

The Holy Spirit, Teacher's Guide

Week 1: A Divine Person, Not a Force

Acts 5:1–11; John 16:7–15

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This first lesson lays the foundation stone for the entire twelve-week study, and a great deal is at stake in it doctrinally. The question on the table is whether the Holy Spirit is a divine person or an impersonal power. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach plainly that the Spirit is "God's active force," something like electricity or radar, and many believers who would never accept that label still functionally treat the Spirit as an energy or an influence rather than a someone. The texts for this week answer decisively. In Acts 5, Peter says Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit and in the next breath says he lied to God; you cannot lie to a force, and the one lied to is expressly called God. In John 14–16, Jesus promises "another Helper" who teaches, guides, speaks, hears, declares, convicts, and glorifies, a portrait that only fits a person. The teacher should be ready to present this evidence fully and to handle the standard objections with calm confidence, because everything else in this study, the Spirit's work in revelation, in conversion, in the indwelling, in intercession, rests on who He is.

Yet this lesson is not merely a debate brief. The personhood of the Spirit was revealed to change how God's people live. Ananias and Sapphira died because they treated the Spirit as ignorable; Stephen's hearers were condemned because they resisted Him; Paul pleads with Christians not to grieve Him. Every one of those warnings assumes a personal relationship that can be honored or wounded. A student who walks away convinced that the Spirit is a person will pray differently, worship differently, and sin less casually, because he will know that a divine person, not a passive power, is near. The teacher's aim is reverence, not merely accuracy.

So aim at both targets. Equip students to give a clear, kind answer to a Witness at the door or a friend at work who says the Spirit is only a force, and at the same time lead them to a deeper awe before the Spirit of God. The disciple we are forming this week is someone who can defend the Spirit's personhood from Scripture and whose own heart has stopped treating Him as background noise.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Acts 5:3–4, Peter says Ananias lied "to the Holy Spirit" and then says, "You have not lied to man but to God." What do these two statements, side by side, teach us about the Holy Spirit? Why is it impossible to lie to an impersonal force?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Set the scene before you press the doctrine. Acts 4 closes with Barnabas selling a field and laying the money at the apostles' feet, an act of free generosity that won him honor in the church. Acts 5 opens with the word "but," and the contrast is deliberate. Ananias and Sapphira wanted Barnabas's reputation at a discount. The sin was never keeping part of the money; Peter says plainly that the property was theirs and the proceeds were theirs to use (v. 4). The sin was the lie, a staged performance designed to make the church believe they had given everything when they had not.

Now slow down on Peter's two statements. In verse 3 he asks why Satan has filled Ananias's heart "to lie to the Holy Spirit." In verse 4 he says, "You have not lied to man but to God." Hold those side by side and two truths emerge that no honest reader can escape. First, the Holy Spirit is the kind of being who can be lied to. Lying requires a person on the receiving end, a mind that knows the truth and can be told a falsehood. No one lies to gravity or deceives a current of electricity. Second, the One lied to is called God without qualification. Peter does not say Ananias lied to God's power or misrepresented himself before God's influence; lying to the Spirit simply is lying to God. Personhood and deity stand together in a single breath.

Notice also that Peter treats the Spirit's knowledge as a settled fact. The whole episode assumes the Spirit knew the real price of the field, knew the contents of two hearts, and knew the agreement the couple had made privately (v. 9, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?"). Omniscience of the heart is a divine attribute (1 Kings 8:39; Jeremiah 17:10). The Spirit possesses it.

Some will ask why the judgment was so severe. Help the class see the moment in the church's life. The congregation was days old, its purity and credibility unguarded by centuries of tradition. As with Nadab and Abihu at the opening of the tabernacle service (Leviticus 10) and Achan at the entrance to the land (Joshua 7), God marked the first corruption at the threshold of a new era with unmistakable severity, so that no one would conclude that the God of this new covenant winks at hypocrisy. The result was not despair but holy awe: "great fear came upon the whole church" (v. 11).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The personhood of the Holy Spirit: only a person can be lied to
- The deity of the Holy Spirit: lying to the Spirit is lying to God (vv. 3–4)
- The Spirit's omniscience, knowing hearts and secret agreements, a divine attribute
- The sin of hypocrisy: wanting the reputation of godliness without the reality
- The holiness of the church and God's concern for its purity at the threshold of a new era
- Satan's role in temptation ("filled your heart") alongside full human responsibility ("why have you contrived this deed in your heart?")

