

**Pentecost and the
Work of the Spirit**

**2025 TERM 4 LIFE
GROUP MATERIAL**

Bracken Ridge
BAPTIST CHURCH

Pentecost and the Work of the Spirit

A Discussion Guide for Life Groups
by John Sweetman

Covering the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), these studies work through the symbols of the coming of the Spirit, exploring each individual symbol (wind, fire, tongues) to see what it tells us about the work of God's Spirit both in these early followers of Jesus and in us today. These studies will help you understand the Holy Spirit's incredible work of enlivening, purifying and empowering you for the sake of your world.

Please work through the Scriptures and each devotion before your Life Group discussion.

The sermon series is:

Nov 2: Waiting for God's Spirit

Nov 9: The Wind of God's Spirit

Nov 16: The Fire of God's Spirit

Nov 23: The Languages of God's Spirit

There is also a final study on "The Purpose of God's Spirit" that summarises the teaching of the sermon series.

1. Waiting for God's Spirit (Nov 2)

Scripture: Read Acts 1:4-8 (NIV); Acts 2:1-4 (NIV)

ACTS 1:4 On one occasion, while he [Jesus] was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

ACTS 2:1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Devotion

I grew up in a conservative church. I am so thankful for the training I received in understanding the Bible and serving Jesus. But somehow, despite our strong emphasis on studying the whole of Scripture, we missed much of its positive teaching on the Holy Spirit. So, when I became a pastor, I was on a steep learning curve concerning the work and gifts of the Spirit.

Through my many years of serving as a pastor and lecturing in a seminary, I have continued to learn about the incredible work of the Holy Spirit. These studies explore some of these wonderful truths. We're going to focus on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all the followers of Jesus for the first time.

Those who were close to Jesus had been through a dreadful Jewish Passover. This celebrative event had become a time of mourning for them. Their Rabbi had been crucified, and they deeply grieved His death throughout the weekend. They had given up on the mission of Jesus. It was all finished. Without their leader, what could they do? But then Jesus incredibly came back to life. He completely overwhelmed death. It just couldn't hold Him. All that Jesus had promised through His death and resurrection was now available to His followers— complete forgiveness, new life to the full, a personal intimate relation with God, victory over death, and good news to boldly share with the world. Except that they still didn't fully grasp it. The reality had not hit. They were hopeful but not yet confident in their new life.

But before He left, Jesus gave His followers a clear direction. We read about it in Acts 1:4–8. They were to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptized (or immersed) with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). This special gift from the Father was going to make a radical difference in them. Up until this point in history, only special Israelites like kings and prophets had been filled by the Spirit, but “in a few days” every follower of Jesus would be completely immersed by God. This was going to be the game changer. The Holy Spirit would release new power in them to live for God and be bold witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1:8).

So they waited. They were a small, unremarkable group of nobodies on the outskirts of the Roman empire. But their soaking with God's Spirit was going to turn them into powerful witnesses who would take the gospel of Jesus to the world. At this point, they had no idea of their coming influence, but they were expectant. With the next major Jewish feast of Pentecost (50 days after Passover) approaching, their anticipation was growing. As the Passover had marked the death and resurrection of Jesus, maybe Pentecost would mark their immersion by the Spirit.

I hope your expectation is growing as we are going to explore the original coming of God's Spirit on believers. If you are a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is already at work in you. Ask for God to open your eyes to the incredible power and life that He wants to release in you. Pray that God's truth will come alive in you.

In these studies, I will show how the signs accompanying the Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) were very significant. God was not just trying to impress with random symbols of wind, fire and tongues, but each represented a new aspect of the ministry of the Spirit in the lives of believers. These symbols of the Spirit can be compared with the symbol of a wedding ring. The ring is not a random symbol of marriage. As I have said at numerous weddings, "The unending circle represents the endless nature of marriage, and the worth of the ring represents the value of your marriage." Like wedding rings at a wedding, the signs of the Holy Spirit are deeply significant. We will explore each sign and find out what God's Spirit is wanting to do in and through us. This week will be an exciting and inspiring journey. Pray for God's Spirit to fill you afresh and to grow your expectation.

