



First Baptist Church Selmer

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHURCH • SPIRIT-FILLED • ACTS 1:12-14; 2:1-3 • 8/6/2023

MAIN POINT

It is through prayer both privately and corporately that God sends the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower His church to live on mission.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Describe a time recently when you felt unusually powerful. Maybe you test-drove a new car, walked or ran farther than you usually do, or had a breakthrough parenting moment. What was that moment of empowerment like for you?

How can a moment of empowerment encourage you to keep moving forward? How can the same empowerment cause you to experience fear and hesitation?

We all like to feel empowered from time to time, and that's not always a bad thing. It's a feeling that can motivate and encourage us to work harder than usual. However, when it comes to living sent on mission for God, we often feel anything but empowered. This is due in large part to the fact that we're trying to live sent out of our own abilities. As we take a look at the coming of the Holy Spirit and His impact on the early church, we will learn that the church devoted themselves to prayer and in return, received empowerment from the Spirit to live on mission.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 1:12-14

12 "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers." (ESV)

What had just occurred prior to this passage? (Acts 1:9)

Why were the disciples all together in one place? What were they doing?

Acts 1:8 records Jesus' final message to His disciples prior to His ascension to heaven. He told them to go, but He also told them to wait. The Spirit was exactly the one for whom they were waiting. Jesus knew a truth that is important for us to understand—our sending is to be rooted in and dependent upon the Holy Spirit's leading. The Spirit empowers us to live sent every day; apart from Him, our mission lacks purpose.

The disciples had assembled together in an upstairs room in a house in Jerusalem. This would function as a private place to collect themselves and spend time in prayer. The longer the disciples prayed together, the more unified they become.

Why would prayer have been of utmost importance during this time?

How important is prayer within churches today?

It was a praying church that received the Holy Spirit and is a praying church that continues to receive the Holy Spirit. If a church experiences disunity, it is likely the result of a lack of prayer. The Holy Spirit descends upon a church that prays. It is asinine to believe that a prayer-less church would receive blessings from God therefore, Luke emphasizes that the disciples were devoted and united in their prayers which resulted in receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Why is prayer still the pinnacle of a Spirit-filled church today?

How can your small group place more emphasis on the power of prayer?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 2:1-3

1 "When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them."
(ESV)

What stands out to you about Luke's description of this moment?

What do you think was the purpose of the sound of a violent rushing wind?

What do you think was the purpose of the sight of the flames of fire?

The wind in verse 2 was not actual wind, but the sound of violent wind, likely deafening and filling the whole house. The sight was like flames of fire that separated and rested on each person there. Both the sound of the wind and what seemed to be flames of fire are common biblical allusions to God's presence. They were commissioned, but the disciples waited for God's presence to come upon them before going. This demonstrates the essential nature of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all believers. The Holy Spirit came upon sent believers then—and comes to sent believers now—to empower us to share the gospel. The Spirit filled the disciples so that they could convey the gospel in every language it needed to be heard in that day.

What are some of the obstacles in everyday life that keep you from experiencing the effects of the Spirit's power? How can you be more intentional in removing these obstacles?

What are some ways you have experienced the Holy Spirit's power in your life?

What does the Holy Spirit's power have to do with living on mission every day?

The Spirit comes upon all believers and empowers them to live sent lives. In a very literal sense, the Holy Spirit brings us from death to life everlasting (Rom. 8:11). In a symbolic sense, the Holy Spirit brings us from death to life while serving Christ here on earth in the body. He prompts us to share the gospel. He gives us the words to speak. He fills us with

the courage we need. He takes our words and penetrates the hearts of those listening. We are powerless to live out Christ's commands without Him.

We need the Holy Spirit to lead us in order to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. It will come, however, only through the prayers of His people both privately and corporately. The disciples needed God to send the Holy Spirit then and we need God to send the Holy Spirit to us today. But, God's blessing comes to a praying people.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

The Spirit's movement at Pentecost was a miraculous and awe-inspiring event. What does the movement of the Spirit look like today?

