

Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose Initiative  
Church-Based Course Series

# THE SPIRIT'S WORK

AN EVERYDAY GUIDE  
FOR OPENING TO THE  
TRANSFORMING POWER  
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## LEADER'S GUIDE

Developed by TediAnne Hasapopoulos



**BETHEL**  
SEMINARY

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3949 Bethel Drive  
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# COURSE STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE

## GENERAL STRUCTURE

Leader's Guide	Everyday Engagement Guide
Leader Overview	6 days for each session/ 7 <sup>th</sup> Worship reflection
Key Learning Overview	Each day processes the session's content more deeply
Opening Prayer	Each day practices a spiritual formation discipline
Opening Exploration Question	
Key Biblical Exploration and discussion	
Commentary and discussion	
Suggestions for upcoming week through Everyday Engagement Guide	
Closing Prayer and Sending	

## INTRODUCTION

There are three biblical imperatives of spiritual formation. First, Jesus instructed that God commands humans to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love others as we love ourselves (Matt 22:37-40, Mark 12:29-34 and Luke 10:26-28). Second, Paul directed believers to yield to the Holy Spirit in order to experience the renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2-3) and be continually transformed into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Third, followers of Christ are to bear "fruit." This means visible, Christ-like actions that impact the well-being of others (Matt 7:15-23; 25:31-46 and Luke 6:43-45). Together, these three imperatives create the framework for this church-based course.

This framework guides us in our spiritual formation. It encourages us to open ourselves to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. It outlines expectations for actions that result from the Spirit's transformative work. The framework recognizes that given the fallen nature of humanity, loving God with *all* one's heart, mind, soul, and strength requires the spiritual transformation of thoughts, emotions, will, and actions. This is a transformation that only God Himself can accomplish.

The course is centered on our everyday life. It instructs us in Biblical principles and it encourages us to open ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit by exploring spiritual practices. And yet, even though there is important guidance for us to follow, the centering theology of this course is that transformation happens through the work of the Holy Spirit. While spiritual formation practices are essential to deepening our relationship and dependence on the Triune God, it is God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, who is the Giver of life and the Giver of faith.

Greater understanding of human psychology has highlighted that people change only when their understanding of a greater story, or narrative, changes. When they better understand and find their place in that greater story, people change. The Bible reveals to us the Greatest Story ever. It is **THE GREAT STORY** that tells the truth about who God is. **THE GREAT STORY** tells us how precious every human being is to God. **THE GREAT STORY** tells us how God created order so that humans are able to flourish. **THE**

**GREAT STORY** tells how God is constantly working to bring people into a love-centered relationship with God and others so that we might experience flourishing, or what Jesus called an "abundant life" (John 10:10).

Jesus was speaking about **THE GREAT STORY** when he told his followers, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Paul wanted to help people understand more deeply what Jesus meant, when he wrote to the Church, "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We worship God in spirit and in truth by allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us and by displaying that ongoing transformation of our minds, hearts, and will through the everyday actions of the "unveiled" face. People see Jesus' glory in our actions of loving God and loving others. This course seeks to share **THE GREAT STORY** and help us enter into the work of the Holy Spirit of God as **He** transforms our minds, hearts, desires and actions.