As Jesus promised his followers in Acts 1:8, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." This is the work of God's Spirit in you.

There is an old 19th century song/prayer that could become your prayer for this series:

- 1) Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.
- 2) Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.
- 3) Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.
- 4) Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – Week 1

- 1) In this devotion, John talks about growing up in a church that didn't focus much on the Holy Spirit. How has your own spiritual background shaped your understanding of the Holy Spirit? What have been your experiences with the Holy Spirit?
- 2) Why do you think Jesus instructed His followers to wait for the Holy Spirit rather than immediately sending Him after His resurrection? What does this reveal about the timing and purpose of the Spirit's coming?
- 3) In Acts 1:6, the disciples ask about restoring the kingdom to Israel. What does this question reveal about their expectations—and how does Jesus redirect their focus in verse 8?
- 4) What is the significance of the Holy Spirit coming during Pentecost, a major Jewish festival? How might this timing be intentional in God's plan?
- 5) The early disciples were told to wait with anticipation. How do you respond to seasons of waiting in your spiritual life? What can we learn from their posture of expectation?
- 6) How did the coming of the Holy Spirit transform a small, fearful group into bold witnesses? What does this transformation tell us about what the Spirit wants to do in and through us?
- 7) Jesus promised that the Spirit would give power to be His witnesses. How have you experienced this power in your life—or where do you feel you need it today?
- 8) If the Spirit is already at work in every believer, what can we do to become more aware, open, and responsive to His presence daily? How can we "wait" actively in our current spiritual lives?

2. The Wind of God's Spirit (Nov 9)

Scripture: Read Acts 2:2 (NIV); Genesis 2:7 (NIV); John 20:21 (NIV); John 10:10 (NIV)

ACTS 2:2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

GEN 2:7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

JOHN 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

JOHN 10:10 I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

Devotion

In the Bible, significant movements of God are often accompanied by very loud sounds. For example, when God descended on Mt Sinai to give the Law to Moses, there was "thunder" and "a very loud trumpet blast" (Ex. 19:16). I guess that thunder and trumpet blasts were the loudest sounds in those days, so Moses is saying that God's presence was ear-splitting. Similarly, when Jesus returns for believers, it's going to be noisy.

1 Thess. 4:16 (NIV) says, "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God." God will roar at His return. So, it is not a surprise that the coming of the Spirit on all believers for the first time was a noisy affair.

But this time, the noise is not described as a trumpet blast or thunderclap, but as the sound of a cyclonic wind. In 1974, the town of Darwin in northern Australia was hit by Tropical Cyclone Tracy. The wind gusts measured 217 km/hr before the instruments failed and more than 70% of Darwin's buildings were destroyed. As survivors reflected on the events of that night, they particularly highlighted the frightening sound of the violent winds as they tore through the houses where they were sheltering. This was the type of sound described in this Scripture.

However, at Pentecost, the wind of the Spirit was not terrifying but invigorating. God was breathing on His people. In both the Hebrew and Greek languages, the word translated wind is also the word for breath and the word for spirit. The sound of the rushing wind was the roar of God's breath as He breathed the Holy Spirit into the believers.

This is not the first time that the Bible talks about God breathing into people. In Gen. 2:7 (NIV) it says, "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." As God breathed on Adam's body, he became physically and spiritually alive. God's breath brings His life. Here, a similar thing is happening.

Many of these disciples had been following Jesus for years. They probably knew His teaching off by heart. (I'm sure He often repeated Himself.) They had seen God's powerful work through Jesus' ministry, and some had even participated in supernatural miracles themselves. They had loved and served Jesus in the flesh. What a special privilege! You would think that you couldn't ask for more. Yet here they were huddled in a room together with no idea how they would move forward without Jesus. They felt inadequate. They knew a lot, they had seen a lot, but they lacked the reality of the life that was theirs through Jesus. Jesus has promised them "life to the full" (John 10:10), but it was still theory for them.

