



Acts

EARLY CHILDHOOD LESSON TEACHER'S GUIDE



PASSAGE

Acts 1:1 – 2:47



MEMORY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).



HYMN

"Breathe on Me, Breath of God," Rafiki Hymnal



DOCTRINE

God sends out the Holy Spirit to empower believers to be his witnesses to all nations.



CATECHISM

(FOR MEMORIZATION)

Question: How many commandments did God give on Mount Sinai?

Answer: Ten commandments.

LESSON 1: JESUS ASCENDS TO SEND THE PROMISED SPIRIT



OUTLINE FOR THE WEEK

Day One

Jesus returned to heaven.

Scripture: Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11

Day Two

The eleven disciples chose a man to replace Judas.

Scripture: Acts 1:12-26

Day Three

The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

Scripture: Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-12

Day Four

Peter preached with the Holy Spirit's power.

Scripture: Acts 2:5-41

Day Five

The believers met together.

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

DAY ONE

Jesus returned to heaven.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11

After the Lord Jesus came alive from the tomb, he lived on earth for weeks and weeks. He spent time with his disciples. Jesus ate meals with them. Jesus walked with them. Jesus talked to his disciples and explained many important truths to them. Days went by. Ten days passed. Ten more days, and ten more days. Finally forty days had passed.

Each day the disciples listened to Jesus and asked him questions as he explained what they needed to know about the kingdom of God. They were so glad to be with Jesus and to know for sure that he had risen from the dead.

Jesus ordered the disciples not to leave the city of Jerusalem. He said, "Wait here in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes to you. My Father has promised to send him. Wait here." The disciples asked him more questions and (*read aloud from your open Bible*) Jesus told them, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

After Jesus told the disciples these words, they walked together outside the city. Jesus stopped and lifted up his hands. He blessed the disciples. While he was blessing them Jesus' feet left the ground. Jesus began to rise up off the ground into the sky. He moved up and up toward the clouds. The disciples watched. They did not know what to say. They looked and looked, trying to see him as he moved farther and farther away from the earth. Jesus went up and up into the air until he disappeared into a cloud, and they could no longer see him.

The men stood there, amazed, with their heads leaning back, looking up into the sky. Jesus was gone!

Suddenly two men in white robes stood next to them. They began to speak, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

These were angels, speaking to the disciples. Jesus had returned to his home in heaven. He was gone. But he would come back...some day.

QUESTIONS

1. When Jesus came alive from the tomb, did he stay with the disciples only for a day or for many days? (Jesus stayed many days.)
2. Where did Jesus tell the disciples to wait? (Jesus said to wait in Jerusalem.)
3. When Jesus left, where did he go? (Jesus returned to his home in heaven.)

QUESTIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN

1. How many days did Jesus stay on earth with the disciples after he had risen from the dead? (Jesus stayed for forty days.)
2. Who did Jesus say his Father promised to send to the disciples? (Jesus said that his Father promised to send the Holy Spirit.)
3. How did Jesus leave the earth? (Jesus left by moving up, up, up, through the sky into heaven.)
4. How did the angels say Jesus will return? (They said that Jesus will return the same way as the disciples saw him go.)

ACTIVITY

Make cloud pictures. Use white chalk on black/dark paper. Or glue cotton onto blue sky paper.

DAY TWO

The eleven disciples chose a man to replace Judas.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:12-26

The disciples had walked the road away from Jerusalem with Jesus. But now Jesus was gone! Jesus had gone up into heaven while they watched. Now the disciples were on their own. The only reasonable thing to do was to walk back to the city. So they did.

Jesus had told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until God sent the Holy Spirit. So the disciples went up to the room where they had been staying before Jesus left them. There were eleven men—Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, Simon, and Judas the son of James. The eleven men began to pray. Jesus had taught them to go to God with confidence. Because they knew they needed the Holy Spirit so they could do what Jesus had instructed them, the disciples asked God to send the promised Holy Spirit. As time passed, the men continued to pray.

Finally, Peter stood up and spoke to the men and the other people who had come into the room to pray with them. He reminded them that Jesus had called twelve men to be his disciples. But Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, had betrayed Jesus. Judas had also killed himself. Now there were only eleven men. Peter told the group of people that it was God's plan to have twelve disciples. There needed to be twelve men to do the work that Jesus left them to do.

Peter said that they must choose another disciple to take the place of Judas. The man to be the disciple had to be one who had traveled with Jesus and with them. They had to choose a man who knew like they did that Jesus had risen from the dead. There were two men, Joseph and Matthias. The eleven disciples agreed to ask God to show them which man should be the new twelfth disciple to replace Judas.

(Read verse 24 aloud from your Bible) They prayed, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry." And God answered their prayer. Matthias was the man God told them to add to the eleven disciples.

The disciples trusted God to show them the man to choose, and God did. Now the leadership of the church was complete. Once again there were twelve disciples of Jesus. Now the group of believers was ready for God to send the gift of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS

1. Where did Jesus tell the disciples to wait? (Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem.)
2. What did the disciples do in Jerusalem while they waited? (The disciples prayed.)
3. What did Peter tell the disciples that they needed to do? (Peter told them they needed to choose another disciple.)
4. Who showed them the man to choose as the new disciple? (God showed them who to choose.)

QUESTIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN

1. How many men had Jesus called to be his disciples? (Jesus had called twelve men to be his disciples.)

2. How did the eleven disciples know who to choose as the new disciple? (They prayed God to show them.)
3. Who did God show them to choose as the new disciple? (God showed them to choose Matthias.)

ACTIVITY

Learn the names of the 12 disciples. Say them aloud together. Sing them together.

DAY THREE

The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-12

Jesus made a promise to his disciples. Before Jesus returned to heaven, he told his disciples, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift from God the Father to come to you." Jesus promised his disciples that God was going to send them a most special gift. God was going to send the Holy Spirit to them.

So, the disciples waited, just as Jesus had told them. After Jesus disappeared into heaven all of the disciples walked back to Jerusalem and stayed together in one house. They waited for God to keep his promise to them. God always keeps his promises, and on the day of Pentecost it happened.

The disciples had no idea as the day began that this was the day. But not long after the sun began to climb in the sky, it happened. Suddenly there was a sound. It was the sound of a mighty wind, not a gentle breeze blowing. It was a loud rushing noise coming from heaven like a furious wind storm rushing from the sky to the house where the disciples were waiting. The sound filled the entire house where the disciples were sitting.

And just as the sound of mighty wind filled the house, something that looked like tongues of fire appeared. On the head of each disciple it looked like something bright and burning. At that moment they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

The men were amazed at what they saw and heard, but each man then began to speak. It was as though they could not be quiet. But the way they spoke was not ordinary. Each man began to speak in a language that was not his own. He did not talk in the language that he had always used. Each man began to speak in a different foreign language.

People in the city heard the sound and came running to see what had happened. The people who ran to the house were not only people who lived in Jerusalem. They were people who lived in far away countries but who had come to celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem. As they stood there, these people were amazed. They could understand the words the disciples were speaking.

This was God's gift. The Holy Spirit had come to the disciples just as Jesus had promised. God's message was coming out of the mouths of the disciples in words that could be understood by people from other lands and countries. This was a miracle. It was a gift from God unlike anything that had ever happened. The Holy Spirit had come and was giving all the people in Jerusalem a way to hear the good news about Jesus.

QUESTIONS

1. Who made a promise to the disciples? (Jesus made a promise to the disciples.)
2. What did Jesus promise? (Jesus promised that God would send the Holy Spirit.)

3. Who always keeps his promises? (God always keeps his promises.)
4. What did the people hear when the Holy Spirit came? (The people heard a mighty wind and then the disciples speaking in foreign languages.)

QUESTIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN

1. Where was Jesus when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples? (Jesus was in heaven.)
2. What did the disciples see when the Holy Spirit came? (The disciples saw tongues of fire on the head of each disciple.)
3. What message did the people hear from the disciples? (They heard the good news about Jesus.)

ACTIVITY

Wrap a package as a gift. Each child can hand the package to another child, and tell what good gift the child would choose to put in the package.

DAY FOUR

Peter preached with the Holy Spirit's power.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:5-41

Hundreds of people ran through the streets of Jerusalem. What was that noise? What was happening, they wanted to know. It was early in the morning, and the city was filled with visitors from other countries. It was Pentecost, a celebration day for all Jewish people. But just as the day was beginning there was this startling noise. It was as though there was a mighty wind blowing through the town, although there was no wind! The noise was impossible to ignore, it was loud and different. People came out of their houses and ran toward the strange sound.

The Holy Spirit of God had come. He had come with the sound of a mighty wind. Jesus' disciples were wonderfully changed in their hearts. Suddenly God was living in them and they knew it. The crowd stood outside the house as the disciples came out. The disciples were now brave and eager to tell everyone about Jesus. The disciples began to talk. And as they spoke, the Holy Spirit gave them the words of different languages. The people from other countries were surprised—they could understand the good news about Jesus in their *own* language!

Peter stood up and spoke out loudly to the crowd. He told the people, "Listen to me. This is what God promised." Peter explained to the people that the disciples were filled with God's Spirit as God had promised. He explained to them that they could understand his words because God had promised this would happen.

Then Peter went on to tell the crowd, "God sent Jesus to you, but you killed him." He explained that God had sent Jesus, that it was God's plan for Jesus to die, and be raised from the dead, but that they were the ones who had crucified Jesus.

Peter was not afraid to tell the truth. The Holy Spirit gave Peter special power and made his words clear for all the people to understand.

The people listened while Peter talked about Jesus' return to heaven and about God's plan. They knew that Peter's words were true. "What shall we do?" they asked. Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

The people did what Peter said. They believed his message and were baptized. Hundreds and hundreds of people were baptized. That day about 3,000 people became new Christians! The

Holy Spirit was mighty in Peter's words and in the hearts of the listening people. The church of believers began to grow that day.

QUESTIONS

1. What did the people hear that made them run to where the disciples were? (They heard a strange sound.)
2. Who preached to the crowd of people? (Peter preached to the crowd.)
3. Who gave Peter special power to speak? (The Holy Spirit gave Peter special power to speak.)

QUESTIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN

1. What was different about the way the disciples talked? (The disciples talked in different languages.)
2. What person did Peter tell the people about? (Peter told the people about the Lord Jesus.)
3. What did Peter tell the people to do? (Peter told the people to repent and be baptized.)
4. How many people did what Peter told them to do that day? (About 3,000 people became new Christians.)

DAY FIVE

The believers met together.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:42-47

The new church of Jesus Christ began in Jerusalem. In the beginning, there were the twelve disciples and the close friends of Jesus. However, on Pentecost when Peter preached and the Holy Spirit opened the ears and hearts of the people who listened, 3,000 people believed and were baptized. The church began to grow rapidly.

After that day the new believers gathered together to listen to Peter and the disciples. Peter preached about Jesus. He and the disciples taught the believers how Jesus was the one God promised to send in the Old Testament. Every day the believers learned more about Jesus. They learned about Jesus' life and the words that Jesus taught. They learned about the death and the resurrection of Jesus. They heard the disciples tell about Jesus returning to heaven.

The new believers loved to be together. They ate together. They prayed together. They watched as God helped the disciples do wonderful things. The believers talked and shared their thoughts and their needs.

The believers prayed for each other and learned together what God wanted them to know. When someone needed something, another Christian gladly helped. Often a person would sell some of his belongings to get money to help the needy poorer Christians.

They went to the temple together to worship God. The believers ate meals together in each others' homes. The new believers were glad to be together and share and thank God together.

One of the most special things that the new Christians did was to share bread and remember the Lord's Supper as Jesus had taught. The new church grew in understanding the importance of celebrating Jesus' sacrifice for them.

As days passed, God brought more and more people to their group. As the Christians listened and grew in understanding God's Word, other people watched and listened. God grew the church in Jerusalem day by day.

QUESTIONS

1. In what city did the Christian church begin? (The Christian church began in Jerusalem.)
2. To whom did the new believers listen? (The new believers listened to Peter and the other disciples.)
3. Were the new believers lonely or did they do things together? (The new believers did things together.)

QUESTIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN

1. What kind of things did the new believers do together? (The new believers learned, talked, ate, worshiped, shared, and prayed together.)
2. What did the new believers do to help when someone was needy? (They prayed and they sold their belongings to get money to help the needy.)
3. What special meal did the believers share? (They shared the Lord's Supper.)
4. Did the church get smaller or did it grow? (The church grew.)

ACTIVITY

Draw pictures of the children doing the same things with the members of their church (sing, pray, listen, serve) that the new church in Jerusalem did.