#### **Prayer for Our Participation in this Course**

Holy Spirit, the Lord who gives faith and gives life, we earnestly seek your work of transformation. Show us how to open ourselves to that work so that we might worship God in spirit and in truth. Amen.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Seeking Transformation of:	Session	Changing our Narratives of what is, what ought to be and what will be:	Work of the Holy Spirit to Transform:	Spiritual Practices Guide
<b>Our Mind</b>  <b>Intellection: Inquiry &amp; Learning</b>	1	<b>What is</b> The Sovereignty of God and the condition of us as humans in relationship to God?	<b>Renewing of the Mind</b> Opening of Scripture, Conviction, Wisdom	<b>Disciplines of the Mind</b> Prayer, Bible Study, Theological Study, Discussion
	2	<b>What is</b> Grace and how does that change us?	<b>Renewing of the Mind</b> Understanding, Faith	
<b>Our Heart and Will</b>  <b>Loving and Yielding</b>	3	<b>What ought to be</b> In surrendering to the will of God? In loving God with all one's heart, soul and mind?	<b>Renewing the Heart</b> Speaking through Scripture to the emotions Bringing forth agape love	<b>Disciplines of the Heart and Will</b> Contemplation, Contemplative prayer, <i>Lectio divina</i> , Surrender, Asceticism, Fasting
	4	<b>What ought to be</b> As the beloved of God? In loving others as self? In seeking to love others as God does?	<b>Renewing the Will</b> Making God's presence known Fortifying one's will	
<b>Our Strength</b>  <b>Actions to bring forth flourishing</b>	5	<b>What will be on earth as in heaven</b> In actions of worship? In actions of caregiving?	<b>Directing Action toward God's Will</b> Speaking through Scripture to guide action Speaking through fellow believers to counsel and affirm Speaking through circumstances to indicate opportunities	<b>Disciplines of Action</b> Corporate Worship, Everyday and daily service to others, Participation in ministries of the church
	6	<b>What will be on earth as in heaven</b> Actions of activism	<b>Directing Action towards God's Will</b> Speaking through Scripture to guide action Speaking through circumstances to indicate opportunities	

## SESSION ONE: RENEWING OUR MINDS TO EXPERIENCE GOD BY CHANGING OUR NARRATIVES OF **WHAT IS** **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND THE CONDITION OF US AS HUMANS IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

### LEADER OVERVIEW

Guiding Biblical Principle:

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).<sup>1</sup>*

**Transformation of One's Mind.** Paul noted the need for a renewal of the mind as he instructed the Roman believers to allow the Holy Spirit to work in them. For most people, the mind is the gateway to change. As psychologists have noted, substantive, enduring change rests in a revision of self-narrative where the person redefines reality and one's role in life. A person can do this in light of his or her new understanding of reality. The role of one's thoughts—the mind—is important to our spiritual walk.

Because of this narrative aspect of being human, the course's initial focus is directed toward using the intellect to discern the Bible's narratives about reality. These stories explain God's sovereignty, the human condition in relationship to being created in the image of God and the fallen nature of humanity. Additionally, they explain the conditions of grace, both salvific grace through the work of Jesus and common grace through the providence of God over all things. The many stories come together as chapters of **THE GREAT STORY** of God's eternal and undying love for the people He created for relationship with Him.

Spiritual formation disciplines (also known as "practices") can serve the transformative work of the Holy Spirit by opening us to that work. Disciplines of the mind serve to attune our thoughts to the Spirit through prayer, Bible study, theological study and discussions with others. The Holy Spirit renews our minds by illuminating Scripture, helping us to better understand its message. The Holy Spirit convicts us regarding our separation from God. The Spirit provides wisdom and understanding. And importantly, the Spirit gives us the gift of faith so that we may believe and receive the grace, or free gift of salvation. As the Holy Spirit transforms our minds, we experience "intensification," or a stronger experience of a relationship with God. This is an intensification of:

*our trust in God    our hope for well-being (now and for eternity)    our submission to the mind of God  
our love for God    our thanksgiving    our strength in dealing with hardships*

In service to others, the outcomes of the renewal of the mind create greater capacity to "see" through God's eyes. We are better able to discern the conditions of others and their needs, as well as experience *phila* love (loving another as one loves the self) for others. We talk about *phila* love as something a bit different than *agape* love. *Agape* love involves intentional self-sacrifice. For most people, our thoughts can lead us to *phila* or reciprocal love. However, our thoughts rarely lead us to self-sacrificing love (see Rom 5:6-7). *Agape* love requires a renewal of the heart and will. It requires a relationship with the Holy Spirit and His work of transformation.