Then God breathed, they were saturated in the Spirit, and their new life in Jesus became reality. And did it make a difference! They were immersed in security because the Spirit stamped them as belonging to God. They were filled with joy because God's presence was in them. They were filled with peace because the Lord of the universe was looking after them from within. They were filled with confidence because God was working through them. This new Holy Spirit-filled life was incredible. No wonder they wanted to tell others about it. They couldn't contain themselves.

If you are a Christian, then God has already breathed His Spirit into you. God is living in you and all the incredible life that comes through that is already available to you. You don't have to earn it by the quality of your spiritual life or the effectiveness of your service. God's grace package includes forgiveness, freedom, and God living in you. So, part of the Spirit's ministry is to enliven us to everything that we have in Jesus. Life to the full.

The Holy Spirit will give you a deep sense of peace, even when your circumstances are tough. He will enable joy to well up from within you at all times. He will strengthen you when you feel weak. He will remind you of the care of your Father when you feel alone. He will encourage you and support you. He will make God's truth come alive for you. He will awaken your deep desire to live close to God. He will comfort you when you are disappointed or discouraged. He will grow your passion for Jesus. He will produce godly character in you.

As a believer, this life is yours. God's Spirit wants to breathe the reality of His life into you. It's just a matter of allowing Him to do His work. It would be good to ask Him now to breathe on you.

"Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – Week 2

- 1) Acts 2:2 describes the Spirit's arrival as a “violent wind.” Why do you think God chose to use wind to represent the Spirit in this moment? How does this connect with the imagery of God breathing life into Adam in Genesis 2:7?
- 2) In both Hebrew and Greek, the same word can mean wind, breath, or spirit. How does this deepen your understanding of the Holy Spirit’s role in the life of a believer?
- 3) Compare John 20:22 and Acts 2:2. Why do you think Jesus breathed on the disciples before Pentecost, and what is the difference between that moment and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost?
- 4) The disciples had seen miracles and knew Jesus personally, but still needed the Holy Spirit to experience “life to the full” (John 10:10). Have you ever felt like you “know” God but are missing the fullness of life He promises? What can we do about this?
- 5) The devotion says that after the Spirit came, the disciples were “immersed in security,” “filled with joy,” and “filled with confidence.” Which of these do you long for most right now, and why?
- 6) Have you ever experienced a moment where you felt “breathed on” by God — a time when His presence, strength, or comfort became especially real to you? What was that like?
- 7) The devotional outlines several ways the Holy Spirit supports believers—peace, joy, strength, guidance, comfort, etc. Which of these aspects of the Spirit’s work have you experienced recently?
- 8) If the Holy Spirit has already been given to every believer, what might be stopping us from living in the fullness of that reality? How can we become more open or responsive to His presence?
- 9) The wind at Pentecost wasn’t destructive, but invigorating. How might God’s “breath” be seeking to renew or refresh you today?

3. The Fire of God's Spirit

(Nov 16)

Scripture: Read Acts 2:3 (NIV); Exodus 3:2-5 (NIV); Isaiah 6:3-7 (NIV); Hebrews 12:28-29 (NIV); Matthew 3:11-12 (NIV)

ACTS 2:3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

EX 3:2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up... 5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

ISA 6:3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

HEB 12:28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

MATT 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Devotion

With the wind came the fire that separated into flames that rested on every believer. The fact that the fire fell on everyone is very significant. The Holy Spirit was no longer just empowering special people for special ministry. God was now indwelling every believer through His Holy Spirit. Every one of those 120 followers of Jesus in that upper room got the fire. This was incredibly new and important. As Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit was now filling every believer, not just the leaders.

But what did the tongues of fire symbolise about the Holy Spirit's work in every Christian? This is certainly not the first mention of a connection between fire and God in the Bible. Let's explore a couple of examples to understand the significance of this symbol.