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it significant that Peter moves from “lie to the Holy Spirit” to “lied to God” without any explanation or qualification?
- What does this account teach about how seriously God takes what we pretend to be?
- If the Spirit were merely a force, how would this whole passage have to be rewritten?

Question 2

Student Question:

Ananias and Sapphira wanted to look more generous than they really were, and they assumed the Spirit either would not notice or did not matter. Where are you most tempted to manage your reputation before people while forgetting that the Spirit of God sees the real ledger? What would change if His presence felt as real to you as Peter's gaze felt to Ananias?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the doctrine toward the heart, and the teacher should let it sit there with real weight. Ananias and Sapphira were not pagans or scoffers; they were members of the most spiritually alive congregation in history. Their failure was not unbelief but image management. They wanted to be seen as fully devoted while remaining partly devoted. That temptation did not die in Jerusalem. It lives in every age in which religious reputation carries social value, which is to say, every age.

Help students name the modern forms gently but concretely. There is the believer who sings and bows on Sunday while running a private life the Spirit grieves over. There is the social media version of Barnabas's gift, generosity performed for the camera. There is the prayer request phrased to display spirituality, the exaggerated account of our service, the silence that lets others believe better of us than is true. None of these will likely be struck dead by Wednesday, and the teacher should say so; Acts 5 is descriptive of a unique confirming moment, not a formula for church discipline. But the God who saw through Ananias still sees, because the Spirit who searched that heart is a person who searches ours.

The second half of the question asks what would change if the Spirit's presence felt as real as Peter's gaze. Press that picture. Ananias could manage what the apostles saw, but not what the Spirit knew. Living before the Spirit's eyes is not meant to produce paranoia but integrity, the relief of finally being one person instead of two. End this question on that hopeful note: the same Spirit who exposed the lie also fills the church with power, comfort, and joy throughout Acts. He is not looking for a reason to condemn us; He is too holy to be performed for.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Hypocrisy as the management of reputation before people while ignoring the presence of God
- Integrity: becoming one person rather than two, in private and in public
- The fear of the Lord as a healthy, sobering grace, not a morbid terror

- Acts 5 as a unique confirming judgment, not a standing pattern for how God deals with every sin today
- The Spirit's knowledge of the heart as a comfort to the honest and a warning to the pretender

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it often easier to confess sin to God in private than to stop performing for people in public?
- Where does our congregation most need the honesty this passage demands?
- What is one area where you have been more concerned with looking faithful than being faithful?

Question 3

Student Question:

In John 16:7–15, Jesus says the Helper will convict, guide, speak, hear, declare, and glorify. List the personal actions Jesus attributes to the Spirit in this passage and in John 14:26. What kind of being do these verbs require? Could they honestly be said of a force or a power?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Have the class actually build the list from the text, because the cumulative weight is the argument. In John 16:7–15 alone the Spirit comes (v. 8), convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (v. 8), guides into all the truth (v. 13), speaks, and not on His own authority but what He hears (v. 13), declares things to come (v. 13), and glorifies Christ by taking what is His and declaring it (v. 14). Add John 14:26: He teaches and brings to remembrance. Every verb on that list is a personal verb. Teaching requires a mind. Speaking requires a will and a message. Hearing requires understanding. Glorifying another rather than oneself requires humility, which is a trait of character, and character belongs only to persons.

Underline verse 13: the Spirit “will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak.” An impersonal force has no “own authority” to decline to use. The sentence is meaningless unless the Spirit is a someone who could conceivably speak from Himself but chooses instead to speak what He receives. This same verse, incidentally, shows the beautiful order within the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit working in willing harmony, each person honoring the others.