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture is quoted from the New Revised Standard (NRSV) unless otherwise stated.

## KEY LEARNING OVERVIEW

If there is a God, then to be God, that Divine Being must be ruler over all things. God exists and wants people to know many things about Him and His agape love for all people. The Bible is the best source for knowing the "things of God."

Learning the "things of God" helps us to develop our theologies, the understandings and beliefs about God and our relationship to God. It is through our theologies that we express our understanding of our personal place in **THE GREAT STORY** of God.

Humans are not in the best position to figure out the "things of God" for themselves. We are not God so how can we know the Mind of God? We are also sin-prone, which pushes us away from God. So God as the Holy Spirit comes to us to help us learn what it is God wants us to know to shape our theologies.

## OPENING PRAYER

*Holy God. Open the eyes of our mind to the inspiration of your Holy Word through the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may truly love You and worship You in your holiness. Amen.*

## OPENING EXPLORATION QUESTION

Imagine you are having a great conversation with a dear friend. Your friend had been wondering about God, asking, "Is there a God and does it matter if anyone really knows or believes in God?" Your friend asks you what you think. Imagine now that the story of your life hits the pause button and like a scene in a movie, all action stands still and you get to think about your response. What are your very first and most honest thoughts about your friend's question?

**Discussion:** Share with one other person in this study what may have surprised you about your first thoughts.

## INTRO VIDEO

*Awake, O Sleeper* from RightNow Media <https://rightnowmedia.org/Content/VideoElement/152480>

## KEY BIBLICAL EXPLORATION AND DISCUSSION

The Apostle Paul wrote a long letter to the early church in Rome about 30 years after Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead and returned to Heaven. In that letter to the new Christians of Rome, Paul explained what he had learned from the teachings of Jesus as handed down by the first disciples. He also explained what had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Among the very first things he shared in this letter was what he had learned about God. The book of Romans is an excellent source for learning about God and **THE GREAT STORY**.

**Read** Romans 1:1-6

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

**Discussion:** In just a few words, Paul is sharing a great deal of theology. What is Paul saying about God? How we know about God? What do we receive from God? What does Paul understand his primary calling to be?

**Read the following:**

*For what can be known about God is plain to them [all human beings], because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20).*

*Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith (Romans 3:29-30).*

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD [YAHWEH] is our God, the LORD [YAHWEH] alone. You shall love the LORD [YAHWEH] your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).*

**Discussion:** What is Paul saying about all peoples' ability to know something about God? As a learned Jewish rabbi, Paul knew the Jewish scriptures well and believed that the claim of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 was true. What is Paul saying about God to the Roman church that is made up of both Jewish people and non-Jewish (Gentile) people? [NOTE: YAHWEH is God's personal name and the Hebrew word often translated as LORD.]

Paul wanted all people to know how they fit into **THE GREAT STORY** of God. Yahweh God is not a hidden person. He has made sure people know He exists. He did so in the grandeur, orderliness, and provision of creation. He gave the Jewish people a special revelation that tells much about who He is and what He cares about. He had them record the stories that tell of these things in what is called the Old Testament of the Bible. In that revelation, He made known that He is the only Almighty and ruling divine being and that His rule covers all humanity. He also made known that He wants a love relationship with all humans. Love is always a two-way relationship. No one can command us to love. So God also made His intense love of each and every person known so we can each love Him in return. John wrote it simply, "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

**Discussion:** **THE GREAT STORY** is a story of love—the love of God who is the one and only God for all people. It is the story of His work to bring us into a loving relationship with Him. In what ways do you think you experience that love? Share your thoughts with the group.

So why is it that at times we don't feel that love? Why does there seem to be something wrong in the story? Consider the answers Paul offered: Romans 1:20-22, 28-32; 3:10-23 and 7:14-25.