The first is in Exodus 3:2-5. Moses was raised in Pharaoh's family with access to incredible wealth, power and education. But he took God's work into his own hands and killed an Egyptian. At 40, Moses was forced to flee Pharaoh's revenge and ended up as a nomadic shepherd. For forty years his life was uneventful until one day in the desert, he saw a bush that was on fire ("flames of fire" – similar to "tongues of fire" in Acts 2:3) but not burning up. As Moses approached this strange sight, God said from the fire that this was "holy ground." The fire was a sign of God's holiness.

We often sing about God being holy, but what does this really mean? At its core, holy means set apart, special and different. God is different from His creation, including humans. We are made in God's image, but God is still very distinct. God's holiness especially involves His purity and perfection, but He is also different because He is all-powerful, everywhere, outside time, sovereign, beautiful and magnificent. So as Moses approached the holy God represented by the flames, he had to get his shoes off immediately to show his respect.

Another mention of fire and God in the Old Testament is in Isaiah 6:3-7. In this Scripture, Isaiah is confronted by God's holiness and recognises his own unworthiness and brokenness. He knows that he is in trouble. But a live coal (fire) from the altar touches Isaiah's lips and his guilt is taken away. He is put right with a holy God. In this case, the fire of God turns out to be cleansing and healing.

So, just like real fire, God's holy presence (represented by fire) can be both a danger and a blessing. Fire burns. If people are not right with God, then they will eventually be consumed by God's fire (Heb. 12:29). God's holiness is a frightening thing for His rebellious creation. But if we are trusting in Jesus, the fire actually burns away our evil and completely removes our sin (as it did for Isaiah). This is such a blessing because it allows us to love and relate to our holy God with no fear or barriers.

We need to be clear that the removal of our sin comes, not through the work of the Spirit, but through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for us. But our experience of holiness in our relationship with our holy God is facilitated through the ministry of God's Spirit.

Let's come back to Pentecost. What is happening here as the tongues of fire settle on each of these followers of Jesus? The holy purity of God is filling their lives, burning up their guilt and brokenness. The Spirit is assuring them that their sins are forgiven and that they are holy people in the right with God. He is setting them free to please and serve God, and to love what is right. They know that they are no longer trapped by their failures and brokenness. They are pure with a holy desire to do good. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire that John the Baptist predicted in Matt. 3:11-12.

Of course, like the early disciples, we face an ongoing battle with sin and failure. But God's Holy Spirit helps us in our hearts and minds by assuring us of our forgiveness, releasing us from our shame, leading us away from temptation, giving us strength in the battle with sin, and helping us to desire what is good and pure (holy). Through the work of the Spirit, we live as holy people who love God and welcome and enjoy His way.

Please pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you and to do His cleansing and freeing work in you.

"Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – Week 3

- 1) In Acts 2:3, the fire rests on each believer. Why do you think it was important that the fire came to all and not just a few? What does this say about the work of the Holy Spirit today? How do you know that you have God's Holy Spirit in you?
- 2) In Exodus 3, Moses encounters God in a burning bush that isn't consumed. What does this scene teach us about God's holiness and how we should approach Him? How does this impact our worship services? Hebrews 12:28–29 calls us to worship God "with reverence and awe." What might worship look like when we truly grasp that God is a "consuming fire"?
- 3) Fire in Scripture often represents both danger and blessing. How do we see both of these aspects of God's holiness in the passages from Isaiah 6 and Hebrews 12?
- 4) Isaiah's lips were touched with a live coal, symbolizing cleansing and forgiveness. It made such a difference. How does the Holy Spirit continue this cleansing and healing work in our lives today? In what ways can the "fire of the Spirit" purify, refine, and transform us?
- 5) The devotion says the Spirit "burns away our guilt and brokenness." What are some practical ways we can open ourselves to this work of the Spirit in our daily lives?
- 6) The early disciples were empowered by the Spirit to live God's way. How might a deeper awareness of God's holy presence change what you desire and the way you serve or relate to others?
- 7) Why is it important to distinguish between what Jesus accomplished on the cross and what the Holy Spirit continues to do in our lives? How do these two truths work together?
- 8) The closing prayer asks God to make our hearts pure and our wills one with His. What might it look like for your life, your church, or your ministry to be truly "set on fire" by the Holy Spirit?

