

Study Guide for Alan Schreck's *Your Life in the Holy Spirit*

[In order to benefit most from *Your Life in the Holy Spirit*, it is suggested that you answer the questions before you read each chapter, either alone or in a small group discussion.]

Introduction:

1. Does your life in Christ make you strong? Does His love comfort you? Do you have fellowship with the Holy Spirit?
2. What do you consider the central message of the Scriptures?
3. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in your own life?

Chapter One: Who is the Holy Spirit?

1. Read the following passages. What do they say? John 7:38-39_____

Ez. 47:1-12_____

Is. 44:3-4_____

Is. 55:1_____

Is. 58:11_____

2. What do these passages reveal to us about the Holy Spirit?

3. Read John chapters 14 and 16. What does Jesus say about the Holy Spirit in these chapters?

4. Which of these titles or roles of the Holy Spirit bring you the most comfort or encouragement?

5. *“The miracle is, like the miracle of the incarnation of the Son of God, that this divine person is not distant and impersonal. He has been sent into the soul of each Christian to live and remain as in a temple, to be the friend closest to our hearts ---- a fountain of refreshment and strength within us, the living water flowing from us and welling up to eternal life.”* (Schreck, p. 23)

What if, for 30 days, you just believed these words and acted as if you believed them?
What do you have to lose? What do you have to gain?

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Chapter Two: The Importance of Pentecost

1. What is the significance of Pentecost, in your own words?
2. According to John the Baptist, Who is it that baptizes us “with the Holy Spirit and with fire”? (See. Luke 3:16). Would you expect that baptism to transform your life?
3. Jesus told the disciples to “be ready” to receive the Holy Spirit. They spent nine days in prayer with Mary, waiting to receive what Jesus promised them. Are you willing to “get ready” for a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit in your life? How would you do that?
4. From your knowledge of the Apostles after Jesus’ Resurrection, what changes did Pentecost bring upon them?
5. What is your reaction to the statement that the reality and presence of the Holy Spirit can be “seen and heard in history and in experience”? (Schreck, p.31). (Think of the experience of St. Paul). Have you “seen and heard” the Presence of the Holy Spirit in your own life?

6. Write, Study, and Pray over the following Scriptures for one week. Talk about your reactions the following week in your small group:

Acts 1:8: _____

Luke 12:12 _____

John 14:26 _____

John 16:13 _____

John 14:16-17 _____

7. Why did Jesus send the Holy Spirit to the Church? To each of us? (Note: after you have answered this question for yourself, read pages 35-40 and make notes here.)

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CHAPTER THREE: THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER

1. What do you think is the ultimate goal of prayer?
2. What is the source of prayer?
3. Read and react to the following paragraph from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: (section 2725: "The Battle of Prayer.")

In the battle of prayer, we must face in ourselves and around us erroneous notions of prayer. Some people view prayer as a simple psychological activity, others as an effort of concentration to reach a mental void. Still others reduce prayer to ritual words and postures. Many Christians unconsciously regard prayer as an occupation that is incompatible with all the other things they have to do: they "don't have the time." Those who seek God by prayer are quickly discouraged because they do not know that prayer comes also from the Holy Spirit and not from themselves alone.

4. What does it mean to be a Christian? (See the last sentence on page 43). Does that sentence *blow you away*? Change your idea of what it means to "be a Christian"?
5. Read the second paragraph on page 44. Now read the last 2 sentences of this section on page 44. What are the implications of those statements for your own life?
6. Read Luke 11:11-13. What is Jesus telling us about the Holy Spirit?

7. In the Acts of the Apostles, what is the initial response of those receiving an outpouring of the Holy Spirit? (see page 47).

8. By nature, we do not “feel like” praising God. Rather, we more often feel estranged from Him, fearful of Him, and even rebellious against Him. The source of this alienation from God is what we call sin --- the state of every human person from birth (Original Sin), and increased by our own free choice (Venial and Mortal Sin). How is this “natural” state overcome in us? (Study pages 48 and 49).

9. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in each one of us?

