

RULE 2 ■ Know Your God

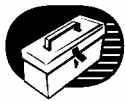
The Spirit—God's Power for Being and Doing



Surveying the Site

Read the Blueprints.

Paul claims that the Spirit of God enabled him to do what he did. He felt the Spirit moving in him and acting through him. Have you ever felt as if you were strengthened or empowered by a presence not your own? How do you explain what you experienced? Answer these questions quietly within yourself, then share your responses with the group.



Checking Your Tool Box

On a cold morning, with gusts of wind slamming sleet into the skin like needles, a cross-country runner approaches the final two hundred yards. The winner crossed the finish line several minutes ago. No one else is on the course. Yet as this lone runner spots the timer, he summons all his strength for a sprint to the finish line. He may beat no one else, but he can beat his own best time. A proud coach cheers loudly, then whispers, "That kid's got spirit."

Each of the fans filling the arena is unique, but from the jump ball to the final buzzer, the lines of distinction will blur. They all moan, cheer, and move in unison. In celebration, strangers hug. In defeat, casual acquaintances console each other. The fatigue they feel the next day will let them know they expended energy here. Yet in the arena they feel energized, and they leave feeling both emptied and filled. The common colors, the emotions released, and

the experiences shared make it clear that they have spirit.

In times exciting and times demanding, what gets us through and what goes through us is more than meets the eye. We call this unseen force "spirit."

Participating in the relationship God offers us through Jesus is demanding. It takes courage, strength, and motivation to help someone we're not sure we like, to stand in front of others and pray, and to provide a good example for young people. It's hard to teach a Sunday school class, to find time for a church workday, and to volunteer for one more activity. It's not easy to believe when everything seems to go wrong and we seem to do nothing right. We need something other than ourselves. We need the Spirit.

- Recall a time when you doubted that you could continue, but when the presence of a friend or a sense of strength from within helped you persevere. Was that the Spirit?

Participating in the relationship God offers us through Jesus is rewarding. We drag ourselves to the soup kitchen mumbling, "Why help these bums?" and leave with a new friend and a sense of satisfaction. We worship with the family instead of "communing with nature," and something in the service lets us know it was time well spent. We take a trip with a youth group, attend a retreat, or find a quiet place and read the Bible, and return confessing, "I'm not the person I was when I started." In those and similar experiences, it becomes obvious something was there that we didn't bring. We call that something the Spirit.

Along the way of participating in the relationship God offers us, we discover (or

are discovered by) the Spirit. The Spirit is that tingling sensation when the choir anthem seems especially beautiful, someone we love accepts baptism, or a sermon or prayer deals with something we've had on our mind all week. The Spirit is that nagging feeling that the spouse abuse center needs paper products more than we need a steak dinner, that being with those we love is not the same as doing for them, or that we need to do something we don't want to do. The Spirit becomes known in the joy of working together, in the awe of participating in something greater than we are, and in the pleasure of discovering that other men have the same needs, fears, and hopes that we do.

The Spirit moves around us and fills the events in which we participate with the presence of God. The Spirit moves through us and gives what we do greater impact and deeper meaning. The Spirit moves in us and lets us know we are not alone and we are not our own. The Spirit is God's power for being and doing.

■ In 1 Corinthians 12:4–7, Paul says we all receive gifts of the Spirit and that those gifts are provided for the common good. Split into groups of two or three and tell one another what gifts of the Spirit you think each possesses.

Come back together as a group.

Although most of the talk we hear about the Spirit is associated with personal experiences, the Spirit also works in and through groups and entire communities. What are the characteristics of a Spirit-filled gathering or community?

Blueprints

In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to boast of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ.

Romans 15:17–19



Conversation with the Master Carpenter

Close your session with prayer. Lift up any prayer requests or insights. Invite the Spirit of God to be in you and among you throughout the rest of the Apprenticeship study.



On-the-Job Experience

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.*

Psalm 51:10–12

Write these words on an index card and place it by your bed, tape it to the mirror where you shave, or place it in the front of your pocket notebook. For two weeks, offer that prayer to God at the beginning of each day.