Be ready for the standard counterargument: that the Bible also personifies impersonal things, such as wisdom in Proverbs 8. The answer is that personification announces itself in poetic literature, while these statements occur in plain teaching, in Jesus' sober final instructions to His apostles, and they are sustained across narrative and doctrinal books by many writers (the Spirit speaks in Acts 13:2, forbids in Acts 16:6–7, appoints in Acts 20:28, wills in 1 Corinthians 12:11, intercedes in Romans 8:26–27). A figure of speech does not hold up across that many genres,

authors, and decades. The natural reading is the right one: the Spirit does these things because He is a person who can do them.

A note on grammar may help your stronger students, handled carefully. The Greek word for spirit, *pneuma*, is grammatically neuter, which is purely a feature of grammar, like gender in Spanish nouns, and implies nothing about personhood. What is striking is that John records Jesus using the masculine demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos*, “that one, He,” of the Spirit (John 16:13–14), letting the Spirit’s personhood override the noun’s grammatical gender. Do not build the whole case on grammar, but it is a confirming detail.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The personal actions of the Spirit: teaching, guiding, speaking, hearing, declaring, convicting, glorifying
- John 16:13, “not on his own authority,” as proof of a personal will
- The Spirit’s humility in glorifying Christ rather than Himself, a model for all teaching and worship
- Answering the “personification” objection: sustained, plain, multi-genre testimony is not a poetic figure
- The harmony of the Godhead: the Spirit speaks what He hears from the Father and the Son
- Why the conviction of the world (v. 8) happens through the Spirit’s sword, the preached word (Acts 2:37; Ephesians 6:17)

Discussion Prompts

- Which verb in Jesus’ description of the Helper strikes you as most impossible for a mere force?
- What does the Spirit’s choice to glorify Christ rather than Himself teach us about how to recognize His true work today?
- How does the Spirit convict the world of sin in our generation, and what is our role in that?

Question 4

Student Question:

Jesus told the apostles it was to their advantage that He go away so the Helper would come (John 16:7). The apostles had walked beside Jesus for three years, yet Jesus says they would not be left worse off. When have you felt that God was distant or that you were on your own? How does the coming of the Helper speak to that fear?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The emotional center of this question is the strange word “advantage.” Jesus looks at eleven heartbroken men and tells them they are about to be better off. From their side of the table, that sounded impossible. They could see Jesus, hear Him, touch Him, wake Him in a storm. How

could His leaving improve anything? Yet Jesus meant it. While He walked in Galilee, His presence was located; He could be in one place at one time, with one group of disciples. Through the Helper, His presence and teaching would go with every apostle into all the world, and the full revelation of truth would be completed (John 16:12–13). Pentecost, and everything that flowed from it, was the proof.

Now bring the question to the students' own seasons of distance. Every Christian eventually walks through a stretch when God feels far away: a hospital corridor, a season of grief, an unanswered prayer, a dry year in the faith. The instinct in those seasons is to conclude that we have been left to manage alone. This text confronts that conclusion. The Lord who said "it is to your advantage that I go away" is the same Lord who said "I will not leave you as orphans" (John 14:18). The Helper's coming means God's people are never unattended.

Be doctrinally careful here, in a way that actually increases the comfort rather than reducing it. The promise of John 14–16 was spoken to the apostles, and its primary fulfillment is the miraculous guidance that gave us the New Testament; Week 5 will establish that firmly. But the Spirit's presence with God's people is not locked in the first century. The indwelling Spirit is promised to every baptized believer (Acts 2:38–39), He strengthens the inner man (Ephesians 3:16), and He intercedes for us in our weakness (Romans 8:26), truths this study will unfold in Weeks 9 through 11. The comfort for your class is real and present tense: heaven's answer to the feeling of abandonment is a person, not a memory.

You might close this question by asking students what they typically reach for when God seems distant: busyness, distraction, nostalgia for an earlier spiritual season. The gospel's answer is better. We reach for the word the Spirit gave, the prayers the Spirit helps, and the people among whom the Spirit dwells.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ's real reasons why the Spirit's coming was to the apostles' advantage
- The primary application of the Helper promises to the apostles, without emptying the Spirit's ongoing presence with Christians
- God's answer to felt distance: the abiding presence of the Spirit, the word, prayer, and the church
- The danger of measuring God's nearness by our emotions rather than His promises
- "I will not leave you as orphans" (John 14:18) and the Christian's standing comfort

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think Jesus' disciples could not imagine His departure being an advantage, and when have you misjudged what God was doing in a loss?
- What do you usually reach for when God feels distant, and what does this passage offer instead?