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Acts

PRIMARY 1-3 LESSON TEACHER'S GUIDE



PASSAGE

Acts 1:1 – 2:47



MEMORY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).



HYMN

"Breathe on Me, Breath of God," Rafiki Hymnal



DOCTRINE

God sends out the Holy Spirit to empower believers to be his witnesses to all nations.



CATECHISM

(FOR MEMORIZATION)

Question: What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?

Answer: The fourth commandment forbids the omission, or careless performance, of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

LESSON 1: JESUS ASCENDS TO SEND THE PROMISED SPIRIT



OUTLINE FOR THE WEEK

Day One

Luke writes about Jesus' ascension and promise to send the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 1:1-11

Day Two

Jesus' disciples choose a twelfth apostle to replace Judas.

Scripture: Acts 1:12:26

Day Three

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to indwell his disciples.

Scripture: Acts 2:1-13

Day Four

Peter explains to the Jerusalem crowd that Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 2:14-36

Day Five

Many people believe the gospel and are saved.

Scripture: Acts 2:37-47

SUGGESTED OR OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Day One: Go outside and look up into the sky. Explain that one day Jesus will return out of the sky in a cloud of glory just as he went up into heaven. Read Acts 1:9-11 aloud to the children as you look at the sky and the clouds.
2. Day Two: Explain the difference between a disciple and an apostle. Keep your explanation short and simple, especially for the younger children. (A disciple is any follower of Jesus; anyone who believes in Jesus as Savior. While Jesus was alive on earth, his disciples were those who listened to his teaching and saw him after he was raised from the dead. The apostles were a special group of twelve men, chosen out from the larger group of disciples, whom Jesus had selected to be his special representatives or messengers. The word "apostle" means "sent one". The apostles were especially sent by Jesus and had special authority. The apostles were all men who had been with Jesus from the very beginning, from when John the Baptist baptized Jesus all the way to his ascension into heaven. All

of the apostles were also disciples, because they too were followers of Jesus. But only twelve of the disciples were apostles. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, lost his place as an apostle because he betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ and killed himself. He was replaced by Matthias as we read in today's lesson. Later on, Paul was also an apostle, because he too saw the risen Lord Jesus and was specially sent by Jesus to the Gentiles.)

3. Day Three: Have the children imitate the sound of a mighty, rushing wind. See if you can make a really loud wind by having everyone use their voices together. Explain that this is what it would have sounded like at Pentecost. If your education director approves, light a candle to show a "tongue of fire" for the children to see. Ask them to imagine a flame like this over everyone's head in the room. If you or the students know different languages, speak words of praise to God in English, and the other languages you or the students know. Talk about how there are many, many languages that people speak all around the world, and we can praise God in every language.

DAY ONE

Luke wrote about Jesus' ascension and promise to send the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:1-11.

Luke had already written one book about Jesus that told all about the things Jesus did while he lived on earth. That book, called *The Gospel According to Luke*, told what Jesus taught and the miracles he did. It told about Jesus' death on the cross, how he was buried in the tomb for three days, and how he rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven. But that was not the end of the story! No, there was still much, much more to tell. Because, you see, Jesus' work here on earth did not end when he went back up into heaven. No! It was just beginning! So, Luke wrote another book to tell about all the things Jesus did next. That book is called *The Acts of the Apostles*, and it is the book we are going to study now.

In the beginning of the book of *The Acts of the Apostles* or just "Acts" for short, Luke wrote what happened after Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus appeared to his disciples for forty days and taught his disciples many things. He told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit to come. Luke wrote about how all the disciples watched as Jesus went back up into heaven in a cloud.

When Jesus went back up into heaven, he left his disciples, here on earth to do his work. The work Jesus did when he died on the cross and rose again to pay for our sins and give us new life, only Jesus could do. No one else could do that. That work was finished and done. BUT, there were many, many people who did not know yet that their sins could be forgiven and they could have eternal life by believing in Jesus. There were many, many people who had never even heard of Jesus yet! Jesus would send his disciples to tell them. This was the work Jesus wanted his disciples to do.

But in order to do this work, the disciples needed Jesus' life and power inside them. They needed Jesus to give them the power to go into all the world and tell people about who Jesus was and what he had done. That is why Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. When they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit would come to live inside of them.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is God, just as Jesus and God the Father are both God. When the Holy Spirit comes to live inside a person, it is just as if Jesus is living inside that person. When the Holy Spirit lives inside a person, he makes them new on the inside. He makes them like Jesus, full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

When the Holy Spirit came into the lives of Jesus' disciples he would give them the right words to say when they told people about Jesus. The Holy Spirit would make them brave so they could travel to strange new places to tell about what Jesus had done. The Holy Spirit would give them courage to talk about Jesus even when the enemies who had killed Jesus told them to be quiet. Yes, these disciples needed to wait for the Holy Spirit before they could do Jesus' work.

QUESTIONS

1. Who wrote *The Acts of the Apostles*? (Luke wrote *The Acts of the Apostles*.)
2. Was Jesus' work on earth finished when he went back up into heaven? (No.) What was the work Jesus had for his disciples to do? (Jesus wanted his disciples to go into all the world to tell people about Jesus.)
3. Why did Jesus tell his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come? (They needed the Holy Spirit to make them brave to go into all the world and tell people about Jesus, etc.)
4. What does the Holy Spirit do when he comes to live inside a person? (The Holy Spirit makes that person more like Jesus, full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The Holy Spirit can make a person brave and strong to do Jesus' work here on earth.)

DAY TWO

Jesus' disciples chose a twelfth apostle to replace Judas.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:12:26

After Jesus ascended back into heaven, his disciples went back to Jerusalem to wait for the promised Holy Spirit to come. While they waited, they prayed together. There were 120 disciples waiting together in a large room. Jesus' mother Mary was there, and his brothers, and other followers of Jesus. Among the disciples were the eleven apostles Jesus had chosen to be his special messengers to take the gospel to the world. They were Peter, John, James, Andrew Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. Jesus had chosen twelve apostles, but one of them, Judas Iscariot, had betrayed Jesus and then killed himself. Now there were only eleven left.

God showed Peter and the other disciples that they needed to choose another apostle to take Judas Iscariot's place. But not just anyone could be an apostle. The man who would be chosen had to be one who had been following Jesus from the very beginning all the way to when he rose from the dead and went back into heaven. There were two men who were qualified. Their names were Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. All the disciples prayed and asked the Lord Jesus to show them which one he had chosen. After they prayed, they cast lots and the lot fell on Matthias. This showed that the Lord Jesus had chosen Matthias to be the twelfth apostle.

Now the number of the apostles was complete. Now everything was ready for Jesus to pour out his Holy Spirit on his people.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Jesus' disciples do while they waited for the Holy Spirit to come? (They prayed and chose a twelfth apostle to take Judas' place.)
2. Could just anyone be an apostle of Jesus? (No. An apostle had to be a man who had followed Jesus from the very beginning of his ministry all the way to his resurrection and ascension back into heaven.)

3. What was the name of the man Jesus chose to be the twelfth apostle to replace Judas? (His name was Matthias.) Can you name any more of Jesus' apostles? (See Acts 1:13)
4. How could you pray when you need Jesus to show you what he wants you to do? (Answers may vary. Teachers – be prepared to share your own answer.)

DAY THREE

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to indwell his disciples.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:1-13

Before Jesus went back up into heaven, he told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until he sent the Holy Spirit to them. The disciples obeyed and while they waited they prayed and asked Jesus to choose another apostle to take Judas' place.

Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven was the special holiday, or feast, called Pentecost. Many, many people came to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. There were people from many countries who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost. All of them spoke different languages, just like people today from different countries speak different languages.

All of Jesus' 120 disciples were still waiting together in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit came! Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit just as he had promised. This was the first time that the Holy Spirit had come to live inside of people who believed in Jesus. Since this was something new, God gave signs to show that the Holy Spirit had really come to live inside his people. God gave three signs to show that the Holy Spirit had come: 1) There was a sound like a mighty, rushing wind. 2) Tongues of fire (little flames of fire) appeared over the heads of each of Jesus' disciple. 3) The Holy Spirit caused each of Jesus' disciples to be able to speak in another language.

All the disciples started praising God and telling about his mighty works in all the different languages. People from different countries heard the disciples praising God in their own language! They were very surprised and wondered how these disciples had learned to speak the languages of far away countries. Some of the people asked "What does this mean?" Others said, "These disciples must be drunk!"

No! Jesus' disciples were not drunk! They were praising God in languages from all around the world. This showed that soon the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would be brought to all countries in the world.

QUESTIONS

1. What happened on the day of Pentecost? (Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples. Also, many people came to Jerusalem from different countries to celebrate.)
2. What three signs did God give to show that the Holy Spirit had come to live inside Jesus' disciples? (There was the sound of a mighty, rushing wind; tongues of fire over each disciple's head; each disciple was able to speak in a language from another country.)
3. What did the disciples say in the different languages? (They praised God and told of his mighty works.)
4. When the disciples began praising God in languages from all around the world, what did this show? (Soon the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would be brought to all the countries in the world.)

DAY FOUR

Peter explains to the Jerusalem crowd that Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:14-36

It was the day of Pentecost. Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples just as he had promised. When the Holy Spirit came to live inside Jesus' disciples, they were able to praise God in many different languages. Many people who were visiting Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost heard the disciples praising God in their own languages. They were very surprised and wondered what was happening.

Peter, one of Jesus' apostles, stood up with the other eleven apostles and spoke to the crowd. Peter explained to them what was happening. Peter explained that this was just what God had promised would happen. Long, long ago, God's prophet Joel had written down that God would send his Holy Spirit to live in his people.

Then Peter explained that Jesus of Nazareth, whom these Jerusalem Jews had crucified, had been raised from the dead. He explained how King David wrote about Jesus being raised from the dead in the Psalms. And that it was this same Jesus who had sent the Holy Spirit. (*Read Acts 2:22-36 aloud to the class.*) This same Jesus, whom these people had crucified, was raised from the dead by God, was exalted (lifted up) at the right hand of God in heaven, and had poured out the Holy Spirit. This was what the people were seeing and hearing right now. God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ. That means Jesus is the promised Messiah, or deliverer of Israel and all the world, and he is Lord of all the world.

The people listened to Peter. They thought about what Peter said. They thought about what David had written and about what Joel had written in the Bible so long ago. Would they believe Peter? Would they believe what Joel and David had written in God's Word? Tomorrow we will find out.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of the prophet who wrote about God's promise to send the Holy Spirit to his people? (Joel.)
2. Who wrote about Jesus being raised from the dead in the Psalms? (David.)
3. What are some of the things Peter said about Jesus to the crowd? (Jesus had been crucified, raised from the dead, is exalted at God's right hand, has poured out the Holy Spirit, etc.)

DAY FIVE

Many people believe the gospel and are saved.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:37-47

Peter explained to the crowd of people in Jerusalem that it was Jesus who had poured out the Holy Spirit on his disciples. And that was why the people could hear the disciples praising God in other languages. Peter explained that Jesus, whom they had crucified, had been raised from the dead by God the Father and was now at the right hand of God in heaven. Just as God had promised long ago through the prophet Joel, Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit to live inside his people.

When Peter explained that the people of Jerusalem had crucified Jesus, who was their Lord and Messiah, they were very sorry and afraid. They realized that by rejecting and crucifying Jesus, they had sinned. They knew God would be very angry with them. They wondered what they could do to be right with God and the Lord Jesus.

They asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* They should tell God they were sorry they had not believed in Jesus and start believing in him right now. To be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ meant to believe that Jesus was God's promised Savior and that Jesus had died in their place on the cross. They would trust Jesus to save them from hell and give them eternal life. And when they trusted Jesus, he would give them his Holy Spirit to live inside of them.

Peter also said, *"For the promise (of the Holy Spirit) is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."* This means us too! We are those who are far off. If you have believed in Jesus as your Savior and Lord, then you too, and me too, have received the gift of the Holy Spirit to live inside of us.

Many people listened to Peter and believed the Lord Jesus for salvation. That very day, 3,000 people believed in Jesus and were baptized.

Those who believed in Jesus met together and listened to the apostles teach them about Jesus from God's Word. They ate together and shared their possessions with each other. They prayed and worshiped God together. And every day, the Lord added more and more people who were being saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. When the people asked Peter, "What shall we do?", what did Peter answer? (Peter said repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.)
2. What gift would they receive when they repented and believed? (They would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.)
3. How many people believed and were baptized that very day when Peter spoke to them? (Three thousand people were baptized that day.)
4. Was the gift of the Holy Spirit only for those people who listened to Peter long ago? (No, the gift of the Holy Spirit is for people today too, for all whom the Lord calls, for all who believe in Jesus for salvation.)

