

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Empowered by the Spirit? Who? Us?
Acts 2:1-16, 22-24, 36-41

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Empowered by the Spirit? Who? Us?

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering and Worship time Leaders:

Prepare the words to the music you have chosen. If you are unfamiliar with any of the suggested songs, please feel free to substitute music that is more suitable for your group's taste.

Bible Study Leader:

For the Youth: Gather blank paper and markers for the Youth application time, **Youth!!! Take Ten.**

Music sources:

“Spirit of the Living God”, CCLI #23488

“Sweet, Sweet Spirit”, CCLI # 18204

“Breathe on Me”, CCLI # 53087

“God of Wonders”, CCLI #3118757

“Above All”, CCLI #2672885

“Open the Eyes of My Heart”, CCLI #2298355

“Breathe”, CCLI # 1874117

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Empowered by the Spirit? Who? Us?*****Acts 2:1-16, 22-24, 36-41****Focal Text**

Acts 2:1-16, 22-24, 36-41

Background Text

Acts 2

Main Idea

As Jesus' followers received the Spirit's power, Peter called individuals in the listening crowd to repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Question to Explore

To what extent am I receptive to being empowered by the Spirit to witness for and serve Christ?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to clarify the meaning for their lives of being empowered by the Spirit.

Gathering together:

Assign one person (man, woman, or child) to greet people as they arrive. Consider playing background music softly as they come in.

Sing one or two hymns or choruses (see music resources) as a signal to begin the gathering time and to prepare for First Thoughts.

Ask volunteers to answer the question: "Did your grandparents know the Lord? Did your great grandparents? How far back does your Christian lineage go? Are you the first in line?"

Say: "Sometimes we forget about our forefathers and about the way their lives influenced ours. Do you ever wonder if one of them prayed for you? Have you prayed for your grandchildren and great grandchildren who will follow after you? Today, during our gathering time, we are going to take a brief history lesson."

First thoughts:

In the late 1500s, evangelical Christians across Europe found themselves objects of persecution by established organizations of Christian churches and their leaders, as well as by pastors, both catholic and protestant. Some came into contact with each other in Holland, after fleeing from such torment in Germany, Austria, and other places. Their contact turned into discussions in order to find out what they had in common. Many discovered that their tribulations stemmed from a commitment to the idea that every Christian believer stands alone before God, with no pastor, priest, or organization serving as mediator or even authority between the believer and their Lord.

Many fervently believed that the Holy Spirit, living and working in the life of every Christian and guiding the believer to rightly interpret the Scriptures, is all that is needed to live out one's life before God. Confirmation of one's commitment to this belief and personal faith in Christ should be baptism of the believer by immersion in water. The power of the Holy Spirit, in one's own individual life, formed the basis of the developing doctrines that we now refer to as "The Priesthood of the Believer" and "Soul Competency." That is, every believer is, by Biblical definitions, a saint and a priest, regardless of race, sex, age, social status, or any other human differences. And every believer is responsible for deciding his or her eternal destiny and the practice of his or her own faith in this life.

Granted, the Calvinists and Lutherans of that day stated a belief in those things. However, some of the practice of the concepts was rapidly being lost in the generations of late sixteenth-century Europe. Loyalty to the church, and in turn, to the pastors and leaders of those churches, had become all-important. Such loyalty was seen as necessary to protect each "form" of the Church from the dangers of political and religious adversaries. Dependency on the Holy Spirit in a person's life, for interpreting Scripture and guiding one's life, was perceived to imply disloyalty to church leadership. This freedom in the Holy Spirit was simply not acceptable by established church leaders.

In and around Holland, those families who pursued such ideas began referring to themselves as "New Lights." Many of them were young adults. Church leaders saw them as rebels and a danger to the then accepted reform movements among both protestant and catholic Christianity.

With the complicity of secular authorities, the crackdown on the "New Lights" was brutal. In Holland, between the years AD 1590 and 1600, more than two thousand New Lights, many of them young parents, were burned at the stake or otherwise tortured to death. Their children were given to families who were considered more "faithful" to the established Churches. But, even facing loss and death, many New Lights refused to give up the freedom they had discovered in the Holy Spirit, and their numbers continued to grow.

