

PENTECOST

Acts 2

Fifty days after Jesus died for our sins, the Holy Spirit He promised came and took up residence inside each person who embraced the truth about Jesus. The Spirit has been faithful to do this to this very day. It happens whenever a person embraces Jesus, God's chosen sin-bearer and king.

It is a most significant era that began on that day. It was the beginning of an entirely new experience with God for humanity. God's great gift created a new potential for us. Two thousand years later it is certainly true that what you believe and practice in your relationship to the Holy Spirit will be THE key factor in your quality of life.

Acts chapter 2 records the important beginning of this era. In your life the event will look a little different. But there can be striking similarities as well. Take time to read that chapter. Think through the questions below as you process the story.

1. From what you remember about Peter's past, what difference do you see the Holy Spirit making in Peter on this day, fifty days after Christ's crucifixion? What are some changes the Holy Spirit would like to make in you?
2. From verses 33-36, what had to happen, that only God could do, BEFORE people could have the experience of the Holy Spirit living in them?
3. A large crowd had come together to a house that they heard a strange sound coming from (Acts 2:1-6). Read verses 37-40. What does Peter tell these people they need to do in order to receive the Holy Spirit?
4. Verse 42 describes four things the newly formed group continually did to maintain their spiritual health. Which of the four practices is strongest in your life? Which is weakest?

5. Verses 43-47 describe the lifestyle the Spirit led Christian people to pursue initially. What are some legitimate reasons He led them into different practices later? What are some of the reasons they might have drifted on their own from these practices?

There are grave dangers inherent in spirituality, because there are evil spirits and so very destructive spirituality that warps our feelings and our thinking process. But there are great dangers in rejecting true spirituality, which is seeking to be instructed and led by the Holy Spirit. We can let go of seeking Him in favor of Christian activity and a purely rational and objective faith. Our focus on order and predictability (which the Holy Spirit does produce), can also hinder His work. Holding Him at arms-length will keep us from the help Jesus died to give us.

When I first began to turn to the Holy Spirit I thought He would make my life easier. I thought I just had to start listening for His voice speaking through my own mind and I would be transformed. I thought spiritual tasks would become effortless. I thought if certain things like reading the Bible required effort, it was a sure sign the Spirit was not leading me to do them.

Read through the following seven observations. Think about the implications. How might the Spirit be leading you in terms of your practice of being led by Him?

1. The Holy Spirit adds to our efforts the dynamics we lack so that the impossible work of changing hearts becomes possible for us. We should not understand His work as making our lives easier. It WILL make them fuller!
2. The Holy Spirit enables us to work harder and endure more than we thought possible. AND He adds the experience of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
3. Much preparation is needed to conduct affairs “in the Spirit.” His work does not eliminate the need for preparation.
4. Walking in the Spirit has important concrete elements, as opposed to being purely abstract. It involves learning a specific way of thinking and some intentional actions.
5. Inability to trust God leads to inability to experience the help of the Holy Spirit. God wants to get you past trust issues you’ve developed.
6. Knowingly going against the Holy Spirit’s leadings greaves Him and causes us to miss out on His work in our behalf .
7. Lack of truthfulness/transparency is the great enemy of life in the Spirit. It is deceit rather than truthfulness and only the truth sets us free.