**Read** Romans 1:20-22, 28-32

*Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles (Romans 1: 20-22).*

*And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them (Romans 1:28-32).*

**Discussion:** Paul did not portray humankind in a very positive light in the opening passages of his letter to the church in Rome. Why might he write such strong commentary about human beings? What about that commentary is true in our world today?

**Read** Romans 3:10-28

*What then? Are we any better off? No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written:*

*"There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one. Their throats are opened graves; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of vipers is under their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

**Discussion:** Paul was commenting on the perception that there is a difference between religious people who follow the old Jewish laws and everyone else. Does Paul see a difference between "religious people" and other people with regards to the power of sin in their lives? Is there a perception on our culture today that "religious" people are less sinful than everyone else?

**Read** Romans 7:14-25

*For we know that the law [specifically, the Jewish law of Moses] is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.*

*So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

**Discussion:** Paul is writing about his own struggle with sin. How well do you think he feels he is doing in the struggle? He mentions that his mind knows what is right, but his body leads him do to what is wrong according to God's law. What do you think it is about human beings that we know what is right but still do what is wrong?

What does Paul understand to be the ultimate solution to his dilemma with sin?

**COMMENTARY**

Paul desired the church in Rome to understand two very important facts about reality. First, he is making it clear that God exists. The real God is not anything like the gods of the Roman culture. The religious myths of the Romans described these gods as many in number. None of them were all-powerful. These "gods" were constantly at war with one another. The one, true God of the cosmos can be seen and known through the grandeur and order of creation. But most importantly, He can be known through the ways He has interacted with people over the centuries. This action was recorded in the Bible.

Second, Paul shared the fact that people can have a relationship with God. God can also be deeply known by that quiet voice heard in the innermost conscience of humans, whom He created to bear His image. God created humans to be a bit like Him. We can think complex thoughts, as we imagine, create, design and build complex things. Like God, we are moral beings, having an internal moral sense—a conscience—that guides us in knowing what is right and what is wrong. We have the capacity to be in intimate relationships. This is like how God is in intimate relationship with Himself as the God who is Three and yet also One. Let's turn to

this aspect of who God is and why it is an important part of **THE GREAT STORY** and in our relationship with God.

A full theology of God—our understandings about God and the things of God—is vital to developing spiritual maturity. The Bible compares marriage to God's relationship with those He loves and those who love Him in return. Can you imagine a mature and healthy marriage between two people who really don't know each other well? God already knows us intimately. We need to know Him intimately as well if we want to mature in our spirituality. But, as Paul so strongly indicates, humans are a bit of a mess and aren't able to keep up their part of the relationship. God knows this, has always known this, and has always had a plan to deal with human brokenness. Who He is explains how this plan works on our behalf.

Careful reading of the whole of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation allows us to put together the pieces that make up a realistic theology of God. The Bible reveals that there is just ONE God. And yet, the Bible talks about Jesus as being God and that there is another God-figure revealed, the Holy Spirit. On the surface, it seems as if the Bible is telling us that there are three Gods. But that can't be since the Old Testament is clear about God's singleness. This teaching is repeated in the New Testament: "Hear O Israel [and everyone else], Yahweh is God; Yahweh is one." The ancient Christian Church wrestled with the odd revelation that God is both one and at the same time three. He is revealed as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In-depth exploration of triune theology is beyond the purpose of this study. But it is important that those who seek relationship with the one, true God come to understand that this relationship is formed and secured by God through His *Threeness*. We develop our connection with God and it deepens by coming into relationship with God the Father, the source of all purpose; God the Son, the source of the bridge between humans and God; and God the Holy Spirit, the Source of life and faith that brings people into relationship with God.

To express these truths about God, the Church has traditionally used creeds. These are statements of theology that pull together and communicate important understandings about God. The Nicene Creed is one of the first such statements formed by the church. The Nicene Creed has been used by Christians since the early days of the church as a way to proclaim what a person believes about God and about humans. It declared that we can have a relationship with God, even though God is all-powerful, infinite and holy. It presents the essential beliefs of the Christian faith.