By 1611, some of the New Lights were forming Mennonite, Baptist, and Brethren churches. Different patterns of belief, forms of church organization, and patterns of worship emerged. One thing that they held in common would endure among them for over four hundred years, until these present days: church leaders and their officials among those groups would never again hold the power over church members as they had before. The priesthood of the believer and soul competency would remain the primary guides to faith and practice for millions of evangelical Christians through the years.

Today, we will study the Scriptures to discover how the Holy Spirit empowers us to live fully in Christ and boldly share the Good News of the Gospel with people who have not received salvation through Jesus Christ.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Close in prayer, asking the Lord to open your hearts and minds to what he will be teaching you today.

Share any announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation.

Close the gathering time by singing “**Open the Eyes of My Heart.**”

Break time! Take five minutes to serve refreshments and allow children to use the washroom.

During the break, hand out materials that the older preschoolers and younger children will use during the Bible study and worship times.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Empowered by the Spirit? Who? Us?

Focal Text

Acts 2:1-16, 22-24, 36-41

Background Text

Acts 2

Main Idea

As Jesus’ followers received the Spirit’s power, Peter called individuals in the listening crowd to repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Question to Explore

To what extent am I receptive to being empowered by the Spirit to witness for and serve Christ?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to clarify the meaning for their lives of being empowered by the Spirit.

Introduction to your personal study:

Many professionals such as teachers, hair stylists, lawyers, plumbers, and engineers, are required to pass specific exams in order to earn a license or certification to practice. Most of these licensed professions also require the practitioner to attend a number of continuing education classes, in order to stay current with new developments or methods in their profession. Similarly, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation; yet we need to be filled by the Spirit on an ongoing basis. In this session we will explore the initial baptism of the Holy Spirit on the first believers. Pray that we will be empowered to minister in our world today, and continue to be filled with His Spirit, day-by-day, hour-by-hour.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you as well.

Just prior to His ascension, Jesus directed His followers to await God’s promised gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). In obedience to His instruction, believers in Jesus were gathered in prayer on the feast of Pentecost (2:1). This traditional Jewish day of Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, was the second of three annual festivals that were set forth in Exodus 34:22 and Leviticus 23:15-21. It was celebrated seven full weeks or fifty days after Passover; therefore, it was given the name Pentecost, meaning fifty days (Leviticus 23:15,16). This festival was celebrated as a Sabbath, with rest from ordinary labour and the calling of a holy convocation (Leviticus 23:21). It was a feast of joy and thanksgiving for the completion of the harvest season. All able-bodied men were to be present at the sanctuary, and a special sacrifice was to be offered (Exodus 34:22, Leviticus 23:15-22).

Focusing on the Meaning:

Immersed in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Acts 2:1-4

On this historical Pentecost celebration, following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, his disciples and followers clung together awaiting the fulfillment of Jesus’ promised gift of the Father. Suddenly, those who gathered heard a noise like a rushing wind, which filled the whole house where they were gathered (Acts 2:2). Throughout Scripture, wind is symbolic of the incredible power and Spirit of God (Genesis 8:1, Exodus 14:21, and John 3:8).

Those who gathered also saw tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them (Acts 2:3). Like wind, Scriptural references often use fire to symbolize the presence and power of the Spirit (See Exodus 3:2). John the Baptizer prophesied that while he baptized with water, One was coming who would baptize with the Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16). God, the Trinity, came.

Gift of the Holy Spirit Acts 2:4

The spiritual baptism, foretold by John and promised by Jesus before His ascension, had come (Matthew 3:11, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4). As prophesied by Joel, all were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (Joel 2:28-32). Not just some, but all believers were filled with the Spirit. The Spirit came to prepare these believers for worldwide proclamation of the Gospel, as commissioned by Jesus (Acts 1:8). What a magnificent confirmation of their calling! Jesus declared that they would be His witnesses to all the world (Acts 1:8). Through the Holy Spirit, they are gifted to speak in all the dialects of the faithful; Jews gathered in Jerusalem, from the entire known world (2:5).

