

Lesson 12 | May 19, 2024

Pentecostal Experience Continues

Study Text: Acts 8:5–17; 10:44–48; 11:1–18; 19:1–7

Central Truth: God's will is that every believer in Christ be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Key Verse: Acts 11:16

Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost (kjv).

“Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (nlt).

Learning Objectives:

- Students will explain that the gift of Holy Spirit baptism is for all Christians.
- Students will appreciate that God does not discriminate in giving the gift of the Spirit; all may receive.
- Students will be encouraged to seek Holy Spirit baptism and to pray for others to receive as well.

Introducing the Study

Say: As Pentecostals, we believe the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift intended for every believer. Peter proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost the promised gift of the Holy Spirit “is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God” (Acts 2:39, NLT).

Opening Activity—The Holy Spirit and You

Ask: *If you have received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, how would you describe the experience?* Invite a few people to share their responses to this question. Try to be sure to include people who are newer to the experience as well as those who have been Pentecostals for many years.

Say: While God does not change, He is creative. Some people may receive the Baptism at an altar and others may be at home on the couch. God does not discriminate regarding who can receive this gift. It is for everyone! (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The baptism in the Holy Spirit was the normal experience of both Jewish and Gentile believers in the Early Church. We will explore three incidents recorded in the Book of Acts, showing that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all who believe. Three of the accounts of the baptism in the Holy Spirit specifically mention speaking in tongues as evidence (Acts 2:1–4; 10:44–46; 19:1–7). On other occasions, speaking in tongues is implied

(8:14–19). Scripture is clear that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of Holy Spirit baptism.

Part 1—Converts Receive the Spirit

Samaritans Receive Christ

Acts 8:5–6,12

Say: Beginning with the Early Church and continuing throughout history, there is a link between prayer, persecution, and revival. Because of the Early Church's commitment to prayer and because they were scattered due to persecution in Jerusalem, the gospel spread. As a direct result, people in Samaria and other parts of the first-century world became believers and subsequently received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Even today, God uses both prayer and persecution to spread the news of salvation to those who do not know Him. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

As persecution began to intensify against the Early Church in Jerusalem, Christians started to scatter. During this time of extreme trial, Philip took the gospel to Samaria (Acts 8:1–5; note that this is the city of Samaria located in the region of Samaria). The Samaritans were descendants of Jews in the north who were not exiled to Assyria or Babylon and instead stayed and intermarried with the Canaanites.

The Samaritans had a contentious relationship with the Jews (see John 4). As Philip ministered, a powerful move of the Spirit drew people to his words (Acts 8:6). The people of Samaria saw great miracles. Demonic spirits were cast out of individuals and many diseases were healed. Amid this powerful testimony to God's Word, men and women repented of their sins, became followers of Christ, and were baptized in water (verse 12).

Miracles can still accompany the preaching of the gospel today. When the prayers of Christians are linked with the moving of the Spirit, lives can be changed. The response in Samaria came about because the Early Church prayed and expected the supernatural. Today, we should pray for such moves of God in our own communities.

Prayer and dedication to God are key to seeing the lost respond to God. The power of God to touch the lost and bring them to repentance is no less present today than in the first century. God still confirms His Word with signs and wonders.

Discuss

? Why do you think miracles often accompany the proclamation of the gospel—both in the first century and today?

? How can you become more involved in proclaiming the gospel and believing for miracles?

Samaritans Receive the Spirit

Acts 8:14–17

Say: The revival in Samaria was soon reported in Jerusalem, so Peter and John came to lend a hand in the ministry. Upon their arrival, they learned the Samaritans had believed in Jesus, but had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit. They did not want these new believers to miss out on the fullness of what God offered. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

When the church in Jerusalem received word of the move of God in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to encourage these new believers (Acts 8:14). Clearly a great work was being done and required the work of a number of spiritual leaders. With Peter and John coming to help, more people could be reached and disciplined. The Church was growing through the work of the Spirit.

The importance the Early Church placed on being baptized in the Holy Spirit is highlighted by the fact Peter and John immediately began to introduce this gift into the lives of the new Christians in Samaria (verse 15). They began to pray for these new believers to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. As they prayed, they laid hands on them, and the people received the Holy Spirit (verse 17).

This is the first time in the Early Church that someone other than Jews or proselytes to Judaism had accepted the gospel. Considering the bad relationship between Jews and Samaritans, the gift of the Spirit may have helped Jewish Christians see that God would save non-Jewish people, just as Jesus had declared in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20). The gift of the Spirit bridged the divide and brought unity into the Early Church. Both Jew and Gentile were receiving this gift.