- How would you encourage a Christian who says, “I know God is real, but He feels a thousand miles away”?

Question 5

Student Question:

Jesus calls the Spirit “another Helper” (John 14:16) and consistently uses personal pronouns of Him, “He will guide you,” “He will glorify me.” What does the word “another” suggest about the relationship between the Spirit and Jesus, and why does it matter that Jesus speaks of the Spirit as “He” and not “it”?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The word “another” carries more doctrine than its size suggests. Greek has two words for another: heteros, another of a different kind, and allos, another of the same kind. John 14:16 uses allos. Jesus promises a Helper of the same kind as Himself, a personal counterpart who will do for the apostles what Jesus had been doing: teaching them, guiding them, standing beside them. If the Spirit were an impersonal force, Jesus’ sentence would collapse, because a power is not “another” of the same kind as a person. You cannot replace a friend with a battery.

The word “Helper” itself (Greek parakletos, rendered Helper, Comforter, Counselor, Advocate in various translations) is a deeply personal word. It described someone called to your side, especially in a courtroom, an advocate who stands with you and speaks for you. John uses the same word of Jesus Himself in 1 John 2:1, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The Spirit is to the apostles on earth what Jesus is to believers in heaven, a personal advocate. The parallel is exact and deliberate.

Then there are the pronouns. Jesus says “He will teach,” “He will guide,” “He will glorify me,” “He dwells with you.” The consistent personal language of the One who knew the Spirit best should settle the question for anyone who takes Jesus seriously. It is worth pausing to say that plainly to the class: our doctrine of the Spirit’s personhood is not built on a technicality; it is built on how Jesus Himself talked about Him on the most solemn night of His life.

Practically, this question lets you correct a quiet error in our own speech. Christians sometimes refer to the Spirit as “it,” not from conviction but from carelessness. Encourage students to let their language match Scripture’s. How we speak of the Spirit both reveals and shapes how we revere Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Allos, “another of the same kind”: the Spirit as a personal counterpart to Jesus
- Parakletos as a personal advocate called alongside, the same word used of Christ in 1 John 2:1
- Jesus’ consistent use of personal pronouns for the Spirit

- The Spirit continuing for the apostles what Jesus had personally been to them
- Guarding our own speech: saying “He,” not “it,” of the Spirit

Discussion Prompts

- What did the apostles lose when Jesus ascended, and how did the coming of “another Helper” answer each part of that loss?
- Why does it matter whether we casually call the Spirit “it” in our conversations and classes?
- How does it change your picture of God to realize that both the Son and the Spirit are called our Advocate?

Question 6

Student Question:

Scripture says the Spirit can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30) and resisted (Acts 7:51). Only a person who loves can be grieved. What does it do to your view of sin to realize that your choices do not merely break a rule but grieve a divine person who dwells with God’s people? Name one specific habit or attitude in your life that this truth puts in a new light.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Ephesians 4:30 may be the most tender verse in the New Testament about the Spirit: “do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Grief is not a reaction a force can have. A power can be interrupted; only a person who loves can be grieved. The command sits in the middle of a paragraph about ordinary sins, lying, stolen goods, corrupting talk, bitterness, wrath, slander (Ephesians 4:25–32), which means the Spirit is personally affected by the everyday conduct of Christians. Paul’s logic is relational: these people have been sealed by the Spirit, marked as God’s own, and sin in the life of one so marked wounds the One who marked him.

Acts 7:51 adds the other side: “You stiff-necked people... you always resist the Holy Spirit.” Stephen’s hearers resisted the Spirit by resisting the Spirit’s messengers and message, the prophets and ultimately the word about the Righteous One. Note carefully how the resistance worked: not by deflecting some mystical pressure, but by refusing inspired preaching. That observation will serve you well later in this study (Weeks 5 and 7): the Spirit works on hearts through the word He inspired, and that is exactly why rejecting the word is resisting Him. His personal approach can be personally refused, which is both a sobering truth and the death blow to any doctrine of irresistible grace.

