

SERMON SERIES

DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 2: ACTS 2:1-41

Vance Havner once said, “We are not going to move this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God.”

The early church had none of the things that we think are so essential for success today—buildings, money, political influence, social status—and yet the church won multitudes to Christ and saw many churches established throughout the Roman world. Why? Because the Church had the power of the Holy Spirit energizing its ministry. They were a rag-tag group of disciples ignited by the Spirit of God. That same Holy Spirit power is available to us today and can make us more effective witnesses for Jesus.

If you remember from Acts 1:4-5, forty days after the resurrection Jesus told the disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Ten days later, as Acts chapter two begins, the disciples were patiently waiting together on the day of Pentecost. (The name Pentecost means 50 because it was the fiftieth day after the Feast of Weeks in Leviticus 23:15-22). The better we understand the Holy Spirit’s working at Pentecost, the better we will be able to relate to Him and experience His power.

Keep in mind, the Holy Spirit was active long before Pentecost. Genesis 1:1-2 tells us the Holy Spirit was present in Creation. We also know He was active all throughout Old Testament history (see Judges 6:34; 1 Samuel 16:13), and even in Christ’s life and ministry as well (Luke 1:30-37; 4:1, 14; Acts 10:38). However, now there would be two changes: the Spirit would dwell in people and not just come on them, and His presence would be permanent, not temporary (John 14:16-17). Also, the Holy Spirit could not have come sooner, for it was essential that Jesus die, be raised from the dead, and return to heaven before the Spirit could be given (John 7:37-39; 16:7ff).

According to a popular commentary, Acts chapter 2 can be summarized as follows: The Spirit showed up and the people heard the sound of rushing wind and saw tongues of fire. The Spirit baptized and filled the believers, and then spoke as they praised God in various languages. The Spirit empowered Peter to preach, and then He convicted the listeners so that 3,000 of them trusted Christ and were saved. What an incredible start to the fledgling church, and all of it due to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

on your own, with family, or with your small group

Pentecost is the only time in Acts when the Spirit shows up with wind and fire. What was the point of these sights and sounds?

Why was it appropriate that the Holy Spirit showed up on Pentecost, the day when Jews celebrated the giving of the covenant under the Law of Moses? See Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Romans 7:6.

They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, or “tongues.” How do you understand the concept of speaking in tongues?

How do you know if you are filled with the Spirit (see Romans 8:9-10 and Ephesians 1:13-14)? Does it change how you behave (see Acts 1:8; Romans 8:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13)?

Read Acts 2:22-24. How can you use the key facts in that part of Peter’s speech as an outline for evangelism?

This was the same Peter who denied Jesus three times on the night He was arrested. Now, weeks later, he’s boldly preaching the gospel and people are responding in droves. What changed? And can this happen to you as well?