

Life! Training

Name:

Date:

Divine Drama

*The Spirit Birth
of the
Church*

Welcome to this journey through the experiences and teachings of the apostolic church as recorded in the book of Acts and the Letters written by the apostles. As a member of His body, you will discover His treasures for those who take His Name and receive His Spirit.

Come to the Scriptures with a prayer-filled heart and open mind as you uncover truths for your life. Record these in the blanks provide to help keep yourself accountable in your daily growth. Talk to the Lord when you find yourself coming short in an area. Share with others the riches you find in His living Word.

Day 1: embellished Bible story.

Day 2-6: interactive journal devotions.

Day 7: contemporary stories of faith.

An Emcee like Me

Jesus can use an _____ person to _____ others.¹

Only _____ prevents our destruction.²

The Spirit drastically changes my _____.³

Others should ____ the _____.⁴

The _____ is not the message.⁵

We should always show _____ the _____ of God.⁶

All _____ must point to _____.⁷

Those who want Jesus will _____ the _____.⁸

_____ believers warn others about _____.⁹



¹ Matthew 14:28-31; 16:16-23; 17:4; 26:37-43; John 1:42; 13:6-11; 21:3

² Matthew 26:33-35, 69-75; Luke 5:1-9; 22:31-33; John 18:10-11, 15; 21:1-23

³ Acts 1:15-22; 2:14-40; 4:1-23; 5:1-11; 17-42; 8:15-24; 10:9-48; I Peter 1:1

⁴ Acts 2:6-13; 4:8-14; Luke 19:7-8; I Corinthians 1:27; Galatians 1:22-24

⁵ Acts 2:14-21; 4:8-12; 5:21, 29-33; 7:2-53; 8:5, 35; 9:17, 20; 10:34-44; 19:1-6

⁶ Acts 2:16-21, 25-28, 34-35, 39; 3:22-26; 4:11; 7:3, 7, 28, 32, 34, 37, 40, 46, 50

⁷ Acts 2:22-38; 3:12-26; Deut. 18:15, 18, 19; Joel 2:32; Psalm 16:8-11; 110:1

⁸ Acts 2:37-42; 4:4; 8:12-17; 9:17-18; 10:44-48; 16:32-33; 19:1-6; 22:16

⁹ Acts 2:40; 15:32; Matthew 3:7-10; 12:34; Hebrews 3:13; James 4:8-10

Epic Previews

See Genesis 11:1-10

I poured more mud into the brick form and thought how great it was to be part of something so perfect. We all looked like busy bees, scurrying around, building a hive that would reach heaven. Everyone—honestly—everyone on earth was part of this project. We had such unity and common goals that we all felt like brothers. It also helped we all spoke the same language.

A guilty sense of excitement had glued us all together. Our ancestors had warned us about their God's commands for how we were to fill up the earth. However, we agreed that being scattered would make us vulnerable.

I had never met a man like Nimrod. He had a clear vision for the future. He encouraged us to do away with the old traditions and adopt a bright new future. He helped us use local resources to do something out-of-this-world.

Still, I had this watch-your-back kind of feeling. Every night I felt vulnerable and alone. In the day, I would look up at the brilliant blue sky and expect a bolt of lightening to destroy our whole project.

One day, the atmosphere was particularly charged. A storm rolled in with thunder and lightening enough to make one go deaf and blind. The rain came down so hard it ruined some of the bricks I had just poured. I thought the storm was the end of the world. Afterward, it suddenly lifted and the sun shone brightly again. Coming out from hiding, we found the project shiny-wet in the brilliant sunshine. Overhead a brilliant rainbow colored the sky.

I went to tell my co-worker to come see the rainbow, but strange words came out of my mouth. After struggling to talk for a minute, I noticed that he, too, was talking funny. I could not make sense of what he was saying. Now I knew we had been hit by something worse than lightening. God had dropped judgment on us for rejecting His plan.

Soon, we left the site where this all happened, and traveled around the world to make a new life for ourselves. I never in my life imagined that God would use our own words to punish us and separate us from each other.

As I poured water into the washbasin, I sighed with restlessness. After Jesus left, everything seemed so incomplete and unfinished. He only gave us vague instructions on what to do. We all met daily for prayer and worship, trying to reach heaven and the promise the Lord had told us about. Everyone—honestly—every disciple of Jesus in Jerusalem was intent on this project. Our unity and common goals made us feel like brothers.

A healthy sense of excitement had meshed our hearts together. We studied the writings of our ancestors in the Holy Scriptures and found multiple places where they predicted the events we were anticipating. We all agreed that no matter how long it took, we would not let doubt or impatience scatter us.

I had never met a man like Peter. He had been one of the most volatile members of Jesus' team, yet he naturally took leadership of the disciples. He encouraged us to reverence the old teachings while adopting wholeheartedly all that God had in store for our future.