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Acts

PRIMARY 4-6 LESSON TEACHER'S GUIDE



PASSAGE

Acts 1:1 – 2:47



MEMORY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).



HYMN

"Breathe on Me, Breath of God," Rafiki Hymnal



DOCTRINE

God sends out the Holy Spirit to empower believers to be his witnesses to all nations.



CATECHISM

(FOR MEMORIZATION)

Question: What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?

Answer: The fourth commandment forbids the omission, or careless performance, of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

LESSON 1: JESUS ASCENDS TO SEND THE PROMISED SPIRIT



OUTLINE FOR THE WEEK

Day One

Jesus tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-8

Day Two

The believers pray while they wait for the Holy Spirit and select Matthias as the twelfth apostle.

Scripture: Acts 1:8-26

Day Three

The Holy Spirit comes upon the believers on the day of Pentecost with miraculous signs.

Scripture: Acts 2:1-13

Day Four

Peter preaches, and 3,000 repent and follow Jesus.

Scripture: Acts 2:14-41

Day Five

The believers grow in numbers as they learn from the apostles.

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

SUGGESTED OR OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Peter did something that was impossible for him to do before the Holy Spirit came upon him. This is true in every believer's life. To help the children understand this better, arrange for one of the ROS to visit the class for an interview. Help the children write interview questions in advance, such as:

- How did you know that God was calling you to serve him in Rafiki?
- Did it seem that God was asking you to do something impossible?
- What fears and concerns did you have?
- Did you say "yes" to God right away?
- What part did the Holy Spirit play in helping you say "yes"?

- How does the Holy Spirit help you in the tasks you do every day?
- What advice do you have for us as students so that we depend on the Holy Spirit in our lives?

After the interview (even if it's the next day because of limited time), ask the children what they learned and how they will apply it.

DAY ONE

Jesus tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-8

Is history one of your favorite subjects in school? Some pupils love it, but others struggle with it. Perhaps that's because they're required to memorize so many different dates and events. But history is very important and can be very exciting. Knowing what has happened in the past helps us to understand what is going on in our lives today. Knowledge of our history—whether it's our family history or national or international history—answers a lot of questions. Knowing history also helps us to make wise decisions for today and for the future.

Acts, the fifth book in the New Testament, is a book of history. Do you know how important this particular book of history is? Without Acts, we could not understand the rest of the New Testament. We would have a *lot* of unanswered questions. The Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—ended with the story of Jesus' resurrection and his return to heaven. At that point, there were a few Jewish followers of Jesus. They were in Jerusalem, the center of *Jewish* culture, talking about a kingdom for Israel. When we read the Book of Romans, the next book in the New Testament, we learn about a man who was never mentioned in the Gospels. This man, Paul, was writing to a group of Christians in Rome. Rome was a long way from Jerusalem and the center of *Gentile* culture. What happened in between? Future generations would need to know, so what happened next is what the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to record.

Luke actually addressed both his gospel record and the Book of Acts to a man named Theophilus. The books of Luke and Acts are like two volumes about the same subject. In Volume I, the Gospel of Luke, Luke carefully recorded "*all that Jesus began to do and teach*" (Acts 1:1). In Volume II, the Book of Acts, he describes what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through his Holy Spirit. After Jesus went up into heaven, he continued to work. How could he do that? Good question! Acts gives us the answer: Jesus continued his work through his apostles. Luke wrote to help Theophilus know for sure that what he had been taught about Jesus was true (Luke 1:1-4). But Luke had no idea that people today would read his writings and come to faith in Jesus through them.

Acts 1 picks up where the story left off in Luke 24, summing up Jesus' resurrection appearances. For forty days after he rose from the dead, Jesus spent time with the disciples. Sometimes he would just show up unexpectedly. At times he ate with them. He invited them to touch him to prove that he was not a ghost. All of these things proved to his followers that he truly was alive. Jesus also taught them during this time so that they understood from the Scriptures that God had planned all this before the beginning of time. However, the disciples did not fully understand the kingdom of God yet. They asked him, "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" (Acts 1:6). They still expected Jesus to deliver them from the control of the Roman government. The disciples still had a lot to learn! Jesus told them that they did not need to know the times when things would happen. They needed to simply trust the Father's plan and obey him by waiting in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come to them. How long would they have to wait? Jesus didn't tell them. They would have to trust him and wait as long as it took.

QUESTIONS

1. How important is the Book of Acts? (Without Acts, we could not understand the rest of the New Testament. The Gospels ended with the story of Jesus' resurrection and his return to heaven. Without Acts, we would not know what happened to Jesus' disciples or how Paul and the Gentiles came into the church.)
2. According to Luke 1:3-4 and Acts 1:1-5, why did Luke write the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts? (Luke wrote the Gospel to help Theophilus know for sure that what he had been taught about Jesus was true. He wrote Acts to continue the story of Jesus' work. The Holy Spirit inspired or prompted Luke to write both books.)
3. What did Jesus do during the forty days he spent with the disciples after he rose from the dead? (Sometimes he would just show up unexpectedly. At times he ate with them. He invited them to touch him to prove that he was not a ghost. All of these things proved to his followers that he truly was alive. Jesus also taught them during this time so that they understood from the Scriptures that God had planned all this before the beginning of time.)

DAY TWO

The believers pray while they wait for the Holy Spirit and select Matthias as the twelfth apostle.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:8-26

Are you a promise keeper? Do you always keep your promises? Jesus had made some promises to the disciples that he had not kept—yet. Jesus always keeps his promises. Sometimes we have to wait longer than we would like, but we can be sure that he will always do what he says. Jesus had promised to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-29). Now he reminds them, *"You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now"* (Acts 1:5).

Jesus also repeats his command to go into the whole world and preach the gospel to everybody. The gospel is not just for the Jews but for every person and nation on earth. *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). Probably these men are wondering how they can possibly do such an enormous task. But they are listening to Jesus, who has died and risen to life. They can believe someone who could do that because that someone is God!

What happens next is an amazing sight: *"And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight"* (Acts 1:9). Do you think the disciples were happy about that? Jesus had been with them for forty days that must have filled them with joy, and now he's gone? But at the same moment, two angels appear and give them a most wonderful promise: Jesus will come back. They must have wondered, "When will that happen?" Tomorrow? Next week? Next month? The angels did not say *when* he would return, but they did say *how* he would return. Jesus would *"come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11). When Jesus comes back to earth, he will come in a body and he will be visible—we will see him with our eyes. About 2,000 years have passed since Jesus left. Sometimes people mock believers for expecting Jesus to return. But we know that Jesus always keeps his promises, so we wait with a longing to see him with our own eyes.

The disciples return to Jerusalem where they spend their time in prayer. There are about 120 people all together. Mary the mother of Jesus, his brothers, and others who believe in Jesus are also there. Jesus had taught them that God would give the Holy Spirit to those who approach him with childlike trust (Luke 11:13). These early followers realize that they are weak and cannot do what Jesus commanded on their own. For the next few days, they pray continually.

One day, Peter stands up and explains that they need to choose someone to replace Judas, who had betrayed Jesus. The Scriptures had predicted that someone would betray Messiah and another would take his place. This twelfth apostle must be one who had traveled with them from the very beginning because he would be a witness to Jesus' resurrection. Two men, Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias, are chosen. The people pray for the Lord to show the one he has chosen. Jesus chooses Matthias, and now the apostles are ready for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS

1. What command did Jesus give to the disciples in Acts 1:8? What promise did he give them? (Jesus commanded them to go into the whole world and preach the gospel to everybody. He promised them that the Holy Spirit would come to them and give them the power to obey his command.)
2. What happened after Jesus finished talking with the disciples? (As the disciples were looking on, Jesus was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. At the same moment, two angels appeared and gave them a most wonderful promise: Jesus will come back.)
3. Do you think the disciples were upset when Jesus left? Explain your answer. (Answers will vary. They may have been disappointed or sad. But the promise that Jesus would come back would have encouraged them. We know that they trusted Jesus because they went back to Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit to come.)
4. What did the disciples and other believers do while they waited for the Holy Spirit? (They prayed, trusting God to keep his promise. And they selected Matthias to take the place of Judas as an apostle and eyewitness.)

DAY THREE

The Holy Spirit comes upon the believers on the day of Pentecost with miraculous signs.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:1-13

When someone makes a promise to do something for you, do you find it hard to wait? Perhaps your teacher might say on Monday that the class will get a special treat on Friday. Do you find that time seems to go so slowly that you think Friday will never arrive? When Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, he did not tell them how long they would have to wait. How they must have prayed for Jesus to keep his promise! They know they need the Spirit to keep Jesus' commands. Finally, the day arrives. Ten days after Jesus went up into heaven, the Holy Spirit comes down.

No one could have imagined what his coming would be like! As the believers are all together, waiting and praying, the Holy Spirit comes upon every person. Three signs are apparent to everyone. They hear a sound like *"a mighty rushing wind"* that *"filled the house where they were sitting."* If you have ever been in a storm when the wind was powerful, then you can imagine the sound. At the same time, *"divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them."* Just think about a huge torch, and picture that above each person. Then the third sign takes them all by surprise. Even though they are from Galilee, suddenly they are speaking different languages (tongues).

What do all these signs mean? How could they know? Perhaps the disciples remember Jesus' words to Nicodemus that compared the person and work of the Holy Spirit to the wind (John 3:5-8). We cannot see the wind, but we can see the effects of the wind—trees swaying as the wind passes through them. We can also feel the effects of the wind, as it cools our skin on a hot day. In the same way, we can't see the Holy Spirit, but we can see and feel his effects as he

works in our lives. The wind represents the Holy Spirit. What about the flames of fire? In the Old Testament, the pillar of fire over the tabernacle in the wilderness showed that God was present with his people. The tongues of fire picture God coming to live in his tabernacle or sanctuary. But this sanctuary is not made of skins or tapestries, wood or gold. This sanctuary is made of living people, the people who believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

The sign of speaking in other languages or tongues points to Jesus' command to carry the gospel throughout the world. All of this happens on the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Passover. Jews from many different nations are present in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. How amazed they are to hear people from Galilee speaking in their own languages! They realize that something unique is happening and ask, "*What does this mean?*" But others mock them and accuse the believers of being drunk (Acts 2:12).

QUESTIONS

1. According to Acts 2:1, when did the Holy Spirit come upon the believers? (The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Passover.)
2. What three signs pointed to the arrival of the Holy Spirit? What did they mean? (First, they heard a sound like a powerful wind. The wind pictured the Holy Spirit and the powerful effect of the Spirit on a believer. The second sign was the appearance of "tongues" or flames of fire that rested on each person. The fire represented the presence of God who came to live within each believer, who became the sanctuary or dwelling place of God. The third sign was the sudden ability to speak a language they had never spoken before. This pointed to Jesus' command to carry the gospel throughout the world.)
3. What two responses did Luke record in Acts 2:12-13? (Some were amazed and perplexed and wondered what it meant. Others accused the believers of being drunk.)

DAY FOUR

Peter preaches, and 3,000 repent and follow Jesus.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:14-41

What happens next is one of the greatest signs of all that the Holy Spirit has come. Peter, who denied Jesus three times out of fear, stands up and speaks to the crowd that has gathered. From where did this boldness come? This boldness is the power that Jesus promised to the disciples. Peter shows no sign of fear as he explains what is happening. No, the people are not drunk—it is too early for that. This is actually the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that God would "*pour out*" his Spirit on sons and daughters, young men and old men, and even on servants (Acts 2:21). Now he has the attention of the crowd, because they recognize the words of Joel.

Peter preaches, explaining that God sent Jesus of Nazareth. He makes several important points:

1. God showed his approval of Jesus through miraculous signs (Acts 2:22).
2. The people knew this, yet they crucified Jesus "*by the hands of lawless men*" (Acts 2:23).
3. This was done "*according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God*" (Acts 2:23).
4. God raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24).

Peter quotes from Psalms to prove that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. God raised him from the dead, and now Jesus is "*exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing*" (Acts 2:33). David died and was buried in a tomb that is still present. But Jesus' tomb is empty, proof of his resurrection. David did not ascend into the heavens, but Jesus did. Peter closes his

sermon with strong words. *“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified”* (Acts 2:36).