As we strive to understand our infinite God, and to explain His interaction with us, how thankful we are that He has provided His Word! In Paul's first letter, to the church at Corinth, God provided a fuller revelation of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12-14). In this letter, Paul explains that there are different spiritual gifts, just as there are different ministries; yet there is One God and Spirit who gives these gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Each manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good, to build up the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7). As believers, we should ask God to show us where He wants us to join Him in ministry. God, through His Spirit, has equipped different believers for different ministries and roles within His body (1 Corinthians 12:27-30). As we grow in our relationship with God and submit to His Lordship, we open up our lives for Him to work through us. Paul urges us all to find our place of ministry, and to eagerly desire the great gifts of faith, hope, and love, and especially the gift of prophesy (1 Corinthians 13-14).

Baptized with the Holy Spirit

As we explored in the previous session, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit means to be immersed with the presence and being of God. (See Congregational Assembly Guide, Acts: Sharing God's Good News with Everyone: Session One.) At the moment of salvation, the individual is "born of the Spirit," and the process of dying to self and living for Christ has begun (John 3:6). Throughout our faith journey, God's Spirit continues to grow us up as He manifests God's nature to us. Although we are *baptized* with the Holy Spirit when we become believers, we are called to be *filled* with the Spirit on an ongoing basis (Ephesians 5:18). This filling is essential for spiritual life and growth as, day-by-day, we confess our sins, receive God's forgiveness, and open our lives to God's instruction and ministry (1 John 1:9).

The Crowd's Amazement Acts 2:5-13

Devout Jews, from many lands, had gathered in Jerusalem at the temple to celebrate the Feast of Weeks (Acts 2:5). Over the years, opportunities for trade, economics, various invasions, persecutions, and deportations, had combined to spread the Jewish population from the Holy Land throughout the Roman Empire. Three times a year, devout Jewish males returned to Jerusalem to fulfill their temple obligations (Leviticus 23). These Jews were astonished to hear believers in Jesus, speaking in the native tongues of visitors' (Acts 2:11-12).

The devout, gathered in Jerusalem on this historic Pentecost, included Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, from the East on the Caspian Sea; residents of Mesopotamia and Judea, in Asia Minor; those from Cappadocia and Pontus in the North, on the Black Sea; both Jews and Gentile converts from Rome, in the West, bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, and worshippers from Libya in the southwest; and those from Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula on the Red Sea (Acts 2:9-11). Each pilgrim heard the promises of God, in his or her own language, spoken by Galileans!

Yet even in the face of this miraculous display of God's grace, there were scoffers who mocked the disciples, saying that they (the disciples) were speaking drunken gibberish (Acts 2:13).

Peter's Proclamation: "This is That!" Acts 2:14-21

Peter, the uneducated fisherman from Galilee, stood surrounded by his fellow believers, and then addressed the crowd (2:14). As a result of the Spirit's gift, a large crowd had gathered. Emboldened by the Spirit, Peter refuted the charge of drunkenness, declaring that the Prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled before their eyes (2:15-16). "This is that which Joel proclaimed!" he announced.

Peter then quoted the prophecy that, in the last days, God would pour out His Spirit on all people, and that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord would be saved (Joel 2:28-32). This first recorded Christian defense included the announcement that the Day of the Lord has dawned (Acts 2:17). The Last days began with Christ's first coming, and will end with His second coming.

Peter reviewed the basic facts in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, emphasizing the contrast between the crowd's rejection of Jesus, and God's resurrection and exultation of Him (2:22-24). "This Man of God, you, with the help of wicked men, nailed to a cross and put to death," he declared.

Next Peter outlined how Jesus alone could fulfill the messianic prophecies in Scripture (2:25-33). Therefore, he concluded, "...let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (2:34).

Clearly the Holy Spirit was working in the hearts of these devout listeners (John 16:8). Luke declared that they were "cut to the heart," and begged the believers to tell them what to do (Acts 2:37).

Call to All the House of Israel to Repent Acts 2:36-41

Peter invites his hearers to repent and be baptized as a testimony to the world of their commitment to Jesus (2:38). Water baptism of believers became an outward act or picture of true repentance within. God's Holy Spirit confirms and affirms the believer's salvation through His indwelling. Nearly three thousand accepted his message and were baptized (2:41). This common experience of salvation and baptism created a new community—the church of Jesus Christ was born.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Carefully reread the "Question to Explore" and the "Teaching Aim" found at the beginning of this Teacher Preparation section. Those two statements explicitly set out your responsibility as you lead the group toward the goal for this Bible study.

