



# Empowered

*The Holy Spirit empowers believers to point others to Jesus.*

## **ACTS 2:5-16,36-38**

A small congregation averages twenty people—mainly senior adults. Worshiping in a small back building without street visibility, they wondered how they could make an impact for Christ. They needed divine empowerment, and they saw it happen. The members simply used their God-given abilities to serve. Without the strength of numbers, attractive demographics, or financial wealth, the church ministered to multitudes of families throughout their neighborhood. Their authority rests in the Scripture and Christ's commission—and that is enough. They are seeing God at work.

How is your church experiencing the Spirit's empowerment?

---

---

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **ACTS 2:1-40**

Jews had celebrated Pentecost for many years before the birth of the church. Occurring fifty days after Passover, it was also called the Feast of Weeks. Beginning seven weeks from the second day of Passover, Pentecost coincided with the annual harvest (Lev. 23:15-16).


Pentecost took on a completely different meaning for the church. Ten days had passed since Jesus ascended to heaven. As one hundred and twenty disciples gathered in prayer, they felt the air move powerfully around them. Visibly, tongues of fire appeared upon each believer as they began to praise God. Mostly uneducated Galileans, they declared the gospel in languages they had not learned.

Visiting Jews from many parts of the world gathered to see what was happening. This house probably was owned by a wealthy family to have an upper room large enough for this gathering. These rooms sometimes had half walls on two sides to allow for air circulation. Alternatively, large windows could be opened, allowing people on the outside to see and hear what occurred inside. Open walls or shutters also would have allowed Peter to interact with the people below and deliver his Spirit-inspired sermon.

The house may have been located beside a large plaza, marketplace, or temple courtyard to accommodate a crowd of this size. Some scholars think the disciples moved from the house to the adjoining area so the crowd outside could see and hear what was happening.

More importantly, the spiritual dimension of the Pentecost experience fulfilled Jesus's promise of Spirit empowerment. Believers began boldly proclaiming the gospel in many languages. When the hearers mocked, supposing them to be drunk, Peter arrested their attention and preached the first sermon of the church era.

The power of the Holy Spirit pierced the people's hearts. Three thousand repented, believed, and were baptized.

 **Read Acts 2:1-40. Notice how Peter interspersed His sermon with Scripture. When sharing Christ, how can believers rely on the Spirit and the Bible in witnessing?**

---

---

# EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

## **NOTICED** (ACTS 2:5-13)

<sup>5</sup> Now there were Jews staying in Jerusalem, devout people from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> When this sound occurred, a crowd came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup> They were astounded and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?” <sup>8</sup> How is it that each of us can hear them in our own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts), <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs — we hear them declaring the magnificent acts of God in our own tongues.” <sup>12</sup> They were all astounded and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup> But some sneered and said, “They’re drunk on new wine.”

## **VERSE 5**

Holy Spirit empowerment does not occur solely for the benefit of the believer but for the accomplishment of God’s purpose. Once the disciples received power through the Holy Spirit, they would become His witnesses throughout the world, starting in Jerusalem. God gave them a head-start by bringing the world to Jerusalem.

Passover and Pentecost attracted thousands of **Jews** from **every nation under heaven** to Jerusalem. Since these two festivals were so close together, pilgrims from distant lands were **staying in Jerusalem** throughout the extended observance. Some commentators believe the word *staying* should be translated as “residing.” In that case, these people had returned from various countries to become permanent residents. The context argues for the presence of both pilgrims and permanent residents.

## **VERSES 6-8**

The people outside the disciples’ room heard an unusual **sound** as the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak in different languages. Onlookers also heard the noise created by the rushing wind as the Spirit moved in their midst (v. 2).

**A crowd came together** full of curiosity. They also were **confused** because **each one heard them speaking in his own language**. Some translations render the word *language* as “tongue,” giving rise to the

phrase “speaking in tongues.” The Greek serves as the source of our word “dialect.” Pentecostal expression of the Holy Spirit did not employ unknown or angelic languages, but rather speech understood by people from many backgrounds.