The people are *“cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”* (Acts 2:37). They realize what an awful thing they have done, but what can they possibly do about it now? Peter has good news for them. The promise of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit are available to them. This is why Jesus died, so that they could be saved. And this promise is not only for the people in Jesus’s day but for all who repent and receive Jesus by faith in any age. That day, about 3,000 people believe and are baptized. God’s church is growing according to God’s plan and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS

1. What did Peter do that was another sign that the Holy Spirit had come? (Peter, who denied Jesus three times out of fear, stood up and spoke to the crowd that had gathered. That boldness was proof of the power that Jesus promised to the disciples. Peter showed no sign of fear.)
2. From Acts 2:16, what Old Testament prophet did Peter quote to prove that God was fulfilling his promise to send the Holy Spirit? (Peter quoted Joel.)
3. In Acts 2:23, what did Peter say had happened to Jesus? (Peter said that Jesus was now exalted at the right hand of God and that Jesus had poured out the Holy Spirit. The people could see that for themselves through what they were witnessing.)
4. How did the people respond when Peter told them that Jesus, the man they had crucified, was Lord and Christ? (The people were “cut to the heart,” convicted of their awful sin. They cried out to the apostles to tell them what they should do.)
5. What answer did Peter give them in Acts 2:38-41? (Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Then they would receive the Holy Spirit also.)
6. How does Peter’s answer relate to you and me? (Peter said that the promise was for all the people and for all their descendants. This means that people of every age, including you and me, can repent and receive Jesus by faith, and Jesus will send the Holy Spirit to live with us.)

DAY FIVE

The believers grow in numbers as they learn from the apostles.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:42-47

From this time on, the lives of the people who believe will never be the same. What is the explanation for such a great change? First of all, each new believer receives the Holy Spirit. They now devote themselves to learning more about God and his plan. When the Holy Spirit lives within people, he gives them a desire to know God better. The new believers listen carefully to the apostles’ teaching. What do the apostles teach them? Acts 1:4 says that Jesus spoke to his followers about the kingdom of God during the forty days he was with them. Everything Jesus taught them, whether it was during his preaching ministry or after his resurrection, the apostles taught the people. Luke 24:44-48 says that Jesus told them that everything written about him in the Old Testament had to be fulfilled, and *“he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”* (Luke 24:45). Now the apostles are able to teach others through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The believers enjoy meeting together. They “break bread,” which means they follow Jesus’ instructions to remember his death until he returns by observing the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:17-20). It is an awesome time. The apostles do many “wonders and signs”—miracles that confirm that

God is truly with them.

The people who hear the apostles are unselfish. Nobody keeps back things for themselves. Instead, they sell their possessions and belongings and give the proceeds to those who need help. Every day, they attend the temple together to worship. They are thankful for their food and are generous in every way. The believers praise God for his goodness. There is such a difference that other people notice and like them. This is what Jesus told the disciples when he commanded them to love each other just as he loved them. *“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35).

There is another proof of God's favor on them. *“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:47). It is the Lord who saves people and brings them into the fellowship of the church.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the explanation for the great change that took place in the lives of the people? (Each new believer received the Holy Spirit, who gave them the desire to know God better. Because of this desire, they listened carefully to the apostles' teaching.)
2. What did the apostles teach the people? (The apostles taught the people everything Jesus had taught them, while he was alive and after his resurrection. Jesus gave them the understanding of the Old Testament prophecies and how they were fulfilled in him.)
3. What else did the new believers do that other people noticed? (The believers enjoyed meeting together. They observed the Lord's Supper to remember what Jesus had done for them on the cross. They were unselfish and shared everything so that nobody was in need. They were thankful and praised God. They loved each other and showed it by the way they lived.)
4. According to Acts 2:47, how did the church grow in numbers? (The Lord added the people by saving them and bringing them into the fellowship of the church.)

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Acts

RAFIKI JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL LESSON TEACHER'S GUIDE



PASSAGE

Acts 1:1 – 2:47



MEMORY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).



HYMN

"Breathe on Me, Breath of God," Rafiki Hymnal



DOCTRINE

God sends out the Holy Spirit to empower believers to be his witnesses to all nations.



CATECHISM

Question: What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?

Answer: The fourth commandment forbids the omission, or careless performance, of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

LESSON 1: JESUS ASCENDS TO SEND THE PROMISED SPIRIT



OUTLINE FOR THE WEEK

Day One

Luke reports Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 1:1-5; 2:33

Day Two

Jesus ascends into heaven and predicts the disciples would be witnesses to the end of the earth.

Scripture: Acts 1:6-11

Day Three

While waiting for the Holy Spirit, Jesus' followers were devoted to prayer and replacing Judas.

Scripture: Acts: 1:12-26

Day Four

Luke describes the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 2:1-41

Day Five

Luke describes the fellowship of believers after the Holy Spirit's coming.

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary

Teachers: Have the students look up the vocabulary words in their dictionaries for each week. Discuss the meanings when they are found in the text.

narrate, narrative – (Day One lesson notes)

unanimous – (Day One lesson notes)

influential – (Day One lesson notes)

gap – (Day One lesson notes)

initial – (Day Two lesson notes)

oppression – (Day Two lesson notes)

rebuke – (Day Two lesson notes)

redefine – (Day Two lesson notes)

immensity – (Day Three lesson notes)

treachery – (Day Three lesson notes)

proclamation – (Day Three lesson notes)

revelation – (Day Three lesson notes)

descent – (Day Four lesson notes)
coronation – (Day Four lesson notes)
enthronement – (Day Four lesson notes)
redemptive – (Day Four lesson notes)
foreshadow – (Day Four lesson notes)
linguist – (Day Four lesson notes)
proceed – (Day Five lesson notes)
high point – (Day Five lesson notes)
institute – (Day Five lesson notes)
corporate – (Day Five lesson notes)
strategies – (Day Five lesson notes)
tangible – (Day Five lesson notes)
sacraments – (Day Five lesson notes)

Group Study of the Holy Spirit

Teachers: Divide the class into two groups. Give one group the assignment: How the role of the Holy Spirit in New Testament times was the same as it was in the Old Testament. Have them look up 1 Peter 1:10-12; John 16:12-15; John 3:3-8; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Galatians 4:28-29 for help. Have them write down their findings to share with the other group.

Give the other group the assignment: How the Holy Spirit's role was different in New Testament times from his role in the Old Testament period. Have them look up Numbers 11:29; Joel 2:28-29; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Have them write down their findings to share with the other group.

Have the groups come back together and share with each other what they have found.

Hymn "Breathe on Me, Breath of God"

There are four verses to "Breathe on Me, Breath of God." For what is the author asking? (The Holy Spirit) Write a short paragraph saying which verse is most important to you and is something you would like God's Holy Spirit to do in and through you?

Group Scripture Search and Discussion

Teachers: Lead a class discussion and Scripture search of the following: In Acts 1:16, Peter says that the Scripture had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, which the Holy Spirit spoke through David. How many other places can you find in chapters 1 and 2 of Acts where Old Testament Scriptures are fulfilled?

DAY ONE

Luke reports Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:1-5; 2:33

Of the four inspired authors who wrote gospels, recording "all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1), one author continued his report to narrate what Jesus continued to do and teach, through his Holy Spirit, after his resurrection and ascension to heaven. Early and unanimous church tradition tells us that this author was Luke, a physician who traveled with Paul (Colossians 4:14). He wrote both the gospel that bears his name and the Book of Acts to Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), whose title "most excellent" suggests he was socially influential. Both Luke and Theophilus may have been Gentile "God fearers," attracted to the God of Israel but not prepared to submit themselves to circumcision. (At least Luke's narrative in Acts will pay special attention to the God fearers who stood "on the edge" of Judaism and who would flock into the church as the good news of Jesus' welcome to outsiders was preached.) It seems that Theophilus, unlike the first readers of the gospels written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke (but like us!), had not had direct

contact with the apostles, so Luke wrote his gospel and Acts to support Theophilus' belief in the truths about Jesus that he had been taught (Luke 1:3-4).

We can be grateful that the Holy Spirit moved Luke to write Acts, for it fills in many gaps for us. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the one who would "*baptize in the Holy Spirit*" (Luke 3:17), but it is in Acts that we see Jesus fulfill that promise (Acts 1:4-5; 2:33). Jesus predicted Peter's central role in being a witness for him (Matthew 16:16-18), but it is in Acts that we hear Peter—who had denied Jesus in fear just weeks before—boldly proclaim Christ's death and resurrection (Acts 2 and 3). Jesus promised to draw all people from all nations to himself (John 10:16; 12:32), and it is in Acts that we begin to watch that spread of God's kingdom beyond Israel, in the power of the Spirit. Acts also introduces us to the apostle Paul, giving us the historical background of his violent persecution of Christians, his sudden conversion to Christ, and his call to preach good news to Gentiles—subjects that he mentions repeatedly in his epistles.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was the author of the Book of Acts and the gospel that bears his name? Describe him. (Luke wrote the Book of Acts and the Gospel of Luke. He was a Gentile physician who traveled with Paul. He did not submit to circumcision.)
2. What did Luke continue to report in the Book of Acts? (Luke continued his report to narrate what Jesus continued to do and teach, through his Holy Spirit, after his resurrection and ascension to heaven.)
3. Name some of the things we see fulfilled in the Book of Acts. (Answers will vary. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the one who would "*baptize in the Holy Spirit*" [Luke 3:17], but it is in Acts that we see Jesus fulfill that promise [Acts 1:4-5; 2:33]. Jesus predicted Peter's central role in being a witness for him [Matthew 16:16-18], but it is in Acts that we hear Peter—who had denied Jesus in fear just weeks before—boldly proclaim Christ's death and resurrection [Acts 2 and 3]. Jesus promised to draw all people from all nations to himself [John 10:16; 12:32], and it is in Acts that we begin to watch that spread of God's kingdom beyond Israel, in the power of the Spirit.)

DAY TWO

Jesus ascends into heaven and predicts the disciples would be witnesses to the end of the earth.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:6-11

Acts 1 picks up where the story left off in Luke 24, summing up Jesus' resurrection appearances especially his invitation to his disciples to touch his wounds and to watch him eat food—as "many proofs" that showed that his risen body was real. Our faith is based on the testimony of what they saw, so it is important to us that over the period of forty days Jesus appeared to them again and again, crushing their initial unbelief with evidence that they could not deny; he was alive again, and forever!

When Jesus continued his teaching that the kingdom of God had arrived through his ministry, death, and resurrection (see Mark 1:15), the disciples still thought that the kingdom he spoke of would be the kingdom of Israel which would be politically and militarily free from the oppression of Rome. Jesus' response to their question, "Will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" rebuked their curiosity of trying to learn the secrets of God's hidden plan. But Jesus also challenged the smallness of their mental picture of God's kingdom. He redefined the power by which the kingdom comes: not by military strength, but by God's Holy Spirit. He redefined the way the kingdom would advance: not by armed resistance, but words of witness. He redrew the kingdom's borders, referring to Isaiah 49:6-7, in which God had promised that his Servant would

not only restore a remnant from Israel but would also become a light to the Gentiles and bring salvation *"to the end of the earth."* In fact, Jesus predicted the church's witness that provides a preview, almost an outline, for the Book of Acts: Jerusalem (chapters 1-7), Judea and Samaria (chapters 8-12), the end of the earth (chapters 13-28).

Jesus' ascension to heaven in a cloud fulfilled the promise given in Daniel's vision of *"one like a son of man,"* who approached the Ancient of Days to receive an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). A few days later, on Pentecost, Peter would announce that Jesus had taken his throne on the right hand of God (Acts 2:33).

After Jesus' ascension, angels interrupted the apostles' stunned amazement, promising that Jesus would return visibly, bodily, to earth at the end of history. His second coming is the church's *"blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"* (Titus 2:13), and the apostles would soon declare that Jesus' return from heaven will produce the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21)—not merely restoring Israel's political fortunes, but repairing the results of sin in a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13).

QUESTIONS

1. Why were the disciples convinced of Jesus' resurrection that also gives us a basis for our faith to rest upon? (Answers will vary. Jesus' resurrection appearances—especially his invitation to his disciples to touch his wounds and to watch him eat food—were "many proofs" that showed that his risen body was real. Our faith is based on the testimony of what they saw, so it is important to us that over the period of forty days Jesus appeared to them again and again, crushing their initial unbelief with evidence that they could not deny.)
2. Are you convinced of Jesus' resurrection as you read the accounts of the disciples' time with Jesus after his resurrection? (Answers will vary.)
3. We learned that Jesus redefined God's kingdom as not being a political or military kingdom. What would this kingdom that Jesus' spoke about be like? (God's kingdom would come by the power of his Holy Spirit, through the strength of words of witness, and would bring salvation to the end of the earth.)
4. What do we have yet to look forward to that the angel's promised at Jesus' ascension? (The angels promised that Jesus would return visibly, bodily, to earth at the end of history. His second coming is the church's *"blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ"* [Titus 2:13]. Jesus' return from heaven will produce the restoration of all things including the results of sin into a new heaven and a new earth.)

