

Acts of the Holy Spirit - 2
The Filling of the Holy Spirit – Week of Sept 25, 2016
Bay Park Life Groups – Leader

We trust you had a good start as a group getting to know each other, studying Acts 1 and praying together. Micah Cobb, a minister, said *I should want to talk about God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I have no trouble talking about the Father. And I have no trouble talking about Jesus Christ. But the Spirit is a different story. I grew up in churches that only talked about the Spirit to disprove other churches' teachings about the Spirit. I was trained to be skeptical about any statement about the Spirit.* Digging down deeper Micah confesses that his apprehension really stems from five sources:

1. *I haven't experienced the Spirit like I want. I know the Spirit should be a strong presence in my life . . . but I can only point to a handful of times I felt the work of the Spirit in my life.*
2. *I've never heard the Spirit talked about much.*
3. *I don't see others experiencing the Spirit around me like I see in the Bible.*
4. *The Spirit is a controversial topic.*
5. *There are many misuses of the Spirit.*¹

If you've been around Christians or church for any small amount of time you can probably relate to at least one of Micah's fears, if not all. But here's the deal, without the Spirit our faith is powerless, lifeless and fruitless. So guess what we're going to be talking about again? Welcome aboard!

Be sure to take time to welcome any new people.

1. Can you relate to Micah Cobb's trouble in talking about the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?
2. If you had a chance to hear the sermon on Sunday, or to listen to it online, what were some of your main takeaways?

Read Acts 2:1-13 together

3. Compare Acts 4:8, 31, and 9:17-20 with 2:4. What is the recurring theme?
4. Of all the miracles God could have done on the day of Pentecost, why is the proclamation of the Gospel in various mother tongues so significant?

On the first day of Jesus' church, he refused to choose one language or one culture to minister in! If the apostles had spoken in Hebrew or Aramaic or Greek — the signal would have been set that the gospel was primarily for just one people group. But the Lord on Pentecost shows the world that the gospel is for every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. The first "worship service" is multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-racial in the extreme.

¹ <http://micahcobb.com/blog/five-reasons-im-scared-to-talk-about-the-holy-spirit-2/>

Pentecost means that the unity of the Spirit transcends all racial, national, and linguistic barriers. For centuries, commentators have noted that Acts 2 is a reversal of the curse of Babel. Acts 2 provides a “Table of the Nations” as does Genesis 10. But in Acts 2, a miracle of blessing brings people together through understanding despite linguistic barriers. While in Genesis 11, a miracle of cursing breaks people apart through division despite original linguistic sameness. In Genesis 11, the people of the earth unite to “make a name for themselves” (v.4), and this leads to the disunity of racial and cultural alienation. In Acts 2, when people unite “to call on the name of the Lord” (Acts 2:21) and the result is racial and cultural healing.

The practical ramifications for the church have never been completely worked out. The next few chapters of Acts will show that the disciples themselves did not understand the implications. They continued to erect racial barriers between Christians. What Pentecost means is that the church must work to the greatest degree possible to show unity of Christians across racial barriers. It is a mark of the Spirit-filled church that people get along inside the church who could not get along outside of it.²

5. From Acts 1:14-15 and 2:1 we learn that the believers (about 120 of them) were gathered together corporately. Who among them would have imagined that their meeting on the day of Pentecost would lead to each one of them *declaring the wonders of God (2:11)* to strangers! The word *declaring* simply means to speak. So obviously they weren't all preaching their own sermon over and above each other. What can we learn from this about our corporate gatherings?

1. That sharing God's Word isn't limited to a sermon or preachers. That will come later with Peter, but it all started with everybody. One can imagine there was a combination of public prayers by some, reciting a scripture by others, sharing a testimony of what God had done for . . . maybe somebody even broke out in a song of adoration. 2. Corporate worship and gathering is both for edification and evangelism. Too often we try to divide the two. 3. That God is not afraid to engage culture and to contextualize the message (without changing it) – they all heard the Gospel in their native dialect.

Together read Acts 2:14-36

6. What's so remarkable about the Spirit choosing Peter to speak to the crowd and what personal encouragement can we draw from it?

Before the Christ's crucifixion Peter was unashamed to voice his love for Jesus. He was bold when among other believers. After Christ's arrest Peter denied Christ when in a public space. Yet Peter is the first one the Holy Spirit chooses to boldly preach to a huge crowd – even a potentially hostile crowd. If God can use Peter,

² Timothy Keller, *Evangelism: Studies in the book of Acts*, Redeemer Presbyterian Church 2005, 14-15

then what are we so afraid of? Note the confidence with which Peter spoke – v 29 & 36

7. What insights can we glean from Peter's sermon that can help us in our proclamation of the Gospel?

1. Peter started with where his listeners were at by addressing their concern regarding drunkenness. 2. Peter used God's Word. 3. Peter pointed people to Jesus, specifically his death and resurrection. 4. The crowd's response – the Holy Spirit was obviously at work not just in the believers but also in convicting the crowd.

8. How has the study of Acts 2 helped you in your understanding of the Holy Spirit? Are you more or less confident?

9. How can we be praying for one another in light of what we've been discovering? How can we pray as a group together?