People in the crowd were **astounded and amazed**. They were witnessing something beyond human explanation. The word **look** implies observation, but also calls others to take notice. They could tell that **all these who are speaking** were **Galileans**. The disciples’ accents and perhaps their clothing revealed Galilean origin.

Emphasis on *all these* indicates the entire body of believers participated in proclaiming the gospel. The Spirit was not selective in His empowerment but blessed all the disciples equally.

People in the crowd could **hear** in their **own native language**. God was speaking to each cultural group in their heart language.

### VERSES 9-11

The crowd encompassed a broad representation of nationalities.

**Parthians, Medes, and Elamites** were inhabitants of an area generally equivalent to ancient Persia or modern Iran. **Mesopotamia** included a large area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. **Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia** were regions in Asia Minor. *Asia* did not mean the continent we think about today but was one of the provinces located around what is modern day Turkey. **Egypt** and **Libya, near Cyrene**, are in northern Africa.

The description of **visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts)**, points to pilgrims rather than residents. These people included ethnic Jews as well as Gentiles who converted to Judaism. Paul’s letter to the Roman church addressed issues related to this mix of different backgrounds. Possibly the genesis of the Roman church might be found among these *visitors from Rome*. Concluding the recitation were **Cretans** and **Arabs**. Crete is an island off the coast of Greece. Arabia included a vast area from the Red Sea to the Euphrates. Scholars argue these *Arabs* were likely from the area from modern Jordan to the wilderness south of Judea.

Many nations were represented as the disciples were **declaring the magnificent acts of God in their own tongues**. This summary statement offers two important facts. First, the hearers identified themselves collectively as well as individually. They were in the same boat—experiencing something beyond human explanation. Second, the piety of many listeners was demonstrated by characterizing what they heard as the *magnificent acts of God*.

## VERSES 12-13

These hearers were **astounded and perplexed**. They recognized something was happening beyond their comprehension. They were saying to one another, **“What does this mean?”** The verb form of **saying** means they kept on saying it. Their clamorous reaction to the Spirit’s manifestation added to the commotion of the moment.

While some in the crowd asked about the significance of the event, others dismissed the event, attributing it to intoxication. They mocked these Galileans with their strange display. Some in the mob accused the disciples of being **drunk on new wine**. *New wine* was a sweet drink still in the fermentation stage.

Believers should celebrate God working in and through them to share the gospel. Inevitably many who hear the good news of Jesus will reject it and us. However, others will see God’s supernatural working and be drawn to His Son.

 **How can you cooperate with the Holy Spirit to witness for Christ?**

---

---

## ENGAGED (ACTS 2:14-16)

<sup>14</sup> **Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, “Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words. <sup>15</sup> For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it’s only nine in the morning. <sup>16</sup> On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:”**

## VERSES 14-16

Responding to growing derision, **Peter stood up with the Eleven**. His standing argues for the group being seated in the upper room rather than moving out to the courtyard. Although Peter engaged the observers, he was not alone. The other apostles joined him. A united church produces a powerful witness.

Peter **raised his voice** to be heard in the plaza below him. His address to **fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem** included both pilgrims and people who lived in the capital city.

Notice how Peter engaged their interest. He mentioned the people by their identities. Peter urged them, **let this be known to you**. What followed was important to understand. He called them to **pay attention**.

Peter refuted the accusation that the disciples were *drunk*. He pointed out that it was *only nine in the morning*, referred by some translations as the third hour. Only extreme drunkards would be indulging so early in the day. These believers would not have been getting drunk at any hour of the day. People who ridicule something they don't understand often toss out wild accusations.

Peter identified the experience as fulfillment of what *was spoken through the prophet Joel*. Believers are to engage with others and point them to Scripture. Peter's sermon found its authority in Spirit-inspired Scripture. Likewise, we must rely on God's Word for an effective witness for Christ.

○ What makes engaging with people who are far from God a challenge?

---

---

○ How has the Holy Spirit helped you overcome your hesitation to witness for Christ?