### **THE NICENE CREED**

I [We] believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

I [We] believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through whom all things were made. Who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; And He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father; And He will come again with glory to judge the living and dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

I [We] believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets.

I [We] believe in one, holy, catholic,\* and apostolic Church. I[We] confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I[We] look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

\* An older English word that means "whole".

Perhaps the Nicene Creed is a beginning framework from which you can explore and express your personal beliefs about God. It is significant that this creed points us to explore a theology about the Holy Spirit. Since the time of the apostles—people who learned directly from Jesus, saw Him after the Resurrection, and watched Him return to heaven—the church has depended on the Holy Spirit to bring understanding and wisdom. The Holy Spirit is truly God. He inspired the Bible's authors to write about the things God wanted revealed to humans. He continues to give the Bible's words value by shining the light of understanding on its meaning when people authentically and genuinely seek wisdom from the Bible. The Holy Spirit will speak to our conscience, calling us to repent or turn away from those things that are not pleasing to God. He brings comfort and a peace that "passes understanding." This means that in times when the situation should make us anxious and afraid, the Holy Spirit calms our fears and settles us.

As we move through this course, we will learn more about the Holy Spirit. More importantly, we will discover the ways in which we can open ourselves up to experiencing the work of the Holy Spirit and expand our relationship with God as the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Our relationship with God spills out into our everyday life as God uses each of us as yet another way to make His presence known to others. It is God's incredible plan to have people experience the One, True God through those who trust Him and worship Him. What a high calling and marvelous purpose for our everyday lives—to be a reflection of the God of the universe!

## EVERYDAY STORIES

George knows he needs to adjust to collaborative work teams. He struggles at times because he wonders how he can be comfortable working closely with people who don't share his trust in Jesus. They might not see things the same way; they might have different sets of ethical standards. How might Paul's words to the early Roman church help George see his co-workers as colleagues? [Hint: conscience.] How might the future chapters of his story change? What might he ask of the Holy Spirit as he prays for transformation?

Steve and Carol could not have worked harder or smarter. Their rental properties were well-managed and cared for. They tried to screen prospective tenants, yet all too often after doing significant damage to a rented home, a tenant would vanish, leaving two or three months of rent unpaid. The financial set-back from these bad tenants usually took a couple of years to recoup, and sometimes not at all. Then the crash came – the market values of their rental properties plummeted, mortgages became upside-down, and rents had to be lowered as the supply of rental properties skyrocketed. Steve and Carol couldn't make it financially anymore so they filed for bankruptcy, gave properties to the banks and started all over again, taking jobs that didn't pay very well or use the skills they honed as landlords. It's been a number of years and things are a little better, but they are also 10 years older. How might Steve and Carol find hope in God's sovereignty in all things, and even in hardship? How might the future chapters of their story change? What might they ask the Holy Spirit to help them see?

## SUGGESTIONS FOR UPCOMING WEEK THROUGH THE EVERYDAY ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

The Everyday Engagement Guide that accompanies this course presents more pieces to **THE GREAT STORY** of God and shares ways in which we enter into that story every day. God calls each and every human being into a deep and life-transforming relationship with Him. The Bible tells us about the ways that we might answer that call.

In the days until the next session, use the guide to pray for wisdom and understanding and explore theological aspects of God and our relationship to Him. More specifically, allow the guide to help you explore and experience aspects about God the Holy Spirit and how He is the Renewer of our minds.

## CLOSING PRAYER AND SENDING

Paul, in his excitement of sharing his theological understand about God to the Romans who were gathered in the name of Jesus, proclaimed these words. May they be your prayer as you come more deeply to know God.

*O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!*

*How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

*"For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"*

*"Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return?"*

*For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.*

*Romans 11:33-36*

PREVIEW