Many issues divide people today: Politics, social class, race, nationality, and many other factors can bring disunity. But God can bridge every man-made division through the Spirit (see Ephesians 4:1–6). Take a moment to examine if you harbor any disunity with other Christians. Pray that God will direct you to act in whatever way you can to heal that disunity.

Discuss

? Why does the gift of the Spirit unite Christians who might otherwise be divided?

Resource Packet Item 1: The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

Distribute the worksheet, and use it as a discussion starter for your class. Note that the Spirit came on particular individuals as needed throughout the Old Testament, rather than being available to dwell within all of God's people as in New Testament times.

Part 2—Gentiles Receive the Spirit God Works in Unexpected Ways

Acts 10:44–48

Say: God does not always abide by the cultural norms that form the basis of many human decisions. Such was the case in the giving of the Holy Spirit. It had been a long-standing cultural rule that Jews didn't associate with Gentiles, so the Early Church had

made little effort to reach Gentiles with the gospel—and no effort to introduce them to the gift of the Holy Spirit. But all of that was about to change! (Share your highlights from the following text.)

At the house of Cornelius, Peter became the first apostle to take the gospel directly to the Gentiles. While he was delivering his testimony about Christ, a wonderful thing happened. As he spoke, God poured out the Holy Spirit on Cornelius's household (Acts 10:44). This likely came as a surprise to Peter, who struggled to believe these people could even become Christians. Earlier in the chapter, God had told Peter in a vision He would accept what Peter considered unclean (see verses 1–16). Now Peter began to understand God was not concerned with unclean animals but with the salvation of people considered unclean by the Jews.

While Peter may have had difficulty taking the Gentiles' testimony of salvation seriously, he could not refute the Holy Spirit had been poured out on them. Verse 45 states those who traveled with Peter were astonished God would do this.

Note that in this passage the Bible clearly identifies the evidence of Holy Spirit baptism. The statement, "For they heard them speaking in other tongues" (verse 46, NLT), leaves no room for speculation. By the power of the Holy Spirit, these new believers were glorifying God in other languages.

Verse 47 indicates there may have been discussion regarding whether or not to baptize in water these Gentiles who had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. But Peter ended any debate by declaring a person did not have the right to refuse water baptism to those whom God had already baptized in His Spirit (verse 47). In other words, since God had accepted them, no human being had any right to reject them.

After the water baptism, Peter and those with him stayed in Caesarea to instruct Cornelius and the believers with him (verse 48). Again, evangelism was followed by discipleship.

God is not limited by our understanding of how He operates or by our opinion of how He should operate. He knows the right time and place to do His work. We must be willing to be led by the Spirit even when it does not fit with our plans. Learning to trust God's ways in all we do is vital to seeing Him move in our lives.

Resource Packet Item 2: God Works in Unique Ways

Distribute the worksheet and lead the class in discussing biblical examples of God working in unusual ways to accomplish His plans. Then encourage students to think about how they've seen God work in unusual ways in their lives.

Discuss

? Why is it important to remember God works in unexpected ways—and even in ways we wouldn't choose?

? Describe a time when God did something that surprised you. Why were you surprised?

God's Will Is Recognized

Acts 11:15–18

Say: The attitude of the Jews about associating with Gentiles was never clearer than in their reaction when Peter returned to Jerusalem after witnessing what has become known as the “Gentile Pentecost” at Cornelius’s house. But when they heard the whole story, the believers immediately recognized God had accepted the Gentiles too. How did they know? Because He had poured out the Holy Spirit on them. This was an observable, indisputable sign. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In Acts 11, Peter returned to Jerusalem. The apostles and believers there had heard of the Gentile conversions and criticized Peter’s actions. Peter explained that the Holy Spirit outpouring he witnessed was like what had occurred on the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit had clearly filled the Gentile believers (verse 15).

Peter reminded his Jewish brothers and sisters what the Lord had taught them after His resurrection about the baptism in the Holy Spirit, concluding that if Jesus chose to baptize these believers in the Spirit, Peter was not going to refuse them water baptism (verses 16–17). Hearing Peter’s explanation, the Jewish believers praised God for extending the opportunity of salvation to the Gentiles (verse 18).

This was a great unifying moment in the Early Church and marked an important turning point. God opened the door of unity and Spirit empowerment, and the Church seized the opportunity to march through it and reach out to all nations with the good news of salvation. The overwhelming majority of people who come to Christ today have no Jewish heritage, but by faith they have become the people of God.