Jesus is Lord, the Name Above All Names! In his name, the name of Jesus, and only in his name, we are empowered by the Spirit of God (See Philippians 2:9).

For Personal Reflection:

1. **What have I learned from this study?**

2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: thirty-five minutes)

Empowered by the Spirit? Who? Us?

Regroup the church, after the Gathering Time, and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus, if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth or Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner**, at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader, who downloads the studies, for those suggestions).

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Acts 2:1-16, 22-24, 36-41

Background Text

Acts 2

Main Idea

As Jesus' followers had received the Spirit's power, Peter called individuals in the listening crowd to repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Question to Explore

To what extent am I receptive to being empowered by the Spirit to witness for and serve Christ?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to clarify the meaning for their lives of being empowered by the Spirit.

Connect with Life:

Say: "At the touch of a button we can have "daylight" any time of the day or night. Yet, only a few generations ago, the length of sunlight dictated working hours on any given day, and coal oil or candles were carefully rationed in the evenings. Yet even with our

electronic age, we have to remember to recharge the batteries on our cordless phones. As incomprehensible as it may be, God has sent His Spirit to empower His children. The Holy Spirit works to convict each individual of his or her sin and need for God. He then transforms each life at the moment of salvation and begins the work of regeneration or renewal. When we ask God to come into our lives, He literally sends His Spirit to dwell in us and make us new (2 Corinthians 5:17). God first sent His Spirit to indwell believers, on the celebration of Pentecost, following Jesus' ascension to heaven. May God bless our time as we study His coming then, and as we celebrate His working in our lives now."

Guide the Study:

Ask a volunteer to read Acts 2:1-4. Share the background information on the Feast of Pentecost, from the Acts: Sharing God's Good News with Everyone: Session Two.

Discuss what the believers heard and saw when the Spirit came upon them. Explore the symbolism of wind and fire in other Scriptural instances.

Say: "All believers who gathered were filled with the Holy Spirit. Joel prophesied that God's Spirit would fall on all people and that both men and women would prophesy" (Joel 2:28). Explore the fact that the New Testament documents only one Pentecost experience, even though in several other meetings, those present were filled with the Holy Spirit. Why? What was different about this one experience?

Say: "God's Spirit comes into our lives at the moment of salvation (John 3:6). While He never leaves us, we can quench the Spirit through our disobedience to His guidance (1Thessalonians 5:17). Conversely we can choose to submit to His lordship. Because of our human nature, we need to be filled with the Spirit on a daily, or even hourly basis (Ephesians 5:18). Ask: How often do we struggle with challenges or temptations facing us, and fail to claim what is already ours—the power of the Spirit?"

Have someone read Acts 2:5-13. Discuss the many lands represented in Jerusalem that day. Ask the group to list the backgrounds represented in your group or community.

Discuss the phenomena of the other tongues or languages used by believers. Note that, in this instance, God's gift to the believers differs from the spiritual tongues used for prayer and praise, as discussed in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Discuss the response of the hearers. Contrast the astonishment of some with the scorn of others.

Ask a volunteer to read Acts 2:14-21. Discuss the change in Peter since his betrayal on the night of Jesus' arrest (Luke 23:54-61).

Discuss Peter's message. Explore the meaning of the "Last Days." Say: "This is the first recorded defense of the Christian faith, or the first 'Christian apology.'" Note the four elements of what becomes known as apostolic preaching: announcement of Last Days; the review of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and exultation; discussion of Jesus' fulfillment of messianic prophecies in Scripture; and the call for repentance.

Discuss the response of the hearers. Explore the work of God's Holy Spirit, in John 16:8. Ask volunteers to compare the Holy Spirit's role with our role in witnessing.

Say: "God's gift of the Holy Spirit to all believers comes at salvation. If many are saved at once, then God's Spirit comes to each one. If only one is saved, the miracle of the Spirit coming to indwell that person, is just as amazing."

Remind the group: "An amazing fact arises from realizing that salvation and the Holy Spirit came to everyone who believed. Men and women, old and young, all races and languages, all social classes and all abilities, received the same blessings; in fact, no one was excluded. And once saved, all became equal in each other's eyes."