Now do what the question asks and let the doctrine touch sin’s definition. Most of us learned to think of sin as breaking a rule, and it is that. But Scripture’s deeper grammar is relational: David cries, “against you, you only, have I sinned” (Psalm 51:4). If the Spirit of God dwells with His people, then the harsh word at the dinner table, the bitterness nursed for years, the corrupt talk

that seemed funny at the time, each of these grieves a divine person who is near. Sin does not merely violate a code; it saddens a Friend.

Ask students to name one habit or attitude this reframes, and give them silence enough to actually do it. The goal is not guilt for its own sake but the kind of love-driven repentance that personhood makes possible. No one weeps over disappointing a force. People change for a person.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Spirit can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30): emotion and love belong to persons
- The Spirit can be resisted (Acts 7:51): grace is not irresistible, and resistance happens by refusing the Spirit's word
- Sin as relational wound, not merely rule-breaking
- The sealing of the Spirit as God's mark of ownership on the Christian
- Repentance motivated by love for a person rather than fear of a system
- The context of Ephesians 4: the everyday sins (lying, bitterness, corrupt talk) that grieve Him most often

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul connect grieving the Spirit to sins of speech and attitude rather than only to dramatic public sins?
- What is the difference between feeling guilty about a rule and grieving over wounding someone who loves you?
- How did Stephen's hearers resist the Holy Spirit, and how might a person resist Him in the same way today?

Question 7

Student Question:

Looking across the New Testament, the Spirit speaks (Acts 13:2), teaches (John 14:26), wills (1 Corinthians 12:11), and intercedes (Romans 8:26–27), and He is joined with the Father and the Son in one name (Matthew 28:19). How do these passages together establish both the personhood and the full deity of the Holy Spirit?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question gathers the week's scattered evidence into one ordered case, and it deserves a careful, almost courtroom presentation. Walk the class through the two columns. First, the marks of personhood: the Spirit speaks and issues a call by name, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 13:2), and the "for me" is breathtaking, a personal claim on personal servants. He teaches and brings to remembrance (John 14:26). He wills, apportioning gifts "as he wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11), the decisive text for a personal will. He intercedes for the saints (Romans

8:26–27), and intercession is the act of one person pleading before another on behalf of a third. Add what earlier questions established: He can be lied to, grieved, and resisted. Mind, will, emotion, speech: every faculty of personhood is attested.

Second, the marks of deity. Lying to Him is lying to God (Acts 5:3–4). He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), omniscient, searching even the depths of God (1 Corinthians 2:10–11), omnipresent, “Where shall I go from your Spirit?” (Psalm 139:7), and the agent of creation (Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4, anticipating Week 3). Scripture quotations spoken by God in the Old Testament are attributed to the Spirit in the New (compare Isaiah 6:8–10 with Acts 28:25–27; Jeremiah 31:33–34 with Hebrews 10:15–17), which means the inspired writers regarded the Spirit’s voice as God’s voice.

Matthew 28:19 then sets the capstone: baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” One name, three persons. Jesus binds the Spirit into the divine name itself, on equal footing with the Father and the Son. No Jewish rabbi, jealous for the Shema, could have spoken that sentence about a created being or an impersonal power. The benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14 does the same: grace, love, and fellowship from the Lord Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one blessing.

Give your class the simple summary they can carry: the Holy Spirit does what only a person can do and is what only God can be. Personhood plus deity equals the third person of the Godhead, and next week’s lesson will set Him within the fuller biblical teaching of the one God in three persons.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The cumulative case for personhood: mind (1 Corinthians 2:10–11), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), emotion (Ephesians 4:30), speech (Acts 13:2)
- The cumulative case for deity: called God, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, creating
- The Spirit’s words in the Old Testament cited as God’s words (Acts 28:25–27; Hebrews 10:15–17)
- Matthew 28:19, one name shared by three persons, as the capstone text
- Preparing the ground for Week 2: distinct persons within the one Godhead
- Equipping students to organize the evidence so they can present it to others

Discussion Prompts

- If you had two minutes to show a friend that the Spirit is a divine person, which three passages would you choose and in what order?
- Why is it significant that Acts 13:2 records the Spirit saying “for me” rather than “for God”?
- What difference does the Spirit’s full deity make to how we treat the words He inspired?

