



Acts:

A Life of Witness

Week Two: Acts 2:1-14, 29-33 *Wind and Flame: Equipped for Witness*

Opening Question: Our story today involves God fulfilling His promise of the Spirit in a surprising way. Share about a time in your life you received a really big surprise- could be a gift, an experience, something that went totally differently than you anticipated, etc..

CONTEXT

A quick look back: Spend a few minutes reviewing the big picture of Acts from Week One. Who wrote it? What was going on culturally and religiously in this region when the book was written? What did we learn about the idea of witness last week?

Today's Passage: In last week's passage, we learned that Jesus was going to gift his beloved ones with the Spirit so that they could become witnesses to their neighbors and to the rest of the world. Today we see the fulfillment of that promise on a day called Pentecost- the day commonly associated with the coming of the Spirit and the birth of a new movement of Christ followers. But Pentecost was not a "new" day in the Jewish world. This day- often called the Feast of Weeks- was one of three festivals that Jewish people celebrated every year. It happened 50 days after the celebration of Passover (thus, the name "Pentecost", which is the Greek word for 50th). At the Feast of Weeks, the Jewish community worshipped God as provider as they offered up loaves of bread- signs of God's abundance. They also remembered God giving Moses the law on Mount Sinai- the very law that formed the blueprint for how they should live in relationship to God and to each other. In our text today, the city of Jerusalem is full of Jewish people who have come from all over the world to celebrate this festival, as well as those apostles and friends who have been closest to Jesus. At a time when they are thinking about God's promises, provision, and how to live well in this world as a community of faith, God is about to show up in a way that no one could have imagined...

CONTENT

Read Acts 2: 1-14, 29-33 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, or C) to help your group engage with this passage.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text? What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group to share and discuss your observations, writing them in a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

Option B. Creative Engagement: Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, lists, words. When everyone has completed their art, come together to share and discuss what you drew and why.

Option C. Guided Bible Study Questions:

1. In vs 2, we learn that the Spirit comes in the form of wind. This is the same word used to describe God's presence and work in creation. In Gen 1: 2, God's "wind" hovers over the waters- turning the chaos of nothingness into the full beauty of creation. In Gen 2: 7, God's breath/wind fills humanity with new life. How does this connection expand your idea of what is going on here at Pentecost?
2. Vs 3 tells us that the Spirit also comes in the form of fire. Fire is an important concept in the Old Testament- God meets Moses in flames and gives him a new calling, God leads Israel through the desert with fire at night, God gives Moses the 10 commandments after descending on the mountain in fire. What do you notice about the nature of fire in this passage- how does it come and on whom? Why might that matter? How might this Pentecost experience connect to some of the meanings of fire in the OT?
3. God had told his disciples that they were going to bear witness to "the ends of the earth." How do vs 5-12 already start this fulfillment? What does this tell you about God's involvement in this call He has extended to His followers?
4. In Acts 1, the disciples and followers of Christ watch Him ascend into heaven. What do we see Christ now doing from His throne in vs 33?
5. The Feast of Weeks focused people's eyes on God's provision, abundance, and God's picture of His kingdom as outlined in the OT law. How does this story tie in with those themes?

APPLICATION

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion. Choose one or several.

- Jesus promised that His followers would receive power to be His witnesses. In this passage, we see that the first use of that power is to expand the assumed boundaries of the family of God. To take down barriers (in this case, language) that would prevent anyone from hearing the beautiful story of Christ. How would you define this kind of power? Where is it focused? How does culture today define or use power? How does this story re-define power?
- One of the themes in Acts is that over and over again, people are given exactly what they need- often in surprising ways- to live into their call to be people who speak and live in ways that witness to Christ. Have you ever had a moment in your faith life where the Spirit of God gave you exactly what you needed to do something that you didn't think you could do?
- The crowds in our passage can't believe that they are hearing their language spoken by these everyday, mostly uneducated people called "Galileans". Have you ever received something beautiful or important or needed in your faith life from an unexpected person?

PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below:

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your "wonderings" from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

God of wind and fire-

We marvel at the way you work in tandem- Father, Son, and Spirit- to establish your presence among and within us. At Pentecost, you made good again on your promise to "never leave us, never forsake us" as your spirit breathed new life into our very bones and then set up camp within us. May we live fully into that Spirit-infused life as we seek to be people who faithfully tell and live your resurrection story- not limited by our own boundaries or assumptions, but fully open to your boundary-breaking Spirit among us.

We pray this in your name-

Amen.