just how hard it is to get along with each other.

DISCUSS

Begin by showing your children or young people the trailer to *The Mitchells vs. The Machines* – have any of your group seen the whole film? Ask them to think about the following:

- How many times a day do they pick up their phone? How many times an hour?
- What is good and bad about technology in our world today?

(Don't assume that everyone will have their own phone; adapt your conversation to the proliferation of personal tech in your group.)

This clip takes place after the initial machine uprising. The Mitchells are now the only family left and they are hiding in a dinosaur-attraction gift shop. The family relationships are already strained between dad Rick and Katie due to Rick's lack of support for Katie going to college to study film. After having a close relationship growing up, both Rick and Katie are saddened by their drift apart from each other. This clip offers a brief moment of hope as Katie inspires her father to lead an escape by describing some of her fondest memories. This moment comes crashing down, however, when she reveals to her brother that she did so for her old selfish gain and that she didn't really wish to repair her relationship with her father.

After showing the clip as a stimulus, break into smaller discussion groups or discuss together the following questions:

- How would you describe the Mitchell family from this clip?
- Was Katie wrong for lying to her father to get him motivated?
- Aaron seems disappointed in his sister – why might that be?

For this session, read out loud Ephesians 6:1-5. It is a short passage and you may need to do some explanation of the passage depending on the age of your group:

- What do you think is the meaning of this passage?
 - Should children always obey their parents?
 - What does it mean to 'honour' your parents?
- How do we disagree peacefully with people we love?

The Mitchells vs. the Machines is available on Netflix.

TOM WADE

is head of humanities at Haileybury School.



Anywhere away from here

Rag'n'Bone Man and Pink
Suitable for ten to 13s

INTRODUCTION

We are all painfully aware of the impact the pandemic and lockdowns have had on mental health and well-being, particularly among children and young people. This song speaks of the desire to get away from it all and was recently performed at the BRIT awards, together with a choir of NHS workers. This session gives a space for young people to talk about their own mental well-being and introduces the idea that God can shelter us.

LISTEN AND DISCUSS

As you begin, ask the young people how they are feeling; perhaps they want to talk about it openly, or perhaps you will need to provide a simple activity to open this up, such as using emoji cards (they can choose one that represents them) or setting up a graffiti wall for the young people to doodle across.

Play the track, distributing copies of the lyrics if needed. It may work well to show the official video, as this adds to the understanding of what the song is about.

Explain to the children that mental health is something that affects each of us at times, whether we are feeling good or are struggling. Sometimes our struggles are great and we need to get more help with this; sometimes we just feel a bit low and

wish we could escape our present situation. As appropriate, allow more time to discuss this, perhaps making suggestions about other support avenues as appropriate, and giving the young people the time they need to be able to talk.

Invite someone to read Psalm 91 and ask the group what they notice about this psalm. How do the psalmist's feelings relate to those in the song? Explain that this psalm was written with regards to going into physical battle; sometimes life can feel like a battle. Here, God promises that no harm will come, but life doesn't always feel like that. Help the young people to understand that following God doesn't mean we won't go through hard times, but rather that ultimately, we are saved through him. Give the young people the opportunity to discuss what this means and ask their own questions.

Pray as you close, for the group and for individual circumstances. Take the opportunity to follow up any particular situations where young people may need extra support through the appropriate avenues.

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Walls and gates

I always described myself as a 'jack of all trades, master of none'. I felt I was good at most things I tried my hand at, but never excelled at any one thing. An all-rounder, not a specialist. For a long time, I felt this put limits on what I could achieve, and it became a self-fulfilling prophecy that I would create 'glass ceilings' for myself – invisible but impenetrable boundaries to how far I could go when I was doing something well; a limit to just how much success I would allow myself before subconsciously self-sabotaging and stopping myself short from really pushing through and discovering the heights that I might be capable of.

Does that resonate with you?

Do you see that happening in your mentee?

I have been reflecting on two similar phenomena: boundaries and limits. I'm going to call them walls and gates.

WALLS

I'd suggest are the healthier (not always) boundaries we can install in order to protect and serve our needs, such as creating a rule not to stay up beyond midnight or putting screen time limits on our phone. Think of a wall around a field to keep the livestock safe. How do you protect your values, your mind, your faith, your physical body, your heart?

GATES

- These are the unhelpful, restrictive limits that we unconsciously place on ourselves that stop us from really flying... for example, our own insecurity or holding onto negative comments from others. They are irrational. Sometimes gates can be open but we still won't go through them. Perhaps someone once said "you'll never amount to anything" – silly, but deep down do you believe it, or act as if it's true? You need to open that gate and walk right past that...

Draw a simple wall around the edge of a page, with a few gates in it to help visualise this idea. Encourage your mentee to annotate and label the gates, saying what is beyond them and why they are there. Wait until they think they have exhausted their ideas and then ask them to come up with five more. These five will likely be the real ones that need discussing!

Start chatting about the idea of walls. Does your mentee have any self-imposed limits? Or limits they have inherited from elsewhere that they choose to perpetuate? Perhaps ones their parents taught them that they still use? Are they still fit for purpose? Chat around what walls they might need to put in place. Remember with idea generation and action points like this the ideas always need to come from the mentee, not you, so that they have ownership over them – come up with too many ideas so they can discard ones they don't like and allow them to only hold onto ones they really believe in.

For gates, ask your mentee what are they holding inside that has been spoken over them, or even just things they think others think of them – perceived expectations of failure from parents or teachers, hurtful comments from friends or peers, previous poor exam results etc. How are they going to open the gate so that it doesn't keep them in any more? If they feel there is a limit, but they are not sure what it is, spend some time exploring what the limit does to them, where it came from.

The aim of all this is to assist your mentee to evaluate their boundaries and become more self-aware of them. It is not to push them into changing them. Listen to them and reflect back what they're saying. Encourage them that they can make changes if they want to; ask if they can see that it could benefit them to do so. It might help to share with them some of your own walls and gates, so think through that beforehand!

You might want to take it towards a faith angle. What do they feel limits their relationship with God? What intentional boundaries do they have in order to protect the growth of their relationship with God? Are there unspoken or invisible limits to they feel God can do in or through them?

A good story to look at together might be the story of Gideon, who considered himself the least in his clan and yet, with a bit of persuading, God 'opened the gate'; that is, he altered the way Gideon saw himself and what God could use him for:

"Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

The LORD answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."

Judges 6:15-16

Following the Path

“You’re blessed when you stay on course, walking steadily on the road revealed by GOD.

You’re blessed when you follow his directions, doing your best to find him.

That’s right—you don’t go off on your own; you walk straight along the road he set.”

Psalm 119:1-3 MSG

Sometimes it is easy to go off the best course God has set for us because we want to do things quickly and on our own.

Set a stopwatch and try to follow along the path quickly with your pen in just 5 seconds.



What happened?
Did you manage to stay within the lines?
Did you bump into the edges?
Take a moment to reflect on what this might look like in your own life, when you speed ahead not listening to God’s directions or taking care along the path.

Now take another colour and trace along the path steadily - without a time limit, trying to stay in the middle of the path and making sure you don’t touch the edges.

What happened?
Did this take longer than the first time?
Was it easier to stay on the path?
The verse for today encourages us to ‘walk steadily the road revealed by God’. Spend some time praying for God to help you walk steadily with him, and to help you follow his directions.