

# The Early Christians Witness God's Power

(Acts 2:1-47)

## Pre-Session Warm Up

Is it hard for you to talk to someone about the Lord? [Teacher, discuss problems that make witnessing difficult — feeling of shyness, not knowing who to talk to; being afraid of ridicule or persecution; not knowing what to say.]

If you are a true believer in Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit living inside you to help you witness. He gives you the power to share the good news about Jesus.

Today we're going to learn about when God first sent the Holy Spirit to the believers.

## Opening Prayer

Father, we are so glad that you have sent us the Holy Spirit. He is our Comforter, our Helper in times of need. He gives us the power to live a life in victory over sin and He gives us the courage we need to tell others about Your love for us. Thank You that You have provided us with resurrection power — the same power that raised Jesus from the dead — through the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me...to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)*

## Lesson

Three days after Jesus had been crucified on the cross, the disciples discovered His empty tomb. Then they met their risen Savior who told them to go to Jerusalem and wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:4-5

*Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. (5) John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would fill the disciples with power.

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

People from many countries had come to Jerusalem for the Jewish celebration of the "Day of Pentecost." God commanded the Israelites through His servant Moses to come together to celebrate seven different annual feasts each year. One of them was called the "Day of Pentecost" or the *Feast of Harvest*. It is like the American holiday of Thanksgiving, it is a festival of thanksgiving for the harvested crops. Pentecost is held 50 days after Passover.

It was now 50 days since Jesus' resurrection and 10 days since His ascension up to heaven. And, Jews of many nations had gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost.

The disciples were all gathered together, waiting for the Lord to fulfill His promise to send the Holy Spirit Who would give them power to be witnesses for Him.

Acts 2:1-4

*On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. (2) Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. (3) Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. (4) And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.*

God made His presence known to this group of believers in a spectacular way — violent wind, fire, and His Holy Spirit. This was a fulfillment of John the Baptist's prophesy when he said that there was one coming who "*will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*" (Luke 3:16)

The scripture says, the Holy Spirit looked like "*divided tongues, as of fire.*"

- Tongues symbolizes speech — God wants us to tell people about the good news of Jesus taking our punishment for sin.
- Fire symbolizes God's purifying presence, which burns away the undesirable parts of our lives and sets our hearts on fire for Him.

Then, the disciples began to speak in other languages.

Acts 2:5-8

*At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. (6) When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. (7) They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, (8) and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages!*

All the foreigners in Jerusalem at that time could hear the disciples speaking in their own language.

Acts 2:11

*(both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!"*

The people from all these various countries were amazed to hear God being praised in their own native tongue!

Acts 2:12

*They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other.*

They could hardly believe their ears! Some people made fun of the disciples, saying they were drunk.

Acts 2:13

*But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!"*

But Peter, now empowered by the Holy Spirit explained...

Acts 2:14-15

*Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. (15) These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that.*

Here is Peter who only a few days before had been a coward and deserted the Lord Jesus in His deepest hour of need. Peter who had denied that he even knew the Lord, was now speaking boldly to the crowd, unashamed!

Peter went on to tell the people that it had been God's plan for Jesus to be put to death and raised from the dead.

Acts 2:22-24

*"People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. (23) But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. (24) But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.*

Acts 2:32-33

*"God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. (33) Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today.*

Acts 2:36

*"So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"*

The Holy Spirit was using Peter's message to work in their hearts.

Acts 2:37

*Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"*

Acts 2:38

*Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Wow! Peter was boldly used for the Lord, wasn't he? He was empowered by the Holy Spirit!

When you call on the Lord Jesus to save you, God the Holy Spirit comes to live inside you to help you. The Holy Spirit gives you the power you need to live boldly for the Lord, to make godly choices, to say, "No!" to sin, and to speak with confidence about the things of the Lord. When you live this victorious Christian life, it is hard to not want to tell everybody you meet about Jesus!

The Holy Spirit enabled Peter to stand up and tell thousands of people about what the Lord Jesus had done for mankind. He became a powerful witness for the Lord. When Peter finished talking, the people were convicted by God's Spirit, they wanted to know how to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, too. Many people received Jesus that day!

