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# 1. The Spirit of Mission

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1st Edition

**BIBLE STUDY**

When we look for energy with which to engage in mission, the Bible points us to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It is through receiving the Holy Spirit that we are commissioned and sent to play our part in the mission of God. The Holy Spirit leads us into risky places, calls us to build bridges, and invites us to embark on journeys of transformation.

*STUDY: Luke 4:16-30*

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,<sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup> 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,

<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup> Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your

hearing.'<sup>22</sup> All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' <sup>23</sup> He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Doctor, cure yourself!" And you will say, "Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum."' <sup>24</sup> And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town. <sup>25</sup> But the truth

is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; <sup>26</sup>yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. <sup>27</sup>There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’ <sup>28</sup>When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. <sup>29</sup>They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. <sup>30</sup>But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

### *Questions:*

1. What did the empowerment of the Holy Spirit mean for the ministry of Jesus? What will it mean for us to be empowered by the same Spirit?
2. What situations of poverty, oppression, ignorance in your context call for the transformation which God’s Spirit brings?
3. What would flourishing look like in the year of the Lord’s favour?
4. How do we discern the presence and action of the Spirit of God? What clues do we take from this text?
5. Jesus risked his life to take on exclusiveness and vested interests. What risks might we have to take to challenge the life-denying forces and be part of the Spirit’s transformation?

**Notes:**

## **WHAT IS MISSION?**

It may seem an obvious question but do the simple exercise of getting your congregation to write down their individual definitions of mission and you will find a multitude of ideas, strategies and theologies.

To help us in our work in the Circuit, we are using the World Council of Churches newly agreed Statement on Mission and Evangelism: *Together*

*Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. A full copy of the statement is available at

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>.

It affirms, first of all, that **mission begins in God:**

‘Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation.’

The mission of God in the world is often referred to in Latin as *missio Dei*. Whilst it is God’s mission, **the church is called to participate:**

‘The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God’s people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope. The church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit.’

The church cannot do this in its own strength – it is **empowered by the Holy Spirit:**

‘How important it is to “receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22) to become living witnesses to the coming reign of God! From a renewed appreciation of the mission of the Spirit, how do we re-envision God’s mission in a changing and diverse world today? Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives.’

The church is not called to initiate mission, but **to discern where the Spirit is working and join in:**

‘The churches are called to discern the work of the life-giving Spirit sent into the world and to join with the Holy Spirit in bringing about God’s reign of justice (Acts 1:6-8). When we have discerned the Holy Spirit’s presence, we are called to respond, recognizing that God’s Spirit is often subversive, leading us beyond boundaries and surprising us. Our encounter with the Triune God is inward, personal, and communal but also directs us outward in missionary endeavour. ... We are led by the Spirit into various situations and moments, into meeting points with others, into spaces of encounter, and into critical locations of human struggle.

This process of discernment **must affect our policy-making and decision-making:**

‘In the task of setting policy is it important to recognise the leading and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. How can we work professionally while responding to the presence of the Spirit in developing and implementing our policies?’

Mission is not the church’s to do alone. Mission in the Spirit of Christ involves **mutuality, reciprocity and partnership with our neighbours:**

‘Mission is to be lived out in mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence. Therefore we have to ask ourselves if we are organised in such a way to transform unjust power structures and ensure that a true mission-focussed partnership with the local is established.’

*Questions:*

1. What are the definitions of mission that your congregation currently embraces? How do they compare with TTL?
2. What does it mean for your congregation to be a 'community of hope'?
3. If your congregation was 'commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces', would it change radically what it is doing now? In what ways?
4. In what ways does your congregation discern the work of the life-giving Spirit? Are there other ways that you would like to try?
5. How do our policies and ways of making decisions need to change in order to promote mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence and mission-focussed local partnerships?

***Notes:***