Question 8

Student Question:

The judgment on Ananias and Sapphira brought “great fear” on the whole church (Acts 5:11). Reverence for the Spirit has grown rare; He is often treated as a topic to debate or an experience to chase. What would healthy, biblical reverence for the Holy Spirit look like in your speech, your worship, and your treatment of His word this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The result of the Ananias episode was not church growth strategy or damage control; it was fear, “great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things” (Acts 5:11). And remarkably, the verses that follow describe a congregation more attractive than ever: multitudes of believers added (5:14). Holy awe and genuine appeal are not opposites. A church that takes God with full seriousness has a gravity that casual religion never achieves.

Reverence for the Spirit, the question observes, has grown rare, and the teacher can name the two opposite failures. On one side, the Spirit is over-handled: claimed for every impulse, credited with every emotional surge, His name attached to experiences He never promised and teachings He never gave. On the other side, often in reaction, the Spirit is under-honored: mentioned nervously or not at all, studied less than any other major Bible doctrine, reduced to a paragraph at the end of a tract. Both failures treat Him as less than the divine person He is. This study exists to recover the biblical middle: full reverence, full biblical confidence, no fear of the subject and no fantasy about it.

Then make the question’s three categories concrete. In speech: speaking of the Spirit accurately and warmly, retiring the word “it,” refusing to attach His name to our hunches (“the Spirit told me”) when what we mean is “I feel strongly.” In worship: singing and praying with the awareness that a divine person is present among God’s gathered people, which buries both showmanship and boredom. In treatment of His word: the highest practical reverence for the Spirit is reverence for the Scriptures He gave; an open, obeyed Bible honors Him more than any claimed experience. That last point quietly previews the rest of the study.

Close by letting the class feel the privilege side. The fear of Acts 5:11 belongs to people who realize God is actually among them. That is not bad news. It is the best news in the chapter.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Healthy fear of God as a grace that purifies rather than paralyzes the church
- Two opposite irreverences: over-claiming the Spirit and neglecting Him
- Reverent speech: accuracy about the Spirit, retiring “the Spirit told me” language for our own impressions
- Reverence for the Spirit expressed supremely in reverence for His word
- Awe and evangelistic appeal growing together (Acts 5:11–14)

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think the church grew rapidly right after an event that produced great fear?

- Which failure is the greater temptation in our own circles, over-claiming the Spirit or neglecting Him, and why?
- What would change in our assemblies if every member walked in believing a divine person was present?

Question 9

Student Question:

Some sincere religious people, including Jehovah's Witnesses, teach that the Holy Spirit is not a person at all but simply "God's active force." Using what you have seen in Acts 5 and John 14–16, how would you lovingly and clearly answer that claim? Which single passage would you turn to first, and why?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal question of the week, and the teacher should prepare for it as the lesson's summit. The Watchtower organization teaches that the holy spirit (which they decline to capitalize) is "God's active force," comparable to electricity, which Jehovah projects to accomplish His will. Their arguments typically run: the Spirit is likened to wind, fire, and water, and is said to be "poured out," language that fits a force; people can be "filled" with the Spirit, and you cannot be filled with a person; the Spirit is never given a personal name; and the word spirit is neuter in Greek. Take these seriously enough to answer them, because your students' neighbors believe them sincerely.

The answers are at hand. Figurative descriptions do not settle nature: God is called a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29) and Jesus the Lamb, yet no one concludes the Father is combustion. "Poured out" is likewise the language of generous giving (compare Titus 3:5–6), and Scripture happily speaks of God's love being poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5) without making love a liquid. Being "filled with the Spirit" parallels being filled with His influence and direction, just as a man can be "full of" wisdom or faith (Acts 6:3, 5) without wisdom being an impersonal gas. As for the missing name, "the Holy Spirit" functions exactly as a name in Matthew 28:19, where the Spirit shares the one name with the Father and the Son; and the neuter gender of *pneuma* is a fact of grammar, answered by Jesus' own masculine pronoun *ekeinos* in John 16:13–14.

