

**The Crucial Link: Small Group Discussion**  
Acts 2:1-41

**Warm-up question:**

- What is one of your favorite apps? If you don't use apps, what is one technological innovation that has made a difference in your life?

**Read Acts 2:1-13, then discuss the following questions.**

- Background: Pastor Josh described how the Jewish festival of Pentecost had come to take on dual meanings in 1<sup>st</sup>-century Judaism. 50 days after Passover, this festival was initially instituted in Deut. 16 as a celebration of the grain harvest. But in the centuries just prior to the birth of Jesus, it had also come to be a time to commemorate God's giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai.
- How can you see these two Jewish meanings of Pentecost having symbolic significance for what happened with the coming of the Holy Spirit?
- Read Jeremiah 31:31-34, to get a sense for one of the prophecies of the Holy Spirit's coming. Why was there such anticipation of the coming of the Spirit?
- In Acts 2:2-4, three extraordinary things happen that indicate the coming of the Holy Spirit. What are they, and what do they signify? (Leaders, if you were not present on Sunday, you will have to listen to the sermon audio to get the full significance of the sound, the fire, and the foreign languages).
- **Application:** Josh said that the tongues of fire, resting on every believer, are indicative that the warmth of God's presence can now come and live in every person who trusts in Jesus, without them being consumed by God's holy presence. In other words, **the Holy Spirit offers to bring God's love from your head down to your heart.**
  - How is it possible have the right beliefs about Jesus without experiencing the warmth of God's love?
  - Have you experienced God's love becoming real to your heart, through the work of the Holy Spirit?
- What would it have been like for someone who was visiting Jerusalem from another nation—who didn't speak Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek—to suddenly hear another person speaking in his/her language? What fact jumped out to these observers, per v. 7? Why does this geographical reference matter?
- In vv. 9-11, Luke lists places that were represented by people visiting Jerusalem, who were hearing the disciples speak in other languages. He is moving, with his mind's eye, from East to West, making the point that people of many languages and backgrounds were present, and that in a sense, the entire known world was represented there.
- Why is it so significant that the very first time the Christian gospel was proclaimed publicly, it was spoken in practically every language?
- What is your reaction as you read about the believers speaking in other "tongues," or languages?
- If you have time, read Genesis 11:1-9, then discuss. Pastor Josh said that what happened at Pentecost (Acts 2) was a reversal of what happened at Babel. How is this true?

**Read Acts 2:14-36, then discuss the following.**

- From a "Big Story" perspective, what is Peter trying to get his hearers to see with this "sermon?" (That what they have just seen is not some one-off, random, alcohol-induced phenomenon, but rather, the long-promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit.)
- What is significant about the Joel 2 prophecy, quoted in vv. 17-21?
  - What are the indicators, in the words from Joel, which would point to the fact that the Holy Spirit had come?
  - How is this happening before people's eyes at Pentecost?
  - Should these same events be a part of our Christian experience as well? Why or why not? Have you seen any of these occurring?
- In vv. 22-24, as Peter recounts the events of Jesus' life, he speaks as though his hearers are familiar with the details; indeed, as if they witnessed many of these events. He goes so far as to say that these hearers had witnessed Jesus' miracles, and in some way, had been responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. How would you have expected his audience to respond?
- In vv. 25-28, why does Peter reference David's words from Psalm 16? (Once again, to show that the old prophecies of a Savior who would defeat death had been fulfilled in Jesus).

- What is the significance of Peter's claim in v. 32?
  - Pastor Josh said that if his claim were not true, the Christian movement would have been squashed right then and there. Why is this true?
  - Why did the movement not only survive, but even increase in number by 3000 people?
  - How does this fact make you feel about your Christian faith? (It should give you great confidence!)
- Note on v. 36: Jesus did not *become* the Messiah and Lord at the time of his ascension. *It is rather that now God exalted him to be in reality and power what he already was by right* (John Stott).
- Application: At Pentecost, **The Holy Spirit enabled unsophisticated people to tell the story of Jesus in world-changing ways.** Pastor Josh stated that what happened through the disciples and specifically through Peter is what God wants to do through you—to enable you to tell the story of Jesus in world-changing ways. How do you feel about this idea?
  - How is Peter's experience encouraging to you, given what we last saw of him on the night when Jesus was betrayed?

**Read Acts 2:37-41, then discuss the following.**

- When the audience is moved by Peter's sermon, and they ask what an appropriate response would be, Peter lists two aspects of the necessary response. What are they?
  - Repentance: re-orienting your life around Jesus (which involves turning away from sin and toward him). Specifically, these hearers who had rejected Jesus were being called to change their mind about him, and acknowledge him as risen Savior and Lord.
  - Baptism: a public expression that they were now submitting to the Savior whom they had recently rejected.
- For anyone who repented and was baptized in the name of Jesus, two gifts were promised. What were they? (See vv. 38-39). For whom were these promises available? What has been your personal experience of these promises?
- How was Pentecost a crucial link in the Big Story? How is this experience of the Holy Spirit crucial to our experience of God's redemptive story?

**Further Application:**

- As Pastor Josh mentioned, Peter's own life had been dramatically changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. How has your life been impacted by the Holy Spirit?
- What is an appropriate response for you to the coming of the Holy Spirit as described in Acts 2? Pastor Josh mentioned three very clear responses that are in line with what Peter says:
  - Turn away from sin and place your faith in Jesus
  - Be baptized as a public expression of your faith (we will have baptisms again, most likely in June)
  - Be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Do you think that one of these responses is appropriate for you?
  - Hint: the last should be fitting for any of us, even if we have taken the other two steps in the past. In Eph. 5:18, Paul writes, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." He states this command in the Greek continuous sense, meaning, "Go on being filled with the Spirit." In other words, the filling of the Holy Spirit is not a one-time event in life. It is to be a regular part of the life of a Christian! What do you think of this?
- How might our church look different if we collectively were more open to the filling of the Holy Spirit? How would this impact our part in the ongoing story of Jesus, to bring his good news to our community, region, and world?

**Pray**

- Spend some time sharing with one another about your needs, and pray earnestly for one another.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to move in our church family in a powerful way, leading us to the people and endeavors that are valuable to him, and empowering our work in his name. Pray for the Spirit to do such a work among us, in our day, that people in our lives and community would be prompted to ask, "What then shall we do?"