When you think about living sent, would you say that you rely upon the Spirit's leading or your own ability?

Discuss some specific ways the Spirit helps us in the way we link together, in the way we learn, and in the way we live.

PRAYER

Thank God for His Holy Spirit. Invite Him to make you more aware of His presence and experience the glory of His goodness in your life every day.

COMMENTARY

| ACTS 1:12-14

12. Only at the end of the story of the ascension do we learn that it happened at 'the Mount of Olives'. In the parallel account in Luke 24:50, Jesus is said to lead the disciples to Bethany, which was a village lying on the east slope of the hill (cf. Luke 19:29). A sabbath day's journey was about 1.2 km ($\frac{3}{4}$ mile); the expression is a Jewish one and is not meant

to imply that the event took place on a Sabbath. The point is rather that the ascension (like the resurrection appearances of Jesus in Luke 24) took place in the near vicinity of Jerusalem.

13. The disciples had established themselves in an upstairs room in a house in Jerusalem; this would give them privacy (cf. 9:37) and would be suitable for prayer. Whether this particular room should be identified with that where the Last Supper was held (Luke 22:12—a different Greek word for ‘room’ is used) and located in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark (12:12), cannot be stated with any certainty. Luke gives a list of the eleven apostles at this point, which corresponds with his earlier list in Luke 6:14–16 and demonstrates that the intimate disciples of the earthly Jesus formed the core of the church.

14. If the Holy Spirit is the divine gift which empowers and guides the church, the corresponding human attitude towards God is prayer. It is as the church prays that it receives the Spirit. So at the outset, Luke emphasizes that the disciples spent the time waiting for the Spirit in an attitude of continuous and united prayer (cf. 2:46f; 4:24ff.). They included among their number the women who were disciples of Jesus (Luke 8:2f.; 23:49; 24:10), at least some of whom had seen the empty tomb, and in particular Mary, the mother of Jesus, together with his brothers (Mark 6:3; John 7:3–5). The family of Jesus was thus among those who became part of the church, and one of them, James, was to assume a leading position in it.

I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 66–67.

| ACTS 2:1-3

1. Pentecost is the New Testament name for the Feast of Weeks, when the wheat harvest was celebrated by a one-day festival during which special sacrifices were offered (Exod. 23:16; Lev. 23:15–21; Deut. 16:9–12). Just as other festivals were associated with important events in Israel’s history (e.g. Passover with the exodus from Egypt), so in Judaism, the festival was associated with the renewal of the covenant made with Noah and then with Moses (Jubilees 6); in second-century Judaism Pentecost was regarded as the day when the law was given at Sinai. It is interesting that there was a rabbinic tradition that the law was promulgated by God in the languages of the seventy nations of the world, but we

cannot be certain that this tradition was current in the first century. The disciples were still in Jerusalem; some scholars think that they were in the temple, in view of the word 'house' in verse 2, but 'house', used on its own like this, cannot mean the temple. The whole company of 120 people is doubtless meant, and not just the reconstituted twelve apostles.

2–3. Since elsewhere the Spirit is likened to wind, and the word used (Greek *pneuma*) can have either meaning, it is not surprising that the first of two symbols which accompanied his arrival was a noise like that of wind; Luke describes it as almost palpable when he says that it filled all the house. The language, it should be noted, is that of analogy—a sound like that of wind—and indicates that we have to do with a supernatural occurrence. The symbolism is reminiscent of Old Testament theophanies (2 Sam. 22:16; Job 37:10; Ezek. 13:13): the wind is a sign of God's presence as Spirit. A second symbol was fire. A flame divided itself into several tongues, so that each rested upon one of the persons present. Again the description is analogical—as of fire. And again we are reminded of Old Testament theophanies, especially of that at Sinai (Exod. 19:18), but the primary background is probably John the Baptist's association of the Spirit with fire as a means of cleansing and judgment (Luke 3:16).

I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 73.