



Date: 8th & 15th June 2025

Theme: The Meaning of Pentecost

Bible Readings: Acts 2:1-21, 37-41

and Romans 12:1-2

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PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please remember to contact your group beforehand to remind them of date and time of the meeting and make yourself familiar with all the material and Bible passages. Also, hold in prayer each member of the group, including yourself as you prepare and lead this session.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before the session)

The main Bible passage set for Pentecost Sunday (8th June) is **Acts 2:1-21** describing the dramatic events which happened on that first Christian Pentecost and also the first part of Peter's amazing sermon to the crowd that day. If you have time, it is suggested that you also read at home the rest of Peter's sermon (**verses 22-36**). Then, **Acts 2:37-41**, which is largely the response of the crowd to the sermon and Peter's answer.

The other Bible reading chosen for this session is **Romans 12:1-2**. This is not normally used as a Pentecost reading, but verse two is about change ("be transformed") and one of the features of Pentecost (and the work of the Holy Spirit) is change. Perhaps you could reflect at home on your experiences of changes in your life and also changes in your church, both of which may be the work of the Holy Spirit. *What positive changes do you think God has made, or is making, in you or in the church? Where do you think God's transforming Spirit might be at work?*

STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER

Almighty God,
Thank you for the promise made by Jesus
that He would ask His Father to give another Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, to be with His disciples for ever – a promise fulfilled at Pentecost.
Thank you that the promise was not just for His disciples then, but for all believers for all time.
May the Holy Spirit guide our thoughts and discussion today
to a deeper understanding of God at work in our lives and in the life and mission of the Church.
Come Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

FINDING OUR ROOTS

In groups of 3 or 4, please read **Romans 12:1-2** and discuss the following:

Some people relish change. Others feel threatened by it, even when change is likely to be advantageous. *How do you view change in your life?*

Discuss important changes that you have experienced in your life. Perhaps you could share examples from your own journey of faith and life in the Church, or changes you have noticed in churches or denominations over the years. *How do you think God is involved in the changes?*

READING THE SCRIPTURES - with background information

Read together the Bible passage: Acts 2:1-21 & 37-41

The Jewish Festival of Pentecost (Festival of Weeks) was held seven weeks after Passover each year, primarily as a thanksgiving for the first fruits of the wheat harvest but later associated with the remembrance of the Law (Torah) given by God to Moses. This is one of three festivals when Jewish men were expected to return to the Temple in Jerusalem to worship and make offerings. **Acts 2:9-11** gives a flavour of where the Jewish pilgrims travelled from – including North Africa and modern-day Turkey, Iran and Iraq, with some coming from further afield.

It was on that day that God chose to send the Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus (e.g. **John 14:16-17**). The disciples of Jesus, about 120 of them (including the twelve Apostles), were together near the Temple when the Holy Spirit came to them in a violent wind and, as an outward sign that they were filled with the Spirit, tongues like fire rested on each one of them. The first sign to the large crowd that the disciples had been spiritually-gifted was when Peter stood and spoke to the crowd with such power and authority (similar to when Jesus had often spoke with great authority, through the same Spirit). Peter quoted the prophet **Joel** and other scriptures as he spoke about Jesus and what God was doing. The next gift to show itself was the gift of 'tongues' (languages). There were a wide range of languages spoken by the gathered people, but they each heard Peter's amazing sermon (and the words of the other apostles) in their own language, with understanding. ('Tongues' would be a spiritual gift of some controversy, even in the early church, as we can read about in **1 Corinthians, chapters 12-14**.)

Many people in the crowd wanted to know how to respond to his sermon, and Peter replied: "*Repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (**v.38**). About 3,000 people were baptized that day in response (**v.41**), and God added to this number daily (**v.47**). For us, an important verse is **39** where we can see that the gift of the Spirit was not just for those present, but for all Christians for all time, including us! The Holy Spirit within us will be available to us at all times and has so much to offer, including gifts that enable us to carry out God's will in our church and community.

DIGGING DEEPER

The events of the first Christian Pentecost were dramatic. *What do you think the feelings, thoughts and motivations were of the different groups present that day – the 120 or so disciples; those wanting to be baptized; and other Jews in the crowd?*

What do you think the role of all the disciples or apostles (not just Peter taking the leading role) would have been that day, including the baptism of the three thousand?

The first Christian Pentecost heralded the birth of the worldwide church. Many present that day would take the good news to their home nation. *How did the Disciples start the process of obeying Jesus' "Great Commission" (**Matthew 28:18-20**)? How can we continue it today?*

Christians today have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. *How does the Spirit impact your life? What particular gifts of the Spirit have you or others received? What are the differences between the 'gifts' and the 'fruit' of the Holy Spirit?* Perhaps some in your group would like to share their experiences.

Are there any other issues on Pentecost or the Holy Spirit that you would like the group to discuss?

PRAYING TOGETHER

In a time of sharing and open prayer together, bring to God the needs of your group, community or church. Mention people or situations on your hearts that need God's healing or transformation.

Pray for those who would like the Holy Spirit to help them to grow in faith or understanding.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to awaken the nations to the needs of the world, and to bring greater unity in the worldwide Church.

As a prayer, sing or say '**Breath on Me, Breath of God**' by Edwin Hatch (*Singing the Faith* **370**).

Conclude by saying **The Lord's Prayer** together.