DAY THREE

While waiting for the Holy Spirit, Jesus' followers were devoted to prayer and replacing Judas.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:12-26

Two activities occupied the followers of Jesus as they awaited the arrival of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised to send them. First, they *"with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer"* (Acts 1:14). Jesus had taught them that God would give the Holy Spirit to those who approach him with children's confidence in the generosity of their heavenly Father (Luke 11:13). Recognizing the immensity of their calling to be Jesus' witnesses and their own inability, the early church and its leaders turned to God continually in prayer. Does our prayer life exhibit a similar awareness of our weakness and God's strength?

Second, the number of the apostles needed to be restored to full strength—twelve—after Judas' betrayal and suicide. Just as Israel's twelve tribes looked back to Jacob's twelve sons, so the new

Israel's leadership must be restored to twelve before the Spirit arrived (see Matthew 19:28). Luke referred to Jesus' selection of the apostles in Acts 1:2, and the listing of their names in 1:13 quietly confirms that only eleven remained to pray in expectation of the Spirit. Peter's address (speech) to the group of 120 believers demonstrated from the Old Testament Scriptures (Psalm 69:25; 109:8) that Judas' treachery was included in God's plan for the suffering of his Messiah. In the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension, Jesus had taught his disciples to interpret the whole Old Testament (law, prophets, Psalms and other writings) as reaching fulfillment in his suffering and resurrection, and the proclamation of forgiveness through him to all nations (Luke 24:44-49). Jesus' teaching was bearing fruit in the way that his apostles had come to see and understand the Bible's Christ-centered focus. Because the twelfth apostle would share with the eleven the privilege of testifying to Jesus' resurrection, he must be one who traveled in their company from John's baptism through the events of Jesus' death and resurrection appearances. Because apostles were chosen directly by Jesus (unlike elders and deacons, whose calling to office is recognized by the members of the congregation—see, for example, Acts 6:3), when the group was narrowed to two, Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias, the believers asked the Lord Jesus himself to signal his choice through the casting of lots, an Old Testament method of asking God to reveal his will. Although God gave new revelation in words and miracles throughout the lifetimes of the apostles, this is the last example in the Bible of God's people seeking his direction through the casting of lots. This is the first of several prayers of the church recorded in Acts, demonstrating believers' dependence on the risen Lord to direct their service to him in his kingdom. In their petition, they acknowledge that Jesus, who chooses his apostles, knows the secrets of every human heart—as only he himself can (1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:10; Mark 2:8). Christ revealed his choice of Matthias, who replaced Judas as a witness to the resurrection. The church's leadership was complete, prepared for the climax of Christ's exaltation in his outpouring of the Holy Spirit on his people.

QUESTIONS

1. What two activities occupied the followers of Jesus as they awaited the arrival of the Holy Spirit? (The followers of Jesus were devoted to prayer and sought guidance from God in selecting the replacement for Judas.)
2. Would you describe your life as one that is devoted to prayer, recognizing our calling and the inability to carry it out on our own because of our weakness, thus needing God's guidance and strength? (Answers will vary.)
3. God used many authors, writing over hundreds of years, to give us our Holy Bible. In what ways are these authors' many stories really only aspects of one story—the fact that Jesus taught his disciples in the forty days between his resurrection and ascension? (In the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension, Jesus had taught his disciples to interpret the whole Old Testament [law, prophets, Psalms and other writings] as reaching fulfillment in his suffering and resurrection, and the proclamation of forgiveness through him to all nations. The Bible is made up of many stories that are really aspects of one story.)
4. What did the prayer recorded in Acts 1:24-25 reveal about the followers of Jesus? (The prayer demonstrated the believers' dependence on the risen Lord to direct their service to him in his kingdom. In their petition, they acknowledged that Jesus knows the secrets of every human heart so they sought his guidance.) Could it be said of you that you go to God for guidance and direction in the decisions you need to make in your life? (Answers will vary.)

DAY FOUR

Luke describes the coming of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:1-41

As Peter's sermon at Pentecost explains (Acts 2:33), the descent of the Spirit on the church that was expecting it is the climax of Jesus' coronation-enthronement celebration. In the Old Testament we read of how the Spirit was involved in creation (Genesis 1:2) and then of his empowering judges (Judges 3:10), prophets (Numbers 24:2), and kings (1 Samuel 16:13) for their leadership roles. When God distributed his Spirit to Israel's elders to enable them to judge wisely, Moses expressed the longing that God would place his Spirit on all his people (Numbers 11:29). In Joel 2:28-29, Moses' wish became God's promise for the last days. Those last days had arrived through Jesus' saving mission to earth and triumphant return to heaven.

Three observable signs confirmed the Spirit's arrival: the sound of a mighty wind (in both Hebrew and Greek the word "spirit" also means "wind"), the sight of tongues of fire resting on each believer, and the announcement of God's mighty works in the various languages of the people of the ancient world, across the Roman Empire and even beyond. The tongues of fire, like the pillar of fire over the tabernacle in the wilderness, showed that God was dwelling in his "sanctuary"—not of skins or tapestries, wood or gold, but of living people renewed by his grace (1 Peter 2:4-5). The tongues of the nations pointed to the expansion of God's redemptive kingdom from its focus on Israel to include all earth's peoples through the gospel. This miraculous gift foreshadowed the faithful labors of linguists and translators, who still labor today toward the goal that all people everywhere can hear and read God's Word in their own tongues.

Peter's sermon placed the questions and what had happened recently to his hearers in the background of the Scriptures, and thus drew their hearts and minds to recognize who Jesus is and what he has done. The testimonies that sounded to native Judeans like drunken mumbling were actually God's gift of prophetic speech to all his people, male and female, young and old, in fulfillment of Joel 2. The rejection of Jesus by his own people and his execution by lawless Romans (at the Jews' insistence) was essential to *"the definite plan and foreknowledge of God"* for providing salvation. But because of Jesus' complete purity, death could not keep its hold on him. He was raised from the dead without seeing corruption, as David foretold in Psalm 16. David also foresaw that the Messiah who was to come would occupy his royal throne—not merely an earthly throne in Jerusalem, but the heavenly throne at God's right hand (Psalm 110).

Since *"God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified,"* Peter could promise his heart-injured hearers that God's grace would grant them forgiveness and the Holy Spirit as they repented and received baptism in Jesus' name, humbly depending on the One whom they had so recently rejected.

The Spirit's descent at Pentecost is the final part of the turning point of events (including Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension) that guide the church from the age of promise into the age of redemptive fulfillment.

QUESTIONS

1. What were the three observable signs that confirmed the Holy Spirit's arrival? (Three observable signs confirmed the Spirit's arrival: the sound of a mighty wind [in both Hebrew and Greek the word "spirit" also means "wind"], the sight of tongues of fire resting on each believer, and the announcement of God's mighty works in the various languages of the people of the ancient world, across the Roman Empire and even beyond.)
2. What did the different tongues that the people of all nations were speaking point to? (The

tongues of the nations pointed to the expansion of God's redemptive kingdom from its focus on Israel to include all earth's peoples through the gospel. This miraculous gift foreshadowed the faithful labors of linguists and translators, who still labor today toward the goal that all people everywhere can hear and read God's Word in their own tongues.)

3. How do believers experience the Holy Spirit today? (Answers will vary. The Holy Spirit lives within believers today empowering, guiding, and helping them do what they cannot do for themselves and live a life that glorifies and honors God.)
4. What does Acts 2:38 tell us about who can be saved and how we can obtain salvation? (Answers will vary. Acts 2:38 tells us that all those who repent and receive baptism in Jesus' name can be saved. God's grace would grant them forgiveness and the Holy Spirit would come to live in them.)

DAY FIVE

Luke describes the fellowship of believers after the Holy Spirit's coming.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:42-47

Luke follows the event of the coming of the Holy Spirit with a complete summary (Acts 2:42-47), the first of several in Acts, which describes the ongoing life and growth of the church after the Spirit's arrival in power. Having been born into God's family through Peter's gospel preaching, in the following weeks the thousands of new believers were nourished in the faith by the apostles' teaching. Their devotion to "the fellowship" was shown by their sharing resources, regarding personal property which was held "in common." They sold their possessions and belongings and distributed the proceeds to anyone in need (Acts 2:44-45). While they often ate meals together in homes (Acts 2:46), the high point of their table fellowship was "*the breaking of bread*," the Lord's Supper instituted by Jesus to strengthen our trust in the saving benefits of his sacrificed body and blood. Believers' devotion to "the prayers" included not only the praises and petitions that they offered to God in their meetings in homes but also their participation in the worship of the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46). The next incident recorded by Luke occurred as two apostles attended the temple "at the hour of prayer" (Acts 3:1). Christians' awareness of the presence of Christ's Spirit in their midst was expressed in a corporate life of constant speaking to God as well as listening to his Word.

The church grew not only in spiritual maturity but also in numerical strength, as "*the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:47). Church growth was not the result of their strategies or skills, but of the sovereign work of the Lord himself, as his Spirit used his Word to reach and transform hearts. Yet the characteristics of the early church—its commitment to God's Word, to tangible expressions of love and compassion, to the sacraments, and to dependent prayer—were the means used by the good shepherd to call his sheep by name and gather them into his sheepfold. Let us pray that by his Spirit's application of the gospel to our hearts, Christ will make our churches, villages, and schools communities in which his truth is spoken and heard, and his love lived in relationships and actions.

QUESTIONS

1. How did the church respond to Peter's and the apostles' preaching? (Thousands of new believers were nourished in the faith by the apostles' teaching. They were committed to God's Word. They shared their resources. They sold their possessions and belongings and gave to those in need. They shared meals together and took the Lord's Supper together. They were devoted to prayer, committed to the sacraments, and participated in worship in the temple.)
2. What was the high point of the believers' table fellowship? (The high point of their table

fellowship was *“the breaking of bread,”* the Lord's Supper which was instituted by Jesus to strengthen our trust in the saving benefits of his sacrificed body and blood.) Is partaking in the Lord's Supper the high point of your worship? (Answers will vary.)

3. To what was the church growth attributed? (Church growth was attributed to the sovereign work of the Lord himself, as his Spirit used his Word to reach and transform hearts.)
4. As you reflect on Luke's portrait of the church's life together in the days after Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47), do you see ways that your fellowship could be deepened with the believers that God has set around you? How about your life of prayer together? Are you praying that by his Spirit's application of the gospel to our hearts, Christ will make our churches, villages, and schools communities in which his truth is spoken and heard, and his love lived in relationships and actions? (Answers will vary.)

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Acts

SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL LESSON TEACHER'S GUIDE



PASSAGE

Acts 1:1 – 2:47



MEMORY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).



HYMN

"Breathe on Me, Breath of God," Rafiki Hymnal



DOCTRINE

God sends out the Holy Spirit to empower believers to be his witnesses to all nations.



CATECHISM

Question: What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?
Answer: The fourth commandment forbids the omission, or careless performance, of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

LESSON 1: JESUS ASCENDS TO SEND THE PROMISED SPIRIT



OUTLINE FOR THE WEEK

Day One

Luke reports Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 1:1-5; 2:33

Day Two

Jesus ascends into heaven and predicts the disciples would be witnesses to the end of the earth.

Scripture: Acts 1:6-11

Day Three

While waiting for the Holy Spirit, Jesus' followers were devoted to prayer and replacing Judas.

Scripture: Acts: 1:12-26

Day Four

Luke describes the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 2:1-41

Day Five

Luke describes the fellowship of believers after the Holy Spirit's coming.