10. How do we know for sure that God abides in us and we in Him, that we are indeed “children of God”?

11. Given our limitations in prayer, how do you interpret this statement? *In prayer, the true protagonist is God. (p.54)*

12. *Many people have found the gift of tongues refreshing and freeing; in it, the intellect rests from the onerous burden of formulating words and ideas, while the human spirit is lifted and quickened by the breath of God’s own Spirit. (p.57)*
Given this idea, would you be open to the Gift of Tongues as a form of prayer?

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CHAPTER FOUR: THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

1. *“Before we consider the work of the Spirit of truth, let us look at the blindness that characterized Jesus’ followers before the sending of the Holy Spirit” (p. 59). Your book gives several examples of the disciples not understanding Jesus’ words: Mark 8:14-21 _____*

Luke 18:31-34 _____

Luke 22:24-29 _____.

Are there things in the Gospel or in Scripture that you do not understand?

Are there some teachings of the Church that you do not understand?

2. *“The fullness of the truth that leads to salvation has been entrusted to the church, and particularly to its leaders by the Holy Spirit” (p.66).*

What are some of the guarantees we have as Catholics that the Church has preserved, and does preserve, the Truth? (see pages 66-68).

3. What are the implications for us of the Promised Gifts of the Holy Spirit, given to us in Confirmation, especially wisdom, knowledge, and understanding? (see page 69). Can you think of a time in your life when you suddenly understood, or had insight into, a truth of your faith?

4. *“Faith without any personal conviction of the truths of the faith is a rather bland, if not deficient, form of Christianity” (p.70).* What is the work of the Holy Spirit in us when it comes to the truths of our faith?

5. Explain Cardinal Newman’s distinction between “notional assent” and “real assent” to truth. Would you say your relationship to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit is more “notional” or “real”? Would you be open to a deeper relationship with the Persons of the Trinity?

6. Read 1 Cor. 2:9-10. How do you interpret that Scripture?

7. *“The church as a whole, guided by the successors of the apostles, cannot be mistaken or deceived if the Holy Spirit leads it to define something as true” (p.75).* How does this statement correct the idea of “Sola Scriptura” (*the bible alone*) embraced by the Protestant churches?

8. Read the section on “Discernment” (pp. 75-78). What issues does this reading bring up for you? Have you experienced the kind of discernment mentioned in these pages? (You might include p. 79 in your discussion of discernment).

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CHAPTER FIVE: THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS

1. The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to make us holy. How does He do that?
2. What is the connection between the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai and the Feast of Pentecost? (see. Ez.36:27: *I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.*)
3. Why does the Holy Spirit convince us of our sin? Read pages 83-86 for a full answer.
4. Read Romans, chapters 7 and 8. Do these chapters make a difference to your understanding of sin and the power of the Holy Spirit?
5. What is the Biblical meaning of the word “flesh,” as Paul uses it in Romans 7? (See definition of page 88).

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CHAPTER SIX: EVANGELIZATION: WHERE'S THE POWER?

1. At first, Jesus' apostles didn't witness to their faith very much. They continued to meet privately or they went back to fishing. What changed them was the Pentecost experience. Today, two-thirds of the world's population do not believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior; they do not know that God himself has come into the world to bring hope, strength, and life – even an eternal life of joy with him. As Catholics, we typically are reluctant to share our faith in Jesus Christ, but how are people to learn about the Joy of the Gospel if we refuse to share what we know?

What would inspire us to begin sharing our faith?

2. *The Spirit gave the proclaimers boldness to announce the message, and wisdom to proclaim it rightly. He also opened the ears and hearts of the recipients of this message to hear and believe in Jesus and to join the community of believers, the church. At both the proclaiming and the receiving ends of the evangelization process, the Holy Spirit must act. Without him, there is no power and no conversion (p.104).* What are the implications of that statement for us as believers and disciples?
3. *The Holy Spirit is the soul of the church. It is he who explains to the faithful the deep meaning of the teaching of Jesus and of his mystery (p. 106).* Do you think knowing this would make a difference to many Catholics?
4. *Faith is strengthened when it is given away to others (p. 107).* Have you ever experienced this phenomenon?