4. The Languages of God's Spirit (Nov 23)

Scripture: Read Acts 2:4-11 (NIV); Mark 16:15-18 (NIV)

ACTS 2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

MARK 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

DEVOTION

As Acts 2:4-11 makes clear, there were many different language groups present in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. Both Jews and Jewish sympathisers had made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem from all over the world for this sacred event. As the Spirit came on the 120 disciples of Jesus, they began to speak in the native languages of all the visitors. What is happening here? What does the ability to speak in foreign languages teach us about the work of the Spirit?

Unfortunately, we don't have any Old Testament background for this sign of the Spirit, so we need to be careful about drawing conclusions too quickly. Some have suggested that the native languages were needed for people to hear the gospel. I think we can rule that purpose out. The 3000 conversions came after Peter's clear preaching to the crowd (probably in Aramaic or Greek), not through the hullabaloo of the 120 all speaking at once which was so wild that some in the crowd thought it was the result of too much alcohol (2:13, 15).

Let's explore some possibilities. Maybe the Spirit used the languages to get the attention of the crowd. You don't gather a crowd of maybe ten thousand easily. Something spectacular and supernatural was going on. You see most of Jesus' followers were Galileans. They were country folks who had a reputation for being uncultured. It would have shocked people to hear these bush hicks speaking in perfect Ethiopian or Egyptian or Arabic or Latin. It got their attention. Possibly, God used the supernatural languages to draw the crowd so they would listen to the gospel.

Maybe the diverse languages represented something about God's heart. These people were in Jerusalem because they were followers of the Jewish religion. They all believed that Yahweh favoured the Jews, that He belonged to the Jews. Up until now the Jesus club had been a strictly Jewish affair. Jesus was a Jew who ministered mainly to Jews. The Jewish people were incredibly exclusive. They wouldn't eat a meal in the house of a non-Jew. Hebrew was seen as God's language. It could be that God was saying, "I'm not Jewish. I speak every language."

In My new Kingdom, there will be no cultural divisions, no favoured nations, no second-class citizens, no ethnic boundaries, and no language barriers." The Holy Spirit may have been showing that He speaks Latin and Egyptian and Arabic, as well as Hebrew. I know that it took the early church a little while to pick this feature of Christianity up, but the Spirit could have been making it clear right from the start.

These ideas may be true, but I think the main purpose of the Spirit-inspired languages was to accompany the preaching of the gospel with a supernatural work of God. No-one could say this was a human event. Ordinary people miraculously becoming fluent in multiple languages, and then of course 3000 being saved, was not through human planning or effort. This was miraculous. Jesus had promised supernatural power for witness in Acts 1:8 (NIV), "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The coming of the Spirit was to be accompanied by supernatural power for witness. At Pentecost, it was the Spirit's miraculous gift of languages. Mark 16:15-18 spells out other supernatural works of the Spirit that believers could expect as they missioned.

Later in the New Testament, the purpose of "speaking in tongues" changed. The morphing of the Spirit's gift of languages in the early church is not central to this devotion on Pentecost but understanding it may be of some help to you, so here is a quick summary. Spirit-inspired languages started as a supernatural sign for unbelievers at Pentecost. Then, for a short time, it became ecstatic praise that was a supernatural sign that believers had received God's Spirit (Acts 10:44-46; Acts 19:5-6). Then it became a gift of the Spirit for some Christians (1 Cor. 12:29) that could be used corporately for prophecy (if it was interpreted) but was better used as a private Spirit-empowered prayer language (1 Cor. 14). As Paul says, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church, I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Cor. 14:18-19). The Spirit's gift of languages should neither be disparaged or over-emphasised.