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary

Teachers: Have the students look up the vocabulary words in their dictionaries for each week. Discuss the meanings when they are found in the text.

narrate, narrative – (Day One lesson notes)

unanimous – (Day One lesson notes)

influential – (Day One lesson notes)

gaps – (Day One lesson notes)

initial – (Day Two lesson notes)

oppression – (Day Two lesson notes)

rebuke – (Day Two lesson notes)

redefine – (Day Two lesson notes)

immensity – (Day Three lesson notes)
treachery – (Day Three lesson notes)
proclamation – (Day Three lesson notes)
revelation – (Day Three lesson notes)
descent – (Day Four lesson notes)
dialect – (Day Four lesson notes)
coronation – (Day Four lesson notes)
enthronement – (Day Four lesson notes)
redemptive – (Day Four lesson notes)
foreshadow – (Day Four lesson notes)
linguist – (Day Four lesson notes)
proceed – (Day Five lesson notes)
high point – (Day Five lesson notes)
institute – (Day Five lesson notes)
corporate – (Day Five lesson notes)
strategies – (Day Five lesson notes)
tangible – (Day Five lesson notes)
sacraments – (Day Five lesson notes)

Group Study of the Holy Spirit:

Teachers: Divide the class into two groups. Give one group the assignment: How the role of the Holy Spirit in New Testament times was the same as it was in the Old Testament. Have them look up 1 Peter 1:10-12; John 16:12-15; John 3:3-8; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Galatians 4:28-29 for help. Have them write down their findings to share with the other group.

Give the other group the assignment: How the Holy Spirit's role was different in New Testament times from his role in the Old Testament period. Have them look up Numbers 11:29; Joel 2:28-29; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Have them write down their findings to share with the other group.

Have the groups come back together and share with each other what they have found.

Hymn: "Breathe on Me, Breath of God":

There are four verses to "Breathe on Me, Breath of God." For what is the author asking? (The Holy Spirit) Write a short paragraph saying which verse is most important to you and is something you would like God's Holy Spirit to do in and through you?

Group Scripture Search and Discussion:

Teachers: Lead a class discussion and Scripture search of the following: In Acts 1:16, Peter says that the Scripture had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, which the Holy Spirit spoke through David. How many other places can you find in chapters 1 and 2 of Acts where Old Testament Scriptures are fulfilled?

DAY ONE

Luke reports Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:1-5; 2:33

Of the four inspired authors who wrote gospels, recording “*all that Jesus began to do and teach*” (Acts 1:1), one author continued his report to historically narrate what Jesus continued to do and teach, through his Holy Spirit after his resurrection and ascension to heaven. Many times the book of Acts is referred to or called the acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles. Jesus had finished the work of redemption on the cross and his resurrection, but when he was taken up he had only begun to proclaim the glories of that redemption. This would be carried on and proclaimed by the apostles whom the Lord had sovereignly chosen (John 6:70; 15:26-27). Early and unanimous church tradition tells us that this author was Luke, a physician who traveled with Paul (Colossians 4:14). He wrote both the gospel that bears his name and the Book of Acts to Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), whose title “most excellent” suggests he was socially influential as well as knowledgeable of Roman laws and customs. Both Luke and Theophilus may have been Gentile “God fearers,” attracted to the God of Israel but not prepared to submit themselves to circumcision. (At least Luke’s narrative in Acts will pay special attention to the God fearers who stood “on the edge” of Judaism and who would flock into the church as the good news of Jesus’ welcome to outsiders was preached.) It seems that Theophilus, unlike the first readers of the gospels written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke (but like us!), had not had direct contact with the apostles, so Luke wrote his gospel and Acts to support Theophilus’ belief in the truths about Jesus that he had been taught (Luke 1:3-4).

We can be grateful that the Holy Spirit moved Luke to write Acts, for it fills in many gaps for us. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the one who would “*baptize in the Holy Spirit*” (Luke 3:17), but it is in Acts that we see Jesus fulfill that promise (Acts 1:4-5; 2:33). The promise of God came ten days later on the “day of Pentecost”, since Pentecost, believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit when they come to salvation. Jesus predicted Peter’s central role in being a witness for him (Matthew 16:16-18), but it is in Acts that we hear Peter—who had denied Jesus in fear just weeks before—boldly proclaim Christ’s death and resurrection (Acts 2 and 3). Jesus promised to draw all people from all nations to himself (John 10:16; 12:32), and it is in Acts that we begin to watch that spread of God’s kingdom beyond Israel, in the power of the Spirit. Acts also introduces us to the apostle Paul, giving us the historical background of his violent persecution of Christians, his sudden conversion to Christ, and his call to preach good news to Gentiles—subjects that he mentions repeatedly in his epistles.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was the author of the Book of Acts and the gospel that bears his name? Describe him. (Luke wrote the Book of Acts and the Gospel of Luke. He was a Gentile physician who traveled with Paul. He did not submit to circumcision.)
2. What did Luke continue to report in the Book of Acts? (Luke continued his report to narrate what Jesus continued to do and teach through his Holy Spirit, after his resurrection and ascension to heaven.)
3. Name some of the things we see fulfilled in the Book of Acts. (Answers will vary. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the one who would “*baptize in the Holy Spirit*” [Luke 3:17], but it is in Acts that we see Jesus fulfill that promise [Acts 1:4-5; 2:33]. Jesus predicted Peter’s central role in being a witness for him [Matthew 16:16-18], but it is in Acts that we hear Peter—who had denied Jesus in fear just weeks before—boldly proclaim Christ’s death and resurrection [Acts 2 and 3]. Jesus promised to draw all people from all nations to himself [John 10:16;

12:32], and it is in Acts that we begin to watch that spread of God's kingdom beyond Israel, in the power of the Spirit.)

4. After Jesus Christ's ascension, believers had to wait to be baptized by the Holy Spirit. Since Pentecost, when are believers baptized by the Holy Spirit? See 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 8: 9. (Believers are baptized by and receive the Holy Spirit at salvation).

DAY TWO

Jesus ascends into heaven and predicts the disciples would be witnesses to the end of the earth.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:6-11

Acts 1 picks up where the story left off in Luke 24, summing up Jesus' resurrection appearances—especially his invitation to his disciples to touch his wounds and to watch him eat food—as “many proofs” that showed that his risen body was real. Our faith is based on the testimony of what they saw, so it is important to us that over the period of forty days Jesus appeared to them again and again, crushing their initial unbelief with evidence that they could not deny; he was alive again, and forever!

When Jesus continued his teaching that the kingdom of God had arrived through his ministry, death, and resurrection (see Mark 1:15), the disciples still thought that the kingdom he spoke of would be the kingdom of Israel which would be politically and militarily free from the oppression of Rome. The disciples may have remembered that Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2 connected the coming of the kingdom with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' response to their question, “Will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?” rebuked their curiosity of trying to learn the secrets of God's hidden plan. But Jesus also challenged the smallness of their mental picture of God's kingdom. He redefined the power by which the kingdom comes: not by military strength, but by God's Holy Spirit. He redefined the way the kingdom would advance: not by armed resistance, but words of witness. He redrew the kingdom's borders, referring to Isaiah 49:6-7, in which God had promised that his Servant would not only restore a remnant from Israel but would also become a light to the Gentiles and bring salvation “to the end of the earth.” In fact, Jesus predicted the church's witness that provides a preview, almost an outline, for the Book of Acts: Jerusalem (chapters 1-7), Judea and Samaria (chapters 8-12), the end of the earth (chapters 13-28).

Jesus' ascension to heaven in a cloud fulfilled the promise given in Daniel's vision of “one like a son of man,” who approached the Ancient of Days to receive an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). A few days later, on Pentecost, Peter would announce that Jesus had taken his throne on the right hand of God (Acts 2:33). This would not be the last time that clouds will accompany Jesus (Mark 13:26; 14:62).

After Jesus' ascension, angels interrupted the apostles' stunned amazement, promising that Jesus would return visibly, bodily, to earth at the end of history. His second coming is the church's “blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), and the apostles would soon declare that Jesus' return from heaven will produce the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21)—not merely restoring Israel's political fortunes, but repairing the results of sin in a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13).

QUESTIONS

1. Why were the disciples convinced of Jesus' resurrection that also gives us a basis for our faith to rest upon? (Answers will vary. Jesus' resurrection appearances—especially his invitation to his disciples to touch his wounds and to watch him eat food—were “many proofs” that showed that his risen body was real. Our faith is based on the testimony of what they saw, so it is important to us that over the period of forty days Jesus appeared to them again and again,

crushing their initial unbelief with evidence that they could not deny.)

2. Are you convinced of Jesus' resurrection as you read the accounts of the disciples' time with Jesus after his resurrection? (Answers will vary.)
3. We learned that Jesus redefined God's kingdom as not being a political or military kingdom. What would this kingdom that Jesus' spoke about be like? (God's kingdom would come by the power of his Holy Spirit, through the strength of words of witness, and would bring salvation to the end of the earth.)
4. What do we have yet to look forward to that the angel's promised at Jesus' ascension? (The angels promised that Jesus would return visibly, bodily, to earth at the end of history. His second coming is the church's "*blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*" [Titus 2:13]. Jesus' return from heaven will produce the restoration of all things including the results of sin into a new heaven and a new earth.)
5. If you are a Christian who has received the Holy Spirit, how and with whom are you sharing the Gospel? (Answers may vary).

DAY THREE

While waiting for the Holy Spirit, Jesus' followers were devoted to prayer and replacing Judas.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:12-26

Two activities occupied the followers of Jesus as they awaited the arrival of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised to send them. First, they "*with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer*" (Acts 1:14). Jesus had taught them that God would give the Holy Spirit to those who approach him with child-like confidence in the generosity of their heavenly Father (Luke 11:13). Recognizing the immensity of their calling to be Jesus' witnesses and their own inability, the early church and its leaders turned to God continually in prayer. Does our prayer life exhibit a similar awareness of our weakness and God's strength?

Second, the number of the apostles needed to be restored to full strength—twelve—after Judas' betrayal and suicide. Just as Israel's twelve tribes looked back to Jacob's twelve sons, so the new Israel's leadership must be restored to twelve before the Spirit arrived (see Matthew 19:28). Luke referred to Jesus' selection of the apostles in Acts 1:2, and the listing of their names in 1:13 quietly confirms that only eleven remained to pray in expectation of the Spirit. Peter seems to be set apart as the leader when he stands up to speak. Peter's address (speech) to the group of 120 believers demonstrated from the Old Testament Scriptures (Psalm 69:25; 109:8; Psalm 55:12-15) that Judas' treachery was included in God's plan for the suffering of his Messiah. In the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension, Jesus had taught his disciples to interpret the whole Old Testament (law, prophets, Psalms and other writings) as reaching fulfillment in his suffering and resurrection, and the proclamation of forgiveness through him to all nations (Luke 24:44-49). Jesus' teaching was bearing fruit in the way that his apostles had come to see and understand the Bible's Christ-centered focus. Because the twelfth apostle would share with the eleven the privilege of testifying to Jesus' resurrection, he must be one who traveled in their company from John's baptism through the events of Jesus' death and resurrection appearances. Because apostles were chosen directly by Jesus (unlike elders and deacons, whose calling to office is recognized by the members of the congregation—see, for example, Acts 6:3), when the group was narrowed to two, Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias, the believers asked the Lord Jesus himself to signal his choice through the casting of lots, an Old Testament method of asking God to reveal his will. Although God gave new revelation in words and miracles throughout the lifetimes of the apostles, this is the last example in the Bible of God's people seeking his direction through the casting of lots. This is the first of several prayers of the church recorded in Acts, demonstrating

believers' dependence on the risen Lord to direct their service to him in his kingdom. In their petition, they acknowledge that Jesus, who chooses his apostles, knows the secrets of every human heart—as only he himself can (1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:10; Mark 2:8). Christ revealed his choice of Matthias, who replaced Judas as a witness to the resurrection. The words of the apostles "*you have chosen*" make it abundantly clear that it was God who chose Judas' replacement. The church's leadership was complete, prepared for the climax of Christ's exaltation in his outpouring of the Holy Spirit on his people.

QUESTIONS

1. What two activities occupied the followers of Jesus as they awaited the arrival of the Holy Spirit? (The followers of Jesus were devoted to prayer and sought guidance from God in selecting the replacement for Judas.) What was the qualification for this replacement and the other apostles as well? (He must have traveled with and witnessed the resurrected Christ).
2. Would you describe your life as one that is devoted to prayer, recognizing your calling and the inability to carry it out on your own because of your weakness, thus needing God's guidance and strength? (Answers will vary.)
3. God used many authors, writing over hundreds of years, to give us our Holy Bible. In what ways are these authors' many stories really only aspects of one story—the fact that Jesus taught his disciples in the forty days between his resurrection and ascension? (In the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension, Jesus had taught his disciples to interpret the whole Old Testament [law, prophets, Psalms and other writings] as reaching fulfillment in his suffering and resurrection, and the proclamation of forgiveness through him to all nations. The Bible is made up of many stories that are really aspects of one story.)
4. What did the prayer recorded in Acts 1:24-25 reveal about the followers of Jesus? (The prayer demonstrated the believers' dependence on the risen Lord to direct their service to him in his kingdom. In their petition, they acknowledged that Jesus knows the secrets of every human heart so they sought his guidance.) Could it be said of you that you go to God for guidance and direction in the decisions you need to make in your life? (Answers will vary.)
5. This was the last time the casting of lots to determine God's will was used or recorded in Scripture. How do we determine God's will today? (By prayer and by the Word of God).