5. *From the outset, conversion is expressed in faith which is total and radical, and which neither limits nor hinders God's gift (p. 109). How do we tend to "limit and hinder" God's gift of faith?*

6. *One of the central purposes of mission is to bring people together in hearing the gospel, in fraternal communion, in prayer and in the Eucharist. To live in "fraternal communion" means to be "of one heart and soul," establishing fellowship from every point of view: human, spiritual and material (p.110). How well does this describe your own experience of being a member of a parish?*

7. *Real and effective evangelization must begin with the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual's heart. Without the Spirit, there is no true motivation to evangelize....The most perfect preparation of the evangelizer has no effect without the Holy Spirit (p.111). I propose that we begin to restore evangelization and missionary fervor in the Catholic Church by constant prayer for a renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as at Pentecost (p.112). Have you a desire for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your own life?*

8. *When people have a fervent desire to witness to their faith, they receive teaching with joy. They know their need for instruction to explain their faith effectively, and their spiritual experience produces a hunger to know more about God and the truth He has revealed (p.114). What is it that has triggered your own desire to know more about God and the truth He has revealed?*

9. *What sections or statement from the last section, "The Spirituality of the Witness" impressed you the most?*

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CHAPTER SEVEN: BUILDING THE CHURCH – Part 1

(Note: This chapter will take two weeks for study, reflection, and discussion)

1. The opening pages of this chapter tell us that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost provided the apostles not only with “power” but also with the *practical direction* they needed. The Acts of the Apostles are full of *specific* directions about where to go and to whom to speak. Is there a time when you experienced this kind of guidance in your own life?

2. In Exodus, chapter 31, the Lord says to Moses, “See, I have chosen Bezalel...and I have filled him with the Spirit of Practical Wisdom, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts – to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab ...to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you: the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent...and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place.”

Your book says that to build the church or the kingdom of God, we need God’s guidance and instruction, and we need it every day in *practical* matters. “What am I to do?” “Who should I speak to and encourage in the faith today?” “How should I do this?” The Catechism notes that the Church invites us to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, especially at the beginning and the end of every important action.

Talk about asking the Holy Spirit to guide you in daily tasks and practical matters.

3. *All God's people share in the kingship of Jesusordering the whole of creation to the praise of God (p.122-123).* Have you ever thought of “reporting” to Jesus about the conditions that prevail in *your* corner or section of His Kingdom? Have you ever established the boundaries of your property or your responsibilities at work as a “sacred” place where the values of Jesus Christ are lived out? Have you ever said with Joshua, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:14-15)?

4. What are some of the ways we can receive guidance from God? (See pp. 123-124).

5. *Through the Holy Spirit, we grow to become people who are wise, understanding, reverent and God-fearing (p.124) ...*as we seek Him in prayer and the sacraments and cultivate His gifts through action and practice. Have you ever studied Isaiah 11:2 and deliberately asked for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit listed there? Would you be willing to try that experiment for a period of time?

6. Read through pages 125-127 about the New Testament spiritual gifts given for the building up of the Church. The gifts “make us fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church” (p. 128). *The unity of the church is built as we come to recognize each other's gifts and value them....St. Paul's explanation of the charisms indicates that every Christian possesses at least one charism or spiritual gift – see quote from I Cor. on p. 130.*
Study the chart at the end of this guide. Pay attention especially to when the gifts begin to manifest themselves. Can you identify with any of the gifts listed here?

7. The Second Vatican Council taught that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are so important that they are one of three primary ways that God leads his people to holiness, along with the sacraments and ordained ministry. Reflect on how God has used your gifts to help you grow in holiness.

8. The gifts of the Holy Spirit empower the church and each person in it to fulfill its mission in God's plan (p.134). An orchestra leader uses his gift to lead and conduct the orchestra to bring forth the best from all its members. Is this the way you have previously viewed the role of your pastor?

9. Consider the role of your favorite saint(s) in terms of his/her/their "gifts" to the church. How was the church enriched by the presence of this person? Can you see any of their charisms in your own spirituality?

