

HOLY SPIRIT



SHEPHERDCHURCH

LESSON 5: THE SEALING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

WELCOME

What would your friends say that you're naturally good at?

This section is meant to ease into the lesson and get people talking, so keep it more light-hearted. It's a great way to break the ice and set an open tone. You might consider sharing first to model vulnerability and guide the tone for sharing. Do your best not to skip this first part of the lesson.

WORSHIP

This week's worship moment is about resting in the assurance that we belong to God. Listen to or sing along with a worship song like "Another in the Fire" by Hillsong UNITED or "Living Hope" by Phil Wickham on YouTube, Spotify, etc. Then, thank God for giving you His Holy Spirit and for His faithful promises, and ask Him to help you live with the confidence and hope that come from belonging to Him.

This question/prompt is very self-explanatory, so budget about 7–10 minutes for this section of your Life Group time.

WORD

1. Paul describes a progression in **Ephesians 1:13–14**. Why do you think he presents it in the order that he does?

Guide the Conversation

Lead your group to walk through Ephesians 1:13–14 one step at a time rather than jumping straight to the conclusion. Ask them to identify the progression Paul describes: hearing the message of truth, believing in Christ, being sealed with the Holy Spirit, and receiving the guarantee of our future inheritance. However, do not immediately identify this progression... let your fellow Life Group members discover it on their own. Then ask, "Why do you think Paul presents it in this order?" There are many answers to this question, so give time for everyone to respond. If needed, help them understand that our relationship with God begins with hearing the gospel and responding in faith, not with our own efforts or good works. The gift of the Holy Spirit follows as God's confirmation that we belong to Him.

- To begin, Paul writes that Christians first heard “the word of truth” (v. 13). This is similar to what Paul wrote in Romans 10:17, “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”
- Then, Paul says they “believed” in Jesus (v. 13).
- Next, they were “sealed” with the promised Holy Spirit (v. 13).
- Finally, Paul writes in verse 14 that the Spirit “is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”

This order emphasizes that salvation begins with preaching or a personal conversation about salvation and the reception of the gospel by faith.

- The Greek word for “heard” doesn’t just mean “to hear sounds.” The word refers to “hearing with understanding and responding appropriately.”
- The word “believed” means “to place one’s trust and confidence in something or someone”—in this case, Jesus. Placing trust and confidence is infinitely deeper than merely agreeing with someone.
- Only after hearing and believing does Paul say Christians are “sealed” with the Holy Spirit. In the ancient world, a seal identified ownership, guaranteed authenticity, and provided security and protection. Just as a king’s seal on a document showed it belonged to him and carried his authority, the Holy Spirit marks believers as God’s property.
- The Greek word translated as “deposit” or “guarantee” referred to “a down payment that secured a future transaction and guaranteed that the full amount would be paid.” In other words, the Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee that, one day, everything He has promised will be fulfilled.

This progression shows that salvation is entirely God’s work from beginning to end. The presence of the Holy Spirit is evidence that God has already begun His saving work and will faithfully complete it.

2. According to **Ephesians 1:13–14**, what does God do for Christians, and what is He preparing them for? How do you see this taking place in your life?

Guide the Conversation

This question/prompt dives deeper into Ephesians 1:13–14. And though the two questions seem similar, they are still different.

- Question 1 asks: Why does Paul describe salvation this way? (Interpretation)
- Question 2 asks: How is this truth becoming a reality in your life? (Application)

The two questions move naturally from understanding Paul’s theology to helping group members recognize and celebrate God’s ongoing work in their own lives. He saves them through faith in Christ, seals them with the Holy Spirit as a sign that they belong to Him, and gives them the Spirit as a guarantee of the eternal inheritance that is still to come.

Lead the conversation to a personal place by asking the question in the last part of the prompt: “How do you see this taking place in your life?” Some may talk about growing peace, conviction of sin, answered prayer, changing priorities, or a deeper desire to follow Jesus, while others may still be learning to recognize the Holy Spirit’s work. Remind the group that spiritual growth looks different for everyone.

Deeper Dive

If it helps, since this question/prompt and the previous question/prompt are similar, here are the differences between them.

- Question/Prompt 1 focuses on understanding the text. It asks participants to examine the progression Paul describes the progression that was discussed in question/prompt 1. The goal is observation, interpretation, and understanding the flow of Paul’s argument.
- Question/Prompt 2 builds directly on that foundation by asking, “So what does this mean for us?” Instead of analyzing the order, it asks participants to summarize what God is doing for every Christian and then reflect on how they have personally experienced these realities. This moves the discussion from biblical interpretation to personal application, where your Life Group members reflect on the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in their own lives.

Hopefully, this helps you better navigate this question/prompt.

3. What work does **2 Corinthians 1:21–22** say that God does, and how do these verses explain a Christian’s identity?

Guided Conversation

Rather than focusing first on what Christians should do, ask your Life Group to spend time noticing everything God has already done for them in 2 Corinthians 1:21–22. Your Life Group should list each action God takes in these verses, and then discuss what those actions reveal about His commitment to His people. From there, shift the conversation to identity by asking how these truths shape the way they see themselves. Encourage your Life Group to consider whether they tend to define themselves by their past, their successes, their failures, or others’ expectations, and to contrast that with God’s declaration that they belong to Him. As people share, remind them that our identity is not something we earn or create... it’s something God graciously gives to everyone who is in Jesus.