Discuss

? Why do Christians sometimes struggle to accept God’s will, even when it is clear?

? What are some ways you can carry out God’s will to reach all people with the gospel?

Part 3—Disciples Receive the Spirit Uninformed Disciples

Acts 19:1–5

Say: The Early Church’s enthusiasm to spread the message of Christ and the message of Pentecost should motivate us to do the same. The disciples did not yet have the full written Word of God, so some believers didn’t always have the complete message. Such was the case in Ephesus. When Paul arrived there, he found that some vital details about the faith were missing. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Acts 19 tells of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, an important city on the west coast of what is now Turkey. When Paul arrived there, he encountered “certain disciples” (19:1, KJV).

The identity of these disciples has been a source of much discussion by Bible scholars. They may have been converted under the ministry of Apollos before he was discipled by Priscilla and Aquila (see 18:24–26).

Whatever the specifics, it is important to understand the spiritual condition of these Ephesians when Paul arrived. In his Gospel and the Book of Acts, Luke consistently used the term *disciples* to refer to followers of Jesus. Had Luke meant that these “certain disciples” were followers of John the Baptist, he likely would have said so. Apparently, these were Christians.

Paul realized the Christian experience of these Ephesian believers was lacking. So he asked them a pointed question: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (19:2, NLT; note that “when” might also be translated “since”). Paul clearly expected the baptism in the Holy Spirit to be the next step after conversion.

The disciples’ response to Paul’s question might seem strange. It is hard to imagine they had never heard of the existence of the Spirit, for both the Old Testament and John the Baptist spoke of Him. Many scholars believe they simply did not know the age of the Spirit had come (see Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2). These disciples didn’t realize the outpouring of the Spirit had taken place.

Paul took the time to explain the good news of Jesus, whose message and blessing had superseded John’s. Before praying with them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, Paul baptized them in water as Christ had commanded (19:5).

Discuss

? Is there any Christian teaching you learned after having been a Christian for a period of time? How did this teaching impact your life?

? What can Acts 19:1–5 teach us about the importance of Bible study and discipleship?

Spirit-Baptized Disciples

Acts 19:6–7

Say: Paul knew God had more in store for the Ephesian believers after water baptism. They needed the empowerment of the Spirit that had been promised and poured out on other believers. Always ready to be used by the Spirit, Paul laid his hands on these disciples and they were baptized in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

After Paul had instructed and baptized these disciples in water, he returned to the point where his conversation with them began. For believers to be effective in spreading the gospel, they need empowerment through the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Paul laid hands on the believers and they were baptized in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues (Acts 19:6). Clearly, God began to move among them in a powerful way, because they also prophesied.

Every believer should seek to be baptized in the Holy Spirit; it is an important part of the fruitful Christian life. One way God demonstrates His power to the world is through the lives of those who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit baptism empowers and emboldens believers, opening the door so God can bless His people and His Church with the gifts that are necessary to spread the gospel.

Like the Christians in Ephesus, some believers today struggle to understand even basic teachings of Scripture, such as the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Are you well-grounded in the Word? If not, commit to deep, regular study. Otherwise, reach out to be a discipler for someone who is searching the Word to learn more about God and what it means to serve Him.

Resource Packet Item 3: Have You Received?

Distribute the case study and use it to lead a discussion on how students can help others seek the baptism of the Spirit.

Discuss

? Why is Spirit baptism important?

? How would you explain why Christians should seek Holy Spirit baptism?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Many Christians today feel salvation is the only experience with God they want or need. While faith in Christ is the only requirement for salvation and eternal life, God desires more for His people. God has given Holy Spirit baptism to empower us for service and evangelism. We need to pray God will baptize us, and all Christians, in the Holy Spirit.

Living It Out Ministry in Action

- If you have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit, set aside time this week to pray for that gift.
- Share with another believer the benefits of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- Tell your children, grandchildren, or someone in the next generation about the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Spirit-Inspired Judge.
Judges 6:34–40

Tuesday:

Spirit-Inspired Levite.
2 Chronicles 20:14–19

Wednesday:

Spirit-Inspired Prophet.

Ezekiel 11:1–5

Thursday:

Spirit-Inspired Mother.

Luke 1:39–45

Friday:

Spirit-Inspired Father.

Luke 1:67–79

Saturday:

Spirit-Inspired Martyr.

Acts 7:54–60