10. On the question of spiritual gifts, it has been said that you know what kind of tree you are when people come to you to pick the fruit. What is it that people come to you for? Does that tell you anything about your gifts?

11. "Remain...in an attitude of constant and grateful availability for every gift that the Spirit wishes to pour into your hearts" (Pope John Paul II). Can you see how that attitude could enrich your relationship with the Holy Spirit and with Jesus Christ?

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CHAPTER EIGHT: THE SPIRIT AS GUARANTEE OF OUR INHERITANCE

1. How do we know we have been saved, if someone asks? As Catholics, we need to memorize **2 Cor. 1:21-22**: *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*
2. Are you able to point to the transforming work of Christ in your own life?
3. Reflect on the meaning of the Holy Spirit as a “first-fruit,” (or foretaste) of the life of the world to come, *received as a gift from the risen Christ* (p. 145 -146).
4. “Because they had not received Christian baptism, they had no experience (as well as no idea) of the gift of the Holy Spirit and of how his coming was supposed to change their lives....Would [we] today be able to testify from [our] own experience whether or not [we] have received the Holy Spirit?....Could [we] articulate the fact that it is through the Holy Spirit [we] have experienced (or are experiencing) a foretaste of eternal life?” (p.148).
5. *Eternal life is a gift freely given to those who possess and live by the Holy Spirit....and yet we “groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:22). We are in the process of being transformed into the image of Christ in this life, through the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Does this idea give us hope?*

6. *The fact is that adult Christians are supposed to have some “experiential” knowledge of the Holy Spirit, even to the extent that was known in the primitive church....St. Paul understands the experience of the Spirit as an important and normal aspect of the Christian life....People who have experienced this renewal of the grace of the Holy Spirit...know that God is real, that He loves them, and that he is leading them in Christ to eternal life (p.155-156).* Can you say that you have experienced this fruit of the Holy Spirit?

7. Do you realize that this knowledge is a God-given guarantee or pledge of salvation?

8. Finally, the work of the Holy Spirit in us can be described in a quote from St. John of the Cross: *The soul of one who loves God always swims in joy, always keeps holiday, and is always in the mood for singing.* Let us earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit continues this work in us, no matter the circumstances of our present life!

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CHAPTER NINE: UNITY: THE SPIRIT'S GREATEST GIFT

NOTE: The *best* approach to this chapter would be for the group to read it together and comment on it as they read.

1. Division and disunity flow from Satan. One of the typical biblical names for the devil is *ho diabolos*, derived from the term *diabalein*, meaning *to throw apart*.

God is the great gathering force; sin is a scattering power. Jesus practiced open table fellowship, serving as host for many who would normally be excluded from polite society: the public sinner, the prostitute, the handicapped, the tax collector. He was acting in the very person of Yahweh gathering his scattered children. He was creating a new family, no longer bound by social conventions. He would found the church, which still has the mission of drawing the tribes into the community of Jesus.

The early church, gathered together by the Holy Spirit, had its difficulties – the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians had different customs, practices, and philosophies. These problems were addressed by listening to the Holy Spirit and by being renewed with his love again and again.

Unity is a task as well as a gift (p.161). What is the author's test or measure of whether any church is governed by the Holy Spirit? (p. 163).

2. *We were all baptized into one body ---Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all made to drink of one Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). The result is that Christians, as members of Christ's body, literally belong to one another, are "individually members one of another, just as the parts of a human body belong to each other and must function together to survive" (p.164).*

In the letter to the Ephesians, we read that we are being built together into a holy temple, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Do you experience that kind of unity in our parish church?

3. What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit? What are the works of the flesh, as characterized in Galatians, chapter 5?

4. *Gunther Bornkamm...comments that Paul's guiding principle was responsibility toward others. St. Paul clearly taught that every member of the church had a duty to build up the rest, following the example of Christ (p.168). Where have you seen examples of this kind of "building up" in our church?*

5. *The church is made up of sinners....Its members will hurt each other through misunderstanding and through offenses, either intentional or unintentional. Hence, one of the greatest works of the Holy Spirit is to preserve and restore unity in the church through forgiveness and reconciliation (p. 179)....As we have seen in the Acts of the Apostles, when certain issues threatened to divide the church in Jerusalem and the universal church, it was the elders of the church who came together to pray and to settle the issues in a way that would preserve unity (p.180).*

What are the issues that threaten to divide the church today?