DAY FOUR

Luke describes the coming of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:1-41

As Peter's sermon at Pentecost, which was celebrated fifty days after Passover, explains (Acts 2:33), the descent of the Spirit on the church that was expecting it is the climax of Jesus' coronation-enthronement celebration. In the Old Testament we read of how the Spirit was involved in creation (Genesis 1:2) and then of his empowering judges (Judges 3:10, prophets (Numbers 24:2), and kings (1 Samuel 16:13) for their leadership roles. When God distributed his Spirit to Israel's elders to enable them to judge wisely, Moses expressed the longing that God would place his Spirit on all his people (Numbers 11:29). In Joel 2:28-29, Moses' wish became God's promise for the last days. Those last days had arrived through Jesus' saving mission to earth and triumphant return to heaven.

Three observable signs confirmed the Spirit's arrival: the sound of a mighty wind (in both Hebrew and Greek the word "spirit" also means "wind" [Ezekiel 37:9, 10; John 3:8], the sight of tongues of fire resting on each believer, and the announcement of God's mighty works in the various

languages of the people of the ancient world, across the Roman Empire and even beyond. The tongues of fire, like the pillar of fire over the tabernacle in the wilderness, showed that God was dwelling in his “sanctuary”—not of skins or tapestries, wood or gold, but of living people renewed by his grace (1 Peter 2:4-5). The presence of fire often indicated Divine presence. The tongues of the nations pointed to the expansion of God’s redemptive kingdom from its focus on Israel to include all earth’s peoples through the gospel. They were also a sign of judgment on the unbelieving Israel (1 Corinthians 14:21-28). The people gathered there that day heard them speak in their own language. Travelers would recognize and understand his own dialect or language from the country that he had traveled from. This miraculous gift foreshadowed the faithful labors of linguists and translators, who still labor today toward the goal that all people everywhere can hear and read God’s Word in their own tongues.

Peter’s sermon placed the questions and what had happened recently to his hearers in the background of the Scriptures, and thus drew their hearts and minds to recognize who Jesus is and what he has done. Peter’s sermon was the first big event in church history after the arrival of the Holy Spirit. The church was established when, as a result of Peter’s sermon, 3,000 people were saved. These testimonies which sounded to native Judeans like drunken mumbling were actually God’s gift of prophetic speech to all his people, male and female, young and old, in fulfillment of Joel 2. The rejection of Jesus by his own people and his execution by lawless Romans (at the Jews’ insistence) was essential to *“the definite plan and foreknowledge of God”* for providing salvation. But because of Jesus’ complete purity, death could not keep its hold on him. He was raised from the dead without seeing corruption, as David foretold in Psalm 16. David also foresaw that the Messiah who was to come would occupy his royal throne—not merely an earthly throne in Jerusalem, but the heavenly throne at God’s right hand (Psalm 110). God’s prophecies will come to pass.

Since *“God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified,”* Peter could promise his heart-injured hearers that God’s grace would grant them forgiveness and the Holy Spirit as they repented and received baptism in Jesus’ name, humbly depending on the One whom they had so recently rejected. The words of Peter’s sermon gave certainty that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah. Jesus is not only Messiah, he is God (Romans 1:4).

The Spirit’s descent at Pentecost is the final part of the turning point of events (including Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension) that guide the church from the age of promise into the age of redemptive fulfillment.

QUESTIONS

1. What were the three observable signs that confirmed the Holy Spirit’s arrival? (Three observable signs confirmed the Spirit’s arrival: the sound of a mighty wind [in both Hebrew and Greek the word “spirit” also means “wind”], the sight of tongues of fire resting on each believer, and the announcement of God’s mighty works in the various languages of the people of the ancient world, across the Roman Empire and even beyond.)
2. What did the different tongues that the people of all nations were speaking point to? (The tongues of the nations pointed to the expansion of God’s redemptive kingdom from its focus on Israel to include all earth’s peoples through the gospel. This miraculous gift foreshadowed the faithful labors of linguists and translators, who still labor today toward the goal that all people everywhere can hear and read God’s Word in their own tongues.)
3. How do believers experience the Holy Spirit today? (Answers will vary. The Holy Spirit lives within believers today empowering, guiding, and helping them do what they cannot do for themselves and live a life that glorifies and honors God.)
4. What does Acts 2:38 tell us about who can be saved and how we can obtain salvation?

(Answers will vary. Acts 2:38 tells us that those who repent and receive baptism in Jesus' name can be saved. God's grace would grant them forgiveness and the Holy Spirit would come to live in them.)

5. Read Acts 22:36. What did Peter mean when he said that Jesus was "both Lord and Christ"? (Jesus is both our Lord and Savior and he is also God in the flesh).

DAY FIVE

Luke describes the fellowship of believers after the Holy Spirit's coming.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:42-47

Luke follows the event of the coming of the Holy Spirit with a complete summary (Acts 2:42-47), the first of several in Acts, which describes the ongoing life and growth of the church after the Spirit's arrival in power. Having been born into God's family through Peter's gospel preaching, in the following weeks the thousands of new believers were nourished in the faith by the apostles' teaching. Their devotion to "the fellowship" was shown by their sharing resources, regarding personal property which was held "in common." They sold their possessions and belongings and distributed the proceeds to anyone in need (Acts 2:44-45). While they often ate meals together in homes (Acts 2:46), the high point of their table fellowship was "*the breaking of bread*," the Lord's Supper instituted by Jesus to strengthen our trust in the saving benefits of his sacrificed body and blood. Believers' devotion to "the prayers" included not only the praises and petitions that they offered to God in their meetings in homes but also their participation in the worship of the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46). The next incident recorded by Luke occurred as two apostles attended the temple "at the hour of prayer" (Acts 3:1). Christians' awareness of the presence of Christ's Spirit in their midst was expressed in a corporate life of constant speaking to God as well as listening to his Word.

The church grew not only in spiritual maturity but also in numerical strength, as "*the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:47). Church growth was not the result of their strategies or skills, but of the sovereign work of the Lord himself, as his Spirit used his Word to reach and transform hearts. This event of thousands coming to Christ is referred to as a revival. We do not know if there will be a massive revival in our day, but we should be prepared for one. Preparation for revival today comes in the same way it did in that day. The preparation is four-fold. First there is prayer; second the study of God's Word; third, fellowship; and finally mutual sharing with other believers. Yet the characteristics of the early church—its commitment to God's Word, to tangible expressions of love and compassion, to the sacraments, and to dependent prayer—were the means used by the good shepherd to call his sheep by name and gather them into his sheepfold. Let us pray that by his Spirit's application of the gospel to our hearts, Christ will make our churches, villages, and schools communities in which his truth is spoken and heard, and his love lived in relationships and actions.

QUESTIONS

1. How did the church respond to Peter's and the apostles' preaching? (Thousands of new believers were nourished in the faith by the apostles' teaching. They were committed to God's Word. They shared their resources. They sold their possessions and belongings and gave to those in need. They shared meals together and took the Lord's Supper together. They were devoted to prayer, committed to the sacraments, and participated in worship in the temple.)
2. What was the high point of the believers' table fellowship? (The high point of their table fellowship was "*the breaking of bread*," the Lord's Supper which was instituted by Jesus to strengthen our trust in the saving benefits of his sacrificed body and blood.) Is partaking in

the Lord's Supper the high point of your worship? (Answers will vary.)

3. To what was the church growth attributed? (Church growth was attributed to the sovereign work of the Lord himself, as his Spirit used his Word to reach and transform hearts.)
4. As you reflect on Luke's portrait of the church's life together in the days after Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47), do you see ways that your fellowship could be deepened with the believers that God has set around you? How about your life of prayer together? Are you praying that by his Spirit's application of the gospel to our hearts, Christ will make our churches, villages, and schools communities in which his truth is spoken and heard, and his love lived in relationships and actions? (Answers will vary.)
5. What must we do to prepare for revival? (We must pray, study God's Word, mutually share, and fellowship with other believers).

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Acts

ADULT LESSON

PASSAGE

ACTS 1:1 – 2:47

MEMORY VERSE

"BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU, AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND TO THE END OF THE EARTH" (ACTS 1:8).

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

GOD SENDS OUT THE HOLY SPIRIT TO EMPOWER BELIEVERS TO BE HIS WITNESSES TO ALL NATIONS.

CATECHISM

QUESTION: WHAT IS FORBIDDEN IN THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT?
ANSWER: THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT FORBIDS THE OMISSION, OR CARELESS PERFORMANCE, OF THE DUTIES REQUIRED, AND THE PROFANING THE DAY BY IDLENESS, OR DOING THAT WHICH IS IN ITSELF SINFUL, OR BY UNNECESSARY THOUGHTS, WORDS, OR WORKS, ABOUT OUR WORLDLY EMPLOYMENTS OR RECREATIONS.

Lesson 1: Jesus Ascends to Send the Promised Spirit

Days One and Two

Read Acts 1:1 – 2:47.

Of the four inspired authors who wrote Gospels, recording “*all that Jesus began to do and teach*” (Acts 1:1), one continued his account to narrate what Jesus *continued* to do and teach, through his Holy Spirit, after his resurrection and ascension to heaven. Early and unanimous church tradition tells us that this author was Luke, a physician who traveled with Paul (Colossians 4:14). He wrote both the Gospel that bears his name and the Book of Acts to Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), whose title “most excellent” suggests his influential social standing.¹ Both Luke and Theophilus may have been Gentile “God fearers,” attracted to the God of Israel but not prepared to undergo circumcision. (At least Luke’s narrative in Acts will pay special attention to the God fearers who stood “on the edge” of Judaism and who would flock into the church as the good news of Jesus’ welcome to outsiders was preached.) It seems that Theophilus, unlike the first readers of the Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke (but like us!), had not had direct contact with the apostles, so Luke wrote his Gospel and Acts to reinforce Theophilus’ certainty in the truths about Jesus that he had been taught (Luke 1:3-4) (Johnson, 2003).

We can be grateful that the Holy Spirit moved Luke to write Acts, for it fills in many “gaps” for us. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the one who would “*baptize in the Holy Spirit*” (Luke 3:17), but it is in Acts that we see Jesus fulfill that promise (Acts 1:4-5; 2:33). Jesus predicted Peter’s central role in bearing witness (Matthew 16:16-18), but it is in Acts that we hear Peter—who had denied Jesus in fear just weeks before—boldly proclaim Christ’s death and resurrection (Acts 2 and 3). Jesus promised to draw all people from all nations to himself (John 10:16; 12:32), and it is in Acts that we begin to watch that spread of God’s kingdom beyond Israel, in the power of the Spirit. Acts also introduces us to the Apostle Paul, giving us the historical background of his violent persecution of Christians, his sudden conversion to Christ, and his call to preach good news to Gentiles—themes that he mentions repeatedly in his epistles.

Acts 1 picks up where the story left off in Luke 24, summing up Jesus’ resurrection appearances—especially his invitation to his disciples to touch his wounds and to watch him eat food—as “many proofs” that showed the reality of his risen body. Our faith rests on their eyewitness testimony,² so it is important to us that over an extended period of forty days Jesus appeared to them again and again, overwhelming their initial unbelief with evidence that could not be denied: he was alive again, and forever!

When Jesus resumed his teaching that the kingdom of God had arrived

through his ministry, death, and resurrection (see Mark 1:15), the disciples still thought of the kingdom as political and military dominance for Israel—at least, independence from the oppression of Rome. Jesus’ response to their question, “Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” rebuked their curiosity into the secrets of God’s hidden plan. But Jesus also challenged the smallness of their mental picture of God’s kingdom. He redefined the *power* by which the kingdom comes: not military might, but God’s Holy Spirit. He redefined the *means* of the kingdom’s advance: not armed resistance, but words of witness. And he redrew the kingdom’s *borders*, alluding to Isaiah 49:6-7, in which God had promised that his Servant would not only restore a remnant from Israel but would also become a light to the Gentiles, bringing salvation “*to the end of the earth*” (Johnson, 2007). In fact, the concentric circles that Jesus traced for the church’s witness provide a preview, almost an outline, for the book: Jerusalem (chapters 1 – 7), Judea and Samaria (chapters 8 – 12), the end of the earth (chapters 13 – 28).