Say: "Just as during Jesus' earthly ministry, God continues to break down barriers between believers. Throughout the book of Acts, as the church of Christ grows and the message of salvation spreads, many more cultural, geographical, and social barriers will be broken."

Have someone read Acts 2:36-41. Discuss the response of those who believed. Note the importance of believer's baptism.

Emphasize: "Nearly three-thousand believers were added to the body that day. The Day of Pentecost is sometimes called the 'birthday of the church.'"

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page, and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

In today's world, many things serve as excuses for not believing in the Holy Spirit. Of those, one stands out: technology makes it possible, now, to project visual images on screen and television that enable the realistic faking of supernatural events. We tolerate and even enjoy seeing movies where ghosts and spirits appear to come to life, and move in and out of humans and their environments.

Today's generations find it difficult to separate this imaginary world from the real spiritual world, and the reality of God's Holy Spirit. We are caught up in the psychological danger of the old saying: "Seeing is believing." On the other hand,

seeing too much, too often, may cause us to reject the whole concept of real spiritual beings, and, in particular, our experiencing a very real and present Holy Spirit of God.

We need to remind ourselves frequently that the Day of Pentecost really took place. And all the things described in the Book of Acts regarding that day actually historically happened, just as recorded. Second, we need to defend the fact that the Holy Spirit comes into the life of every person who accepts Jesus as Saviour and Lord. The Spirit of God is available then, to every believer, for counsel, comfort, spiritual power, and discipline, just as Jesus promised in John 16:5-15.

Ask a volunteer to pray for the group. Pray, thanking God for His incredible gift of the Holy Spirit, asking the Spirit to prompt each believer to daily submit to His lordship and to be filled anew day by day.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship times. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study, and to help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Empowered by the Spirit? Who? Us? **Acts 2:1-16, 22-24, 36-41**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Bring with you the paper and markers previously gathered.

- Take a piece of paper and some markers, and draw a picture or write about the most amazing thing you have ever seen or heard.
- What made that event or object so spectacular? Was made it unusual or unique? Was it powerful in some way? Did it make a difference in someone's life?
- What would be something amazing that you think only God could do? How do you think we could be a part of that?
- Are you willing to allow the Holy Spirit to empower you in such a way that you could make a difference in this world? On the back of the paper write a prayer to God, asking Him to use you, to accomplish His purposes.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Empowered by the Spirit? Who? Us?*****Acts 2:1-16, 22-24, 36-41****Beginning the Service:**

Encourage preschoolers to choose one chorus they would like the group to sing today. Follow by singing “Spirit of the Living God” or “God of Wonders.”

Worship Leader: “Today our focus is on the Holy Spirit and His work in our lives. One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is as our comforter. Allow Him to begin to comfort your soul this morning as you lay any worries or concerns at His feet.” Lead out in prayer.

Have someone read Ephesians 4:1-6.

Sing “**Breathe on Me**” or “**Above All.**”

Offering:

Gather the offering as your church deems appropriate. Consider playing background music as it is being collected. Alternately sing a chorus or hymn, during this time, or watch a Christian music video.

Praying for the World:

Pray for the missionaries around the world today who are working in “impossible” situations. Pray that the Holy Spirit will work through them to bring about change.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Empowered by the Spirit? Who? Us?**Acts 2:1-16, 22-24, 36-41**

Ask the congregation: “Does it seem strange, after reading and studying these scriptures in our Bible Study time, that questions should arise in the mind and heart of believers as to just who can or should be empowered by the Holy Spirit? The very idea that anyone, other than the apostles, could or should be empowered by the Spirit, that we should question who is to be empowered by the Spirit, or that we, modern church members and believers, are expected to be empowered by the Spirit, even as the first believers were empowered.

Facing a typical group of older men in Bible study on Sunday morning with these questions, reveals that it is unusual for one man to feel that he is responsible for the empowering of the Spirit, which enables him to serve Jesus in any manner other than attending, giving, and praying. Some Christians are content for the work of the Kingdom to be done by “professionals,” those who are called, ordained, or paid to do the job.