Acts 2:41

*Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.*

Everyone in the world is born a sinner and needs to be saved. Everyone needs to hear the wonderful good news that Jesus came and took the punishment for sin. But, is it hard for you to tell people about Jesus? Remember God is all-powerful and you have His Spirit inside you! What can you do when you feel too shy to talk to someone? Remember that the Holy Spirit is in you and gives you power! What can give you courage when you are afraid to speak up for the Lord? Thank God that the Holy Spirit lives in you to help you be brave! You can count on the Holy Spirit to help you and to work in the hearts of those who listen.

### **Object Lesson:**

Have the children sit in a circle. Give each child an empty paper cup. Ask, "What's inside your cups?" Hold up a paper cup, and say, "If we don't have Jesus in our lives, we may be like these cups: empty inside with nothing to give other people." Pour water into the cup you're holding. Say, "When we believe in Jesus and ask Him to be the Lord of our lives, God promises to pour His Spirit into us and fill us with His love, just as the water fills this cup."

Ask the children:

- Why did God give us the Holy Spirit?
- What happens when we're filled with God's Spirit.

Have the children stand in a circle, holding their paper cups. Say, "Let's see how being filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit helps us live a victorious Christian life." Pour your water into another person's cup and whisper, "The Holy Spirit gives you strength." Then have that person pour the water into the next person's cup and repeat, "The Holy Spirit gives you strength." So on around the circle. Go around the circle again saying, "The Holy Spirit gives you comfort." Ask the children to think of things that the Holy Spirit gives them when they are filled with the Spirit of God. For example,

- The Holy Spirit gives you wisdom.
- The Holy Spirit gives you power to say, "No!" to sin.
- The Holy Spirit gives you power to live a Godly life.
- The Holy Spirit gives you power to tell others about Jesus.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, for sending us the Holy Spirit who gives us the power we need to live godly lives before You. Forgive us those times we forget to call upon Him when we need Him so desperately. We are so weak without Him and we need Him so badly. Thank You that Your power is only a prayer away. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### CRAFT CORNER

*Create a Tract:* Using the pattern on page 6, let each child make a booklet by folding the page in half and then in half again. Or, give each child a paper on which they can print out neatly, the following:

### Jesus can save you from your sin

**A**dmit you have sinned. "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23)

**B**elieve Jesus died for your sins. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3)

**C**all on Jesus to save you (Romans 10:13)

Demonstrate how a tract can be used; give children an opportunity to practice in class with a partner.

### GAME CENTER

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

#### *Review questions:*

1. What Jewish celebration was going on that brought all the foreigners to Jerusalem? (Pentecost)
2. What is Pentecost? (It's like Thanksgiving; it's a festival of thanksgiving for the harvested crops.)
3. In what spectacular way did God send the Holy Spirit to the believers? (Violent wind, tongues of fire.)
4. Why did God send tongues of fire? What did the tongues and the fire symbolize? (Tongues symbolized speech and fire symbolized God's purifying presence.)
5. What did the disciples begin to do when the tongues of fire sat upon them? (They began to speak with other tongues or languages.)
6. What did all the foreigners in Jerusalem think was happening? (They were all amazed and marveled; then some of them began to make fun of the disciples, saying they were drunk.)
7. What did Peter do? (He stood up, raised his voice, and began to explain God's plan of salvation.)
8. What suddenly gave Peter the courage he lacked only a short time before? (He was filled with the Holy Spirit.)

9. What was the reaction of the crowd of people when they heard Peter preach? (After Peter's powerful, Spirit-filled message, the people were deeply moved and asked, "*What shall we do?*")
10. What did Peter tell the people to do when they asked, "*What shall we do?*" (He told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins.)
11. In what amazing way did the Holy Spirit use Peter's message? (3,000 people gave their hearts and lives to Jesus!)
12. How do you receive the Holy Spirit? (When you call upon the Lord Jesus to save you.)
13. What does the Holy Spirit give you? (The power you need to live boldly for the Lord, to make godly choices, to say, "*No!*" to sin and to speak with confidence about the things of the Lord.)
14. What can you do when you feel too shy to talk to someone? (Remember that the Holy Spirit is in you and gives you power.)
15. What can give you courage when you are afraid to speak up for the Lord? (Thank God that the Holy Spirit lives in you to help you be brave! You can count on the Holy Spirit to help you and to work in the hearts of those who listen.)

Believe

Jesus died for

Your sins

“Christ died for

Our sins”

(1 Corinthians

15:3)

Call

On Jesus

To save you

(Romans 10:13)

(Romans 3:23)

“All have sinned”

Sinned

You have

Admit

Your sin!

From

Can save you

Jesus