Deeper Dive

In 2 Corinthians 1:21–22, Paul highlights four actions that God performs on behalf of every believer, emphasizing that our relationship with Him is founded on His work, not ours.

- First, God “makes us stand firm” in Christ. The Greek word *bebaioō* (βεβαιώω) means “to establish, confirm, or make secure.”
- Next, God “anointed,” which is a word used in the Old Testament for priests, prophets, and kings who were set apart by God for His purposes. Paul isn’t saying every Christian holds one of those offices, but that every believer has been set apart to belong to Christ and participate in His mission.
- God also “set his seal of ownership” on us. The Greek word *sphragizō* (σφραγίζω) refers to marking something with an official seal to indicate ownership, authenticity, and protection.
- Paul then says God has “put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit” guaranteeing what is to come. The Greek word *arrabōn* (ᾠραβών) referred to a down payment or first installment that guaranteed the completion of the rest of a transaction. God’s gift of the Holy Spirit is His promise to complete the work of salvation and, one day, to give believers their full inheritance in Christ.

These 4 actions paint a rich picture of Christian identity. Our identity is not determined by our past, our performance, or the opinions of others, but by what God has done for us in Christ. Rather than striving to earn God’s acceptance, Christians are invited to live confidently from the identity He has already given them through His grace.

4. **Ephesians 4:30** says that Christians are sealed by the Holy Spirit. How does this verse set up our understanding of what Paul writes in **Ephesians 4:31–32**?

Guide the Conversation

Before diving into Ephesians 4:31–32, spend a few minutes discussing why Paul first reminds Christians in Ephesians 4:30 that they have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. Lead your Life Group to explore how this truth shapes everything that follows. Rather than viewing Paul’s instructions as a checklist for earning God’s favor, help them recognize that they are a response to the security and identity believers already have in Christ. Ask your fellow Life Group members to share how knowing they belong to God might influence the way they handle resentment, speak to others, forgive those who have hurt them, and pursue peace in their relationships. Help the group see that a transformed life grows out of who God says we are, not out of a desire to prove ourselves worthy of His love.

Deeper Dive

In Ephesians 4:30, Paul reminds believers that they have been “sealed” by the Holy Spirit before he tells them to get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, slander, and malice in verses 31–32. By reminding the Ephesian Christians that they have been sealed by the Holy Spirit “for the day of redemption,” Paul is grounding his ethical instructions in their identity. They are already God’s people, permanently marked as His own, and are living in anticipation of the day when Christ will complete their salvation. This means Paul’s commands are not conditions for becoming God’s children but instructions for those who already belong to Him.

That foundation helps explain why Paul immediately calls believers to put away destructive attitudes and replace them with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. The Greek word for “kind” is *chrēstos* (χρηστός), which describes someone who is “gracious, helpful, and genuinely concerned for the well-being of others.” The phrase “forgiving each other” comes from *charizomai* (χαρίζομαι), a word closely related to *charis* (χάρις), meaning “grace.” It carries the idea of freely extending forgiveness as an act of grace, just as God has graciously forgiven us in Christ.

Paul is showing that Christian behavior flows out of Christian identity. Because believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit and secure in God’s love, they are free to surrender bitterness, extend forgiveness, and love others as Christ has loved them. The Spirit who seals Christians also transforms them, producing a life that increasingly reflects Jesus’ character.

5. Reflect on your study in this lesson and the previous lessons in this series... What attitudes, habits, thoughts, worries, choices, etc. might the Holy Spirit be asking you to surrender?

Guide the Conversation

This final question/prompt is much more crucial than some of your Life Group members might assume. As you lead through this final question/prompt, try your best to create a quiet, unhurried space for people to listen to what the Holy Spirit may be saying to them. Remind the group that surrender isn’t just about giving up obvious sins... it also includes laying down unhealthy attitudes, anxious thoughts, fears, pride, bitterness, control, toxic habits, or anything else that keeps us from fully trusting and following Jesus. Ask them to reflect on what God has been teaching them throughout this series, not just in today’s lesson. If you feel like it would go over well, give a few moments of silence before asking people to share. Additionally, if you feel comfortable doing so, you can close this question/prompt with a prayer. If you do, pray that the Holy Spirit would continue His transforming work in each person’s life, giving them the strength to surrender whatever He’s asking them to release.

WITNESS

Give an update about your “one person” (from the first lesson) that you are sharing with? How’s it going? Do you need any help in how to share with them, what to do next, etc.?

Guide the Conversation

This week’s WITNESS question/prompt is designed to help your Life Group move from discussing God’s Word to putting it into practice. Ask everyone to think back to their “one person” from week 1 (and discussed in week 2). Ask them to give updates. And, if it’s helpful for some in your Life Group, invite group members to brainstorm simple and natural ways to start a conversation, such as:

- Asking someone how they're doing.
- Offering to pray for them.
- Sharing something God taught them during this week's study.
- Asking if they've ever considered who Jesus is and what He means to them.
- Inviting someone to a weekend or Thursday night worship service.
- Inviting someone to the Revival.

Before wrapping up your time together, pray for each person your group members identified. Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare their hearts, create opportunities for meaningful conversations, and give each person wisdom, grace, and truth as they point others to Jesus.