We rarely sing about Pentecostal Power; I wonder why. Either we do not want Pentecostal power, or we don’t believe that it is a gift whereby God continues to enable his people to do the work of the Kingdom. We may also believe that the Holy Spirit’s power is for a select few—those called to “special service.”

So we press the question: Are modern Christians under obligation to be empowered by the Spirit? Why not just read these scriptures as historical, and be thrilled that the Holy Spirit came to believers on the day of Pentecost, and that He enabled believers to do all that is described there. Wouldn’t it be rare for “Pentecost” to happen again? Perhaps those who are called to preach, or those called to be missionaries, should be empowered by the Holy Spirit; but, isn’t education enough to teach them how to prepare and deliver sermons, administer the affairs of a church, and do all the things that require their attention?

The answer to the questions raised by this topic is: Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes, the average Christian may be empowered by the Spirit. Yes, the typical believer can be filled with the Spirit of God. Yes, we all, all of us believers, whether called to full-time service, or called to teach a class of men—all of us—may all be empowered by the Holy Spirit to do the work of God’s Kingdom.

Let’s make several observations about Acts 2.

1. First, the Holy Spirit enabled about 120 men and women to speak in such a manner that those worshipers, from all over the Roman Empire, could hear the Good News, in their native tongues. They were empowered by the Spirit to reverse the effect of the confusing of languages, following the Tower of Babel experience. At that time, referred to in Genesis 11:5-10, God determined that it was not good for all men to speak just one language: to do so would make it possible for men to fulfill the desires of their hearts. But, at Pentecost, all men were able to hear the Gospel in one language—their own, thus making it possible for the disciples of Jesus to accomplish the greatest task in

history—the spreading of the Good News that God was doing a new work in Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit empowered that small group of people to overcome the language barrier that separated mankind from God. The answer to the question: Empowered by the Spirit? Who? Us? is “Most certainly us!”

2. The second observation about Acts 2 is that the Spirit empowered, and empowers, the followers of Jesus, to penetrate the resistance of humanity with the message of the mighty works God has accomplished through Jesus Christ—through His life, death, and resurrection.

Peter was a Galilean fisherman with little formal education, who was prone to “run off at the mouth” and speak when he should have listened, was empowered to deliver the message, the Kerigma, as it is called by Biblical Scholars (The word literally means announcement.). And preach he did! After calling those who were in Jerusalem, on that day of Pentecost, to heed the manner in which Jesus of Nazareth had fulfilled the expectations of the Hebrew Bible, he flatly accused them of culpability in the death of Jesus.

Pentecost celebrated one of the three high and holy days in the Jewish calendar. Note carefully that before Pentecost became an important day in the Christian calendar, it was a celebration of the grain harvest, which took place in the spring of the year, according to the Jewish calendar. All Hebrew males were required to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem on this occasion. That’s why there were people from all over the Roman Empire in Jerusalem on this day.

What an opportune time to inaugurate the mission of the church of Jesus Christ!

People from all parts of the world, in one place, heard the Good News, and would return to remote places, with a new song and a new message in their hearts. The power of the Holy Spirit had accomplished this.

3. The third observation about Acts 2 and the empowering of the Holy Spirit is the change in attitude that was brought about in the hearts of those who had accepted Peter’s message (2:44-47). The Holy Spirit empowers believers to communicate the Gospel. He may do His work through a year spent in language school; He may also do His work through a mind that is trained to interpret Scripture. He may do his work by warming the hearts of believers, causing them to care about people who are hungry, ill clothed, or suffering in deep depression.

A universal phenomenon of the Holy Spirit, in the life of people, is a genuine concern for the needs of people. Lynn Groce and his family returned from the mission field in East Africa, but he didn’t leave his concern for people in Africa; it was Lynn’s nature, being born of the Spirit, to care about people, so he set up a ministry in Florida, through which he was able to assist people with all sorts of needs.

Call to Commitment:

Empowered by the Spirit? Yes! All of us! Each one of us who is lead by the Spirit into the Kingdom of God can and should and need to be empowered by His Spirit. And each one of us must ask God regularly to keep us empowered by His Spirit.

Concluding the Service:

Sing “**Sweet, Sweet Spirit**” or “**Breathe.**”

Have a youth read 1John 3:21-24, 4:4

Conclude the service in prayer.