But coming back to Pentecost, the pouring out of God's Spirit was accompanied by the supernatural sign of languages in order to challenge unbelievers and to embolden believers as witnesses to Jesus. Ordinary Christians were vehicles of God's power. At Pentecost, it was obvious to everyone who was spiritually open that God was at work. Clearly, the events were no human-inspired production. This was a supernatural work of God.

The Spirit empowers and emboldens us as witnesses to Jesus. He sometimes does incredible miracles as we pray. He gives us words to say when we feel inadequate. He brings circumstances together in a supernatural way. He works in the hearts of those we witness to. He opens our eyes to opportunities to witness. He gives us confidence to talk about Jesus. He makes the gospel come alive.

The Holy Spirit grows our courage and confidence. Being a witness to Jesus is not just a truth that we communicate, but a work of God accompanied by His power. God's Spirit does miracles in us and through us to complement and reinforce the good news we share. Through the Holy Spirit, you become a vehicle for the supernatural.

Please pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit to empower and strengthen your witness to Jesus.

"Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glow with Thy fire divine."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – Week 4

- 1) When the disciples spoke in many languages at Pentecost, everyone heard “the wonders of God” in their own tongue. What do you think God was trying to show by doing this? Why do you think the Holy Spirit chose to use *languages* rather than another type of miracle on that day?
- 2) The devotion mentions that God is not just the “God of the Jews” — He speaks every language. How does this truth shape the way we see people who are different from us?
- 3) Have you ever experienced (or heard about) God using something unusual or supernatural to get someone’s attention? Has it happened to you? What did that reveal about God’s power or purpose?
- 4) Pentecost showed that ordinary people could be filled and used by the Holy Spirit. How does that encourage or challenge you in your own witness for Jesus?
- 5) The devotion says the Spirit gives courage and words to speak when we feel inadequate. Can you share a time when you sensed God helping you say or do something you couldn’t have done on your own?
- 6) Mark 16:15–18 lists several supernatural signs that accompanied early believers. What might “signs” of God’s power look like in our lives or churches today? Should we expect these signs in Australia? Why or why not?
- 7) Some Christians focus a lot on the gift of tongues, while others avoid it completely. How can we hold a balanced and grateful view of the Spirit’s gifts today?
- 8) The study ends with a prayer asking God’s Spirit to fill and empower us as witnesses. What’s one area of your life or relationships where you’d like the Spirit to give you greater courage or power this week? Pray for this together.

5. The Purpose of God's Spirit (if needed)

Scripture: Read Acts 2:1-4 (NIV); Acts 2:42-47 (NIV); Acts 1:4-8 (NIV)

ACTS 2:1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

ACTS 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

ACTS 1:4 On one occasion, while he [Jesus] was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

DEVOTION

Let me summarise what we have covered in this series.

This Day of Pentecost started with a group of 120 followers of Jesus praying and waiting for the baptism of God's Spirit that Jesus had promised (Acts 1:4-8). They were an ordinary group of people on the edge of the Roman Empire. Jesus had died for them and had risen again, but now He had gone back to heaven and left them with a mission to take His good news to the world. They felt desperately inadequate. They lacked confidence. The reality of the gospel was not yet their personal experience. They believed in the good news of Jesus but needed God's work to make His truth come alive for them.

Then these 120 waiting believers were suddenly immersed in God's Holy Spirit. God was now living in them. This had never happened to all God's people before. God's Spirit had previously only filled specific leaders for specific ministry. Now the Holy Spirit was filling every believer. His coming was accompanied by the sound of a cyclonic wind, flames of fire, and the supernatural ability to speak in other languages (Acts 2:1-4). This changed everything for these followers of Jesus. The gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection became real for them and a desperate desire to share this good news with others overwhelmed them.