Then return to the positive case, because the strongest refutation is the Bible's own portrait. Work the list with the class until it is theirs: He speaks (Acts 13:2), teaches (John 14:26), wills (1 Corinthians 12:11), can be lied to (Acts 5:3), grieved (Ephesians 4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51), blasphemed (Matthew 12:31–32), and He intercedes (Romans 8:26–27). A force can do none of these. And He is divine: lying to Him is lying to God (Acts 5:3–4), and He stands in the one divine name (Matthew 28:19). If asked which passage to open first, Acts 5:3–4 is hard to beat: one short text, both truths, no technical knowledge required.

Finally, coach the manner as carefully as the matter. The Witness at the door is usually sincere, disciplined, and personally moral, and is also trained for confrontation. Caricature and scorn will close every door. The student's goal is the spirit of 1 Peter 3:15, a ready defense with gentleness and respect: ask genuine questions ("Can a force be lied to? Can electricity be grieved?"), open the Bible rather than trading slogans, and keep the tone of someone offering good news rather than winning a contest. Remind the class that people have been brought out of the Watchtower by Christians who were both clear and kind, and almost never by Christians who were only one of the two.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Watchtower doctrine of the Spirit as "active force" and its standard supporting arguments
- Answering the figurative-language argument: wind, fire, pouring, and filling do not define nature
- The neuter noun *pneuma* versus Jesus' masculine pronoun in John 16:13–14
- Acts 5:3–4 as the single most efficient text: personhood and deity in two verses
- Blasphemy against the Spirit (Matthew 12:31–32) as further proof of personhood
- Evangelistic manner: gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15), questions over quarrels
- Loving the person while refusing the error: no caricature, no compromise

Discussion Prompts

- Which of the Watchtower's arguments seems most persuasive on the surface, and how would you answer it from Scripture?
- Why is Acts 5:3–4 such an efficient passage for this conversation, and how would you walk someone through it?
- What tone wins a hearing with a sincere person caught in error, and what tone loses it immediately?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across both passages for this week. You have met a Spirit who can be lied to and who is called God, a Helper who teaches, guides, and glorifies Christ. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this truth. What is one concrete step you will take this week to treat the Holy Spirit as the divine person He is?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question asks students to stand back from the two passages and let the week's truth become personal formation rather than stored information. Resist the urge to rush this. The difference between a class that informs and a class that transforms usually lies in whether the final ten minutes ask anything of the heart.

Draw the threads together briefly. From Acts 5: the Spirit is a person who knows hearts, who can be lied to, and who is God; therefore integrity before Him is the only sane way to live. From John 14–16: the Spirit is the Helper of the same kind as Jesus, the Teacher and Guide who glorified Christ by giving the apostles all the truth; therefore the word He delivered is His personal gift, and reverence for Him looks like an open Bible and an honest prayer life. The Spirit students have met this week is not a doctrine to file but a divine person to honor.

As students name one way Jesus is forming them, listen for and gently encourage specificity. “I want to take the Spirit seriously” is a sentiment; “I am going to stop saying ‘it’ when I speak of the Spirit,” or “I am going to stop exaggerating my spiritual life in front of others, because that is the sin of Ananias in miniature,” is formation. Concrete steps might include daily Bible reading approached as listening to the Spirit’s own words, a specific repentance where reputation has outrun reality, or memorizing Acts 5:3–4 and John 16:13 to be ready for a conversation with a Witness friend.

Send them out with the study’s trajectory: now that we know who He is, the coming weeks will trace what He has done from creation to Christ to the church, and what He is doing in Christians today. Knowing the Spirit rightly is the doorway to loving Him rightly, and loving Him rightly is the doorway to a transformed life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Moving from information to formation: doctrine aimed at the heart
- Integrity before the Spirit who knows the heart, the lasting lesson of Acts 5
- Reverence for the Spirit expressed in reverence for the word He gave
- Concrete, nameable steps as the test of real response
- Setting the trajectory for the twelve-week study

Discussion Prompts

- What is one sentence you could not have said with conviction two weeks ago that you can say now?
- Which truth from this week most changes how you will pray?
- Who in your life needs to hear what you learned this week, and what would you say first?