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CHAPTER TEN: THE SPOUSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. We have been looking at the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, as the One who produces in us the character of Jesus, with the gifts of wisdom, understanding, fortitude, counsel, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.
The fruits of the Spirit dwelling in us are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

As the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Mary exhibits all of the gifts and fruits of her Divine Spouse. She is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in her perfectly, without obstacle.

Elizabeth's reaction to see her cousin reveals an important truth about Mary: her presence evokes the presence of the Holy Spirit in others (p.186).

Her Magnificat is one of the most beautiful prophetic prayers of praise recorded in sacred Scripture...and she pondered actions of the Holy Spirit that she experienced in the events of her life... She sought to fathom the mysteries of God within her and those which surround her (p.186-187).

Up to this point, what has been the role of Mary in your own life? Does this chapter open possibilities for a greater role of Mary in your life?

2. Read the excerpt from *Marialis Cultus* on p. 190, followed by this quote:
In Mary we behold the most marvelous manifestation of the Spirit who touches each one of us personally to bring out what is best in our own personalities for the sake of the community (Frederick M. Jelly), p. 191).

Mary embraced her role in the "Theodrama," in the words of Bishop Barron, and that is why she went "with haste" to her cousin Elizabeth. In the same way, those who were overshadowed by the Spirit at Pentecost went *with haste* to proclaim the good news to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem for the feast.

Our book indicates that one “filling” with the Holy Spirit is not enough – we are filled anew, in all the changing dimensions of our existence; the Spirit may come many times into our lives and the life of our community to refresh, renew, and deepen His work and to grant new charisms (p. 194). ...It does not matter whether this outpouring precedes baptism, as in the case of many catechumens, or follows it, as is the case for most of us.

Do you consider yourself open to a new infilling of the Holy Spirit for your own benefit and for the sake of the community/the church?

3. *The New Testament clearly describes the Holy Spirit as a Person who guides, directs, and speaks to the church....Most Christians today do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a Person who can guide, teach, and speak to them as he did in the New Testament (p.198).*

If we study the lives of Jesus and Mary, we find them completely guided by the Holy Spirit. Since we are to “put on Christ,” can we allow Christ in us to teach us to be more open to the guidance and teaching of the Spirit? How can we know when the Spirit is guiding us, or when we are following our own desires?

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APPENDIX: SPIRIT FILLED WORSHIP IN THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

1. Read the first two pages of this chapter about praying with uplifted hands (orans). Before coming to the discussion group, try this form of prayer privately and be ready to talk about your experience – positive, negative, or indifferent!
2. Read pages 206-207 about praying without words, of “bursting out into a simple sound of joy, of jubilation.” Does this kind of prayer seem foreign, or does it seem like something you wish for?
3. The next section of this chapter deals with 4 ways to respond to the complaint that the Mass is boring, dull. What is your own experience with the Mass and where or how or why have you found it ***not*** boring or dull? Or have you found it boring and dull, after all?
4. P.213: *Once again, unbelievers need to see that God has broken into history in a radical new way in Jesus Christ, and that he remains active and present in the world through the gifts, power, and guidance of the Holy Spirit....”When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation....For God is not a God of confusion, but a God of peace.” Catholics must learn to be open to these gifts, even to seek them, and to accept them with gratitude. Catholics must hear that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are a normal part of the Christian life and are necessary for the life of the church.*

Now that we have finished the book, our next meeting will be an experiment in being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Each attendee is asked to seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in the coming week, asking for a gift to bring to the group --- a hymn, a word of wisdom, a prayer, a revelation, a Scripture reading, etc. Try not to bring your “favorite thing,” but instead, ask the Holy Spirit what He wants you to bring.

Remember that we are here to worship God, to celebrate the Gift of the Holy Spirit in each one of us, and to ask for the Presence of Jesus in our midst -- let that govern your choice!