The difference the baptism in the Holy Spirit made is represented (at least in part) by the signs that accompanied His coming. The wind symbolised God breathing fresh "life to the full" into them. A life with direct access to God as their Dad. The fire symbolised the holiness of God burning away their sin and giving them a passion for what is from God. The languages symbolised the supernatural power of the Spirit that would now accompany their witness. This transformed their lives and mission. No wonder they burst out of that room with a desire to share the good news about Jesus with anyone who would listen. They were experiencing it. They were now ready and willing to take the gospel to their world.

This has direct application to us. The Holy Spirit is already living in us, but as we ask Him to fill us, He does what He has done in the lives of believers since Pentecost. He enables us to appreciate and enjoy the life we have with God. He purifies and restores us so that we are free of guilt and desire what is of God. He empowers us to be supernatural witnesses to Jesus. This is not all the Holy Spirit does in and through us. We would need to study the whole of the New Testament to get the full picture. But it's a great start. We need the Spirit's work to enliven, purify and empower us. It's not a matter of trying harder but being filled with the Spirit so that the reality of all the Jesus has done for us becomes a lived reality in us.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives radically transformed the way these early Christians lived in community. There is a description of this in Acts 2:42-47. They spent lots of time fellowshiping and praying together. They were keen to learn from those who had been with Jesus. They were hugely generous to each other. They saw lots of God's miraculous power at work. And their hearts were sincerely filled with praise and joy. This Spirit-filled lifestyle was not only a great blessing for them but also was very attractive to all the people who lived around them (Acts 2:47).

The filling of the Holy Spirit is a great blessing for Christians. God's presence, purity, and power are a wonderful combination in us. So many Christians live such a bland version of the life that God offers us. God's Spirit longs to enliven us and empower us. As these early disciples found, He can make such a difference.

But while this is profoundly true, let me take you back to the beginning when Jesus promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit to His disciples (Acts 1:4-8). Jesus made it very clear that the main purpose of the Spirit's indwelling was power for witness (Acts 1:8). While the Holy Spirit certainly blesses our lives, He works to enliven, sanctify and empower us so that we will live and share the good news of Jesus. When we pray to be immersed in God's Spirit, it's not principally to make our lives better, but for the sake of our world that needs Jesus (our friends, our family, our community).

Pray for the filling of God's Spirit so that your neighbours, workmates, friends and family will see the reality, power and urgency of the gospel through your words and actions. Come Holy Spirit.

Pray through our prayer for this Plan once more:

1) Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

2) Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

3) Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glow with Thy fire divine.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS – Week 5

- 1) The disciples waited and prayed for the promised Holy Spirit before doing anything else. What does that teach us about dependence on God before we act or serve? How dependent are you on God's Spirit?
- 2) When the Holy Spirit came, ordinary people were filled with extraordinary power. How does that encourage you about what God can do through you?
- 3) The devotion says the Spirit "enlivens, purifies, and empowers us." Which of these three works of the Spirit do you most long to experience right now – and why?
- 4) The wind at Pentecost symbolised new life. In what ways do you sense the Holy Spirit breathing fresh life into you or your church community?
- 5) The fire represented God's holiness and passion. How does the Holy Spirit help burn away what holds us back from loving and serving God fully?
- 6) The Spirit also gave them the ability to speak in other languages – a sign of power for witness. What are some ways the Spirit can empower you to be a witness for Jesus in everyday life?
- 7) Acts 2:42–47 paints a picture of a Spirit-filled community full of joy, generosity, and unity. Which part of that description most inspires you – and which part challenges you?
- 8) The early believers' Spirit-filled lives attracted others to faith. What might a Spirit-filled lifestyle look like for you in your neighbourhood, workplace, or family?
- 9) Jesus said the main purpose of the Spirit's coming was to give power for witness (Acts 1:8). How can we keep that outward focus while still enjoying the Spirit's personal blessings?
- 10) The hymn "Breathe on me, Breath of God" asks God to fill, purify, and set us aflame for Him. How could you make that your prayer this week – and what might change if God answered it?



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