---

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE:** *God and Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. (See John 15:26; 16:7-14.)

### **INVITED** (ACTS 2:36-38)

<sup>36</sup> **“Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”**

<sup>37</sup> **When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”**

<sup>38</sup> **Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**

## VERSE 36

Peter emphasized that Jesus, whom the Jewish leaders had **crucified**, was **Lord and Messiah**. Had Peter begun his message with this proposition, these Jewish listeners may have dismissed him immediately. Instead, the Holy Spirit led him to begin with what had attracted their attention. Identifying the miracle with Joel 2:28-32, Peter claimed the authority of God's Word as he spoke.

Peter further noted they had personally witnessed Jesus's miraculous signs that manifested His identity. Nevertheless, Peter did not hesitate to lay Jesus's crucifixion at their feet.

The greatest sign was how God raised Jesus from the dead. Peter and the other disciples were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus. He noted Scriptures in which King David prophesied that the Messiah would not be left in the grave. As a result, **all the house of Israel** should **know with certainty** the truth of Jesus.

The word **therefore** in verse 36 links the previous proofs with the undeniable conclusion: **God has made this Jesus . . . both Lord and Messiah**. In the same breath, Peter reminded them they were the ones who *crucified* Jesus.

## VERSES 37-38

When the crowd **heard this, they were pierced to the heart**. This term describes emotional anguish. Power to convict people for repentance and faith cannot be found in mere arguments. The Holy Spirit who inspired Peter's sermon worked in the hearts of the hearers. The word *this* included everything Peter said, but it focused on his final words. The people were personally liable for what happened to Jesus.

With passionate conviction, they appealed to **Peter** and **the rest of the apostles**. Although Peter had been the one speaking, the other Eleven stood with him, giving support to the message. They desperately wanted to know, **what should we do?** The gospel cannot simply be intellectually accepted; it demands action.


Peter called them to **repent and be baptized**. The Greek word translated *repent* literally means to change one's mind in such a way that changes one's life. Salvation requires more than an intellectual exercise. Seeing our sin as God views it mandates a transformation made possible by faith.

At the cross, we learned that baptism is not required for salvation. The repentant thief had no opportunity for baptism, but Jesus said the man's faith gave him a place with Christ in Paradise. Baptism is

an external proclamation of an internal transformation resulting from repentance and faith in Christ.

This response must be made ***in the name of Jesus Christ***. Repentance and faith in Him would result in ***the forgiveness of your sins***. Consequently, new believers could experience what the crowd had witnessed in the disciples—***the gift of the Holy Spirit***. This was not something they could earn; it was the gift of God unto salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).

We cannot argue people into heaven. Using Scripture and personal testimony of God’s work, we can share how others can be saved. Like Peter, we must not minimize repentance or discount the necessity of faith in the resurrected Jesus. Depending on the Holy Spirit for results, we witness about Jesus who saved us and can save them.

 **Why is it important to invite others to respond to the truth of the gospel?**

---

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Take seriously all biblical commands for Christian living.*

The task of missions and evangelism is to communicate the gospel to people in such a way that they are able to hear and understand. Read through today’s focal passages again and reflect on these questions: How did the Holy Spirit work to make sure people could understand? How did Peter’s use of the Old Testament help listeners understand what they were seeing? Why is it important to “speak” to people in a language they understand when sharing the gospel? Spend time in prayer, asking God to help you effectively communicate the gospel to others.

---

---

---

---

---



# APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers should celebrate God working in and through them to share the gospel.
  - + Believers are to engage with others and point them to Scripture.
  - + Believers can invite others to repent and turn to Jesus.
- Discuss the way Scripture and personal testimony combine in an effective gospel presentation. What elements of Peter’s model can you employ in sharing your faith stories?**

---

---

- Consider the changes the Holy Spirit worked in Peter’s life to enable him for Pentecost. What evidence could you share of the Holy Spirit’s conviction and transformation? How can you encourage people you meet this week to experience the Spirit’s saving power in their lives?**

---

---

- Memorize Acts 2:36.**

## *Prayer Needs*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---