Jesus’ ascent to heaven in a cloud fulfilled the promise given in Daniel’s vision of “*one like a son of man,*” who approached the Ancient of Days to receive an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). A few days later, on Pentecost, Peter would announce that Jesus had taken his throne at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33).

After Jesus’ ascension, angels interrupted the apostles’ stunned amazement, promising that Jesus would return visibly, bodily, to earth at the end of history. His Second Coming is the church’s “*blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13), and the apostles would soon declare that Jesus’ return from heaven will produce the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21)—not merely restoring Israel’s political fortunes, but repairing all sin’s effects in a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13).

Two activities occupied the followers of Jesus as they awaited the arrival of the promised Holy Spirit. First, they “*with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer*” (Acts 1:14). Jesus had taught them that God would give the Holy Spirit to those who approach him with children’s confidence in the generosity of their heavenly Father (Luke 11:13). Recognizing the immensity of their calling to be Jesus’ witnesses and their own inability, the early church and its leaders turned to God continually in prayer.³ Does our prayer life exhibit a similar awareness of our weakness and God’s strength?

Second, the number of the apostles needed to be restored to full strength—twelve—after Judas’ betrayal and suicide.⁴ Just as Israel’s twelve tribes looked back to Jacob’s twelve sons, so the new Israel’s leadership must be restored to twelve before the Spirit arrived (see Matthew 19:28). Luke referred to Jesus’ selection of the apostles in Acts 1:2, and the listing of their names in 1:13 quietly affirms that only eleven remained to pray in expectation of the Spirit. Peter’s address to the company of 120 believers demonstrated from the Old Testament Scriptures (Psalm 69:25; 109:8) that Judas’ treachery was included in God’s plan for the suffering of his Messiah. In the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension, Jesus had taught his disciples to interpret the whole Old Testament (law, prophets, Psalms and other writings) as reaching fulfillment in his suffering and resurrection, and the proclamation of forgiveness through him to all nations (Luke 24:44-49). Jesus’ teaching was bearing fruit in the way that his apostles had come to see the Bible’s Christ-centered focus. Because the twelfth apostle would share with the eleven the privilege of testifying to Jesus’ resurrection, he must be one who traveled in their company from John’s baptism through the events of Jesus’ death and resurrection appearances. Because apostles were chosen directly by Jesus (unlike elders and deacons, whose calling to office is recognized by the members of the congregation—see, for example, Acts 6:3), when the field was narrowed to two, Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias, the believers asked the Lord Jesus himself to signal his choice through the casting of lots, an Old Testament method of asking God for direct revelation of his will.⁵ Although God gave new revelation in words and miracles throughout the lifetimes of the apostles, this is the last example in the Bible of God’s people seeking his direction through the casting of lots. This is the first of several prayers of the church recorded in Acts, demonstrating believers’ dependence on the risen Lord to direct their service to his cause and kingdom. In their petition, they acknowledge that Jesus, who

chooses his apostles, knows the secrets of every human heart—as only God himself can (1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:10; Mark 2:8). Christ revealed his choice of Matthias, who replaced Judas as a witness to the resurrection. The church’s leadership was complete, prepared for the climax of Christ’s exaltation in his outpouring of the Holy Spirit on his people.

As Peter’s sermon at Pentecost explains (Acts 2:33), the descent of the Spirit on the expectant church is really the climax of Jesus’ coronation-enthronement celebration. In the Old Testament we read of the Spirit’s involvement in creation (Genesis 1:2) and then of his empowering judges (Judges 3:10), prophets (Numbers 24:2), and kings (1 Samuel 16:13) for their leadership roles. When God distributed his Spirit to Israel’s elders to enable them to judge wisely, Moses expressed the longing that God would place his Spirit on all his people (Numbers 11:29). In Joel 2:28-29, Moses’ wish became God’s promise for the last days. Those last days had arrived through Jesus’ saving mission to earth and triumphant return to heaven.

Three observable signs confirmed the Spirit’s arrival: the sound of a mighty wind (in both Hebrew and Greek the word “spirit” also means “wind”), the sight of tongues of fire resting on each believer, and the announcement of God’s mighty works in the various languages of the peoples of the ancient world, across the Roman Empire and even beyond. The tongues of fire, like the pillar of fire over the tabernacle in the wilderness, showed that God was indwelling his “sanctuary”—not of skins or tapestries, wood or gold, but of living people renewed by his grace (1 Peter 2:4-5). The tongues of the nations signaled the expansion of God’s redemptive realm from its focus on Israel to embrace all earth’s peoples through the gospel. This miraculous gift foreshadowed the faithful labors of linguists and translators, who still labor today toward the goal that all people everywhere can hear and read God’s Word in their own tongues.

Peter’s sermon placed the questions and recent history of his hearers in the context of the Scriptures, and thus drew their hearts and minds to recognize who Jesus is and what he has done. The testimonies that sounded to native Judeans like drunken mumbling were actually God’s gift of prophetic speech to all his people, male and female, young and old, in fulfillment of Joel 2. The rejection of Jesus by his own people and his execution by lawless Romans (at the Jews’ instigation) was central to “*the definite plan and foreknowledge of God*” for providing salvation. But because of Jesus’ complete purity, death could not keep its grip on him. He was raised from the dead without seeing corruption, as David foretold in Psalm 16. David also foresaw that the Messiah who was to come would occupy his royal throne—not merely an earthly throne in Jerusalem, but the heavenly throne at God’s right hand (Psalm 110).

Since “*God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified,*” Peter could promise his heart-stricken hearers that God’s grace would grant them forgiveness and the Holy Spirit as they repented and received baptism in Jesus’ name, humbly depending on the One whom they had so recently rejected.

The Spirit’s descent at Pentecost is the final component of the watershed complex of events (including Jesus’ death, resurrection, ascension) that usher the church from the age of promise into the age of redemptive fulfillment.

Luke follows this event with an extended summary (Acts 2:42-47), the first of several in Acts,⁶ which profiles the ongoing life and growth of the church in the aftermath of the Spirit’s arrival in power. Having been born into God’s family through Peter’s gospel preaching, in the ensuing weeks the thousands of new believers were nourished in the faith by the apostles’ teaching. Their devotion to “the fellowship” took expression in their sharing resources, regarding personal property as held “in common,”⁷ to be liquidated to serve others as needs arose (Acts 2:44-45). While they often ate meals together in homes (Acts 2:46), the high point of their table fellowship was “*the breaking of the bread,*” the Lord’s Supper instituted by Jesus to strengthen our trust in the saving benefits of his sacrificed body and blood.⁸ Believers’ devotion to “the prayers” included not only the praises and petitions that they offered to God in their meetings in homes but also their participation in the worship of the temple in

Jerusalem (Acts 2:46). The next incident recorded by Luke occurred as two apostles attended the temple “at the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1). Christians’ awareness of the presence of Christ’s Spirit in their midst found expression in a corporate life of constant speaking to God as well as listening to his Word.

The church grew not only in spiritual maturity but also in numerical strength, as “*the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*” Church growth was not the result of their strategies or skills, but of the sovereign work of the Lord himself, as his Spirit used his Word to reach and transform hearts. Yet the characteristics of the early church—its commitment to God’s Word, to tangible expressions of love and compassion, to the sacraments, and to dependent prayer—were the means employed by the good Shepherd to call his sheep by name and gather them into his sheepfold. Let us pray that by his Spirit’s application of the gospel to our hearts, Christ will make our churches, villages, and schools communities in which his truth is spoken and heard, and his love lived in relationships and actions.

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Notes

1. See Acts 23:26; 24:2; 26:25.
2. See Luke 1:2; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15.
3. Acts 1:24-25; 2:42; 4:23-31; 6:6; 9:40.
4. Matt. 27:5 speaks of Judas’ suicide by hanging, whereas Acts 1:18 says he fell headlong so that his inner organs spilled out of his torso. Acts seems to describe the aftermath of Judas’ hanging, when his corpse, bloated in the Mediterranean heat, ruptured upon hitting the ground as the cord suspending the body broke or was cut. Scripture preserves these disgusting details to reinforce the divine curse that rested on the betrayer of Christ.
5. See Joshua 8:16; Proverbs 16:33; Jonah 1:7; see Numbers 27:21.
6. See Acts 4:32-35; 5:12-16; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 13:49; 16:5; 19:20. See Johnson (1997), 9-10.
7. In Greek “fellowship” (*koinonia*) and “common” (that is “shared,” *koinos*) have a common root. See Johnson (1997), 70-79.
8. See Luke 22:19; 24:35; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16.

Day Three

1. How is the role of the Holy Spirit in New Testament times the same as it was in the Old Testament? See 1 Peter 1:10-12; John 16:12-15; John 3:3-8; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Galatians 4:28-29.
2. How is the Holy Spirit’s role different in New Testament times from his role in the Old Testament period? See Numbers 11:29; Joel 2:28-29; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.
3. How do believers experience the Holy Spirit today?

Day Four

1. In Acts 1:16, Peter says that the Scripture had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, which the Holy Spirit spoke through David. How many other places can you find in these two chapters where Old Testament Scriptures are fulfilled?
2. God used many authors, writing over hundreds of years, to give us our Holy Bible. In what ways are these authors’ many stories really only aspects of one story?

Day Five

1. What does Acts 2 tell us about who can be saved?
2. What do we need to do to obtain salvation?
3. What has the Lord done and what does he continue to do for our salvation?

For Weekend Reflection or the Staff Meeting Days Six and Seven

1. Sing “Breathe on Me, Breath of God,” *Rafiki Hymnal*.
2. The evangelical church in our day has trouble with the Holy Spirit, some branches overemphasizing his gifts while others seem to ignore his work altogether. How should we relate to this third Person of the Godhead?
3. As you reflect on Luke’s portrait of the church’s life together in the days after Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47), do you see ways that your *fellowship* could be deepened with the believers that God has set around you? How about your life of *prayer* together?

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ACTS LESSON 1: JESUS ASCENDS TO SEND THE PROMISED SPIRIT

PASSAGE:

Acts 1:1 – 2:47

MEMORY VERSE:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

DAY ONE: READ LUKE 1:1-4 AND ACTS 1:1-8.

Principle/Lessons: Jesus tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Questions: Why did Luke write the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts?

DAY TWO: READ ACTS 1:8-26.

Principle/Lessons: The believers pray while they wait for the Holy Spirit and select Matthias as the twelfth apostle.

Questions: What command did Jesus give to the disciples in Acts 1:8? What promise did he give them? What did the disciples and other believers do while they waited for the Holy Spirit?

DAY THREE: READ ACTS 2:1-13.

Principle/Lessons: The Holy Spirit comes upon the believers on the day of Pentecost with miraculous signs.

Questions: What three signs pointed to the arrival of the Holy Spirit? What did they mean?

DAY FOUR: READ ACTS 2:14-41.

Principle/Lessons: Peter preaches, and 3,000 repent and follow Jesus.

Questions: What did Peter do that was another sign that the Holy Spirit had come? How did the people respond when Peter told them that Jesus, the man they had crucified, was Lord and Christ?

DAY FIVE: READ ACTS 2:42-47.

Principle/Lessons: The believers grow in numbers as they learn from the apostles.

Questions: How did the church grow in numbers? What was the explanation for the great change that took place in the lives of the people?

DEVOTIONAL POINTS:

In the Gospel of Luke, Luke recorded what Jesus began to do. In the Book of Acts, he describes what Jesus continued to do and teach through his Holy Spirit. Acts 1 picks up where the story left off in Luke 24. For forty days after he rose from the dead, Jesus spent time with the disciples, then he ascended to heaven with the promise that he would return. He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. The disciples returned to Jerusalem where they spent their time in prayer. They needed to choose someone to replace Judas. The people prayed and Matthias was chosen. Now the apostles were ready for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came with three signs. The fire represented the presence of God who came to live within each believer, who became the sanctuary or dwelling place of God. The sudden ability to speak a language they had never spoken before pointed to Jesus' command to carry the gospel throughout the world. Peter boldly preached about Jesus and about 3,000 people believed and were baptized. God's church was growing according to God's plan and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

CATECHISM:

Question: What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?

Answer: The fourth commandment forbids the omission, or careless performance, of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

HYMN:

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:22

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life a - new,
2. Breathe on me, Breath of God, un - til my heart is pure,
3. Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am whol - ly thine,
4. Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I nev - er die,

that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.
un - til my will is one with thine, to do and to en - dure.
un - til this earth - ly part of me glows with thy fire di - vine.
but live with thee the per - fect life of thine e - ter - ni - ty.

Edwin Hatch, 1878

TRENTHAM S.M.
Robert Jackson, 1888

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