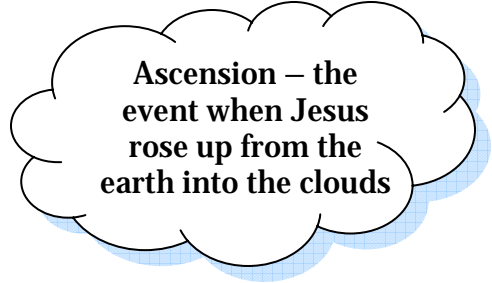
Still, I had this watch-your-back kind of feeling. Every night I worried the Jewish police would come get us. Not knowing what we were looking for, I stared into the brilliant blue sky during the day, hoping for some dramatic sign.

One day, the atmosphere was particularly charged. We had all gathered together for the feast and were sitting down, worshipping the Lord. Suddenly, wind swept in with a loud rushing sound. At first I feared a bad storm, but when I opened my eyes, I saw flames of fire dancing over the heads of our group. The feeling was so unique I thought it was the end of the world! Then, wonderful feelings sprang up—a whole rainbow of color exploded inside me—and I began speaking in a language I had never heard before.

I could not understand my brothers and sisters who also spoke new languages, but I sensed we all shared the same Spirit. What a wonderful God to send His promise in unspeakable words to bless us and bring us together. Later, we took this experience and the Jesus message all over the world to reunite humanity with God and one another.

Opening Acts

While the gospel accounts close out with the wonder of Jesus' resurrection, Acts begins with the woo-ha moment of the Lord's ascension. Rather than demonstrate the end of an era, the Lord begins a new thing as he disappears from earthly view.



Acts, written by Luke, continues where Luke's gospel left off (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). In

Acts 1:1-3, how does the writer summarize the time leading up to the moment of Jesus' ascension?

In Acts 1:4, what command did Jesus give His followers?

In Acts 1:5, what promise did He give them?

This promise parallels John's prophecy in Luke 3:16. While Jesus prepares His followers for a new thing, they ask Him if now is the time to put Israel back in charge (Acts 1:6). Jesus simply tells them they do not need to know about that. Instead, what does He focus their attention on in Acts 1:8?

This verse gives the table of contents for the Book of Acts: Jerusalem in Judea (1-5), Samaria (6-12), the ends of the earth (13-28). This verse also gives the mission for all believers: to represent Jesus in Spirit power.

Jesus left the group on the Mount of Olives and disappeared into a cloud. He had completed His mission and promised to pour out His Spirit on them. How was Jesus' mysterious disappearance similar to the story you read in Deuteronomy 34:1, 5-6?

How is Jesus' story similar to one in II Kings 2:1, 11?

After Moses left, what did he leave with the man who took his place? See Deuteronomy 34:9.

What did Elisha receive from his leader, in II Kings 2:9, 15?

What do Jesus' followers receive after He ascended?

How did Joshua and Elisha fulfill the calling and ministry of Moses and Elijah?

How do the disciples of Jesus' fulfill His calling and ministry?

How does John 14:12 set the stage for what happens in the book of Acts?

Ladies and Gentlemen, Take Your Seats

Expecting great things from the Lord, these believers went to Jerusalem to await the outpouring of the Spirit. Like all moves of the Spirit, this one began with united prayer (Exodus 2:23-25; Judges 3:9, 15; Ezekiel 9:4). What kind of praying does Acts 1:14 say preceded the gift of the Spirit?

What great things are you expecting God to do?

Who have you joined with in prayer?

What is the difference between saying a prayer and waiting on the Lord?

The disciples waited about a week until they received the promise they sought. What promise does Psalm 27:14 give you if you will wait on the Lord?

What do Psalm 37:7-8 tell you to do ?

How does this affect what you are seeking from God?

What promise do you claim from Psalm 37:9?

The eleven apostles also used the Psalms to help them prepare for the Spirit outpouring. Sensing something big coming, they prepared their hearts by praying and applying Scripture. Peter stood up in the group and shared what he had seen in the scriptures about Judas. They had to forget him and replace him with another apostle (Acts 1:15-22).

Following the leading of the Spirit (1:16, 20) and asking the Lord Jesus for direction (1:24-26), they appointed a successor from their group who had followed Jesus faithfully from the time of John. This situation teaches some key principles:

1. Stand strong in the faith. No matter what you have done for God, if you return to wickedness you suffer in hellfire (1:25; Matthew 7:21-23).
2. You can be replaced. Do not think your ministry is better than anyone else's (Exodus 4:24-26).
3. Do not ignore sin. Get it out. A clean church is ready for the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 1:13-14; 2:12-17).

What things have you cleaned out of your life that helped you get ready for what God wanted to do in you?

What unfinished business do you need to tend to before God fulfills His promises in your life?

What can you do to help keep your church morally clean?

How are you expectantly uniting with God's people?

The Curtain Opens

God ripped the Temple curtain, which represented the Old Covenant, and pushed aside the props to present His masterpiece. The Spirit of God would now dwell in human beings. This new theme took center stage on a day of celebration called Pentecost.

Pentecost means “fiftieth” and marks the 50th day after Passover. Pentecost is also called the Feast of Firstfruits, being timed near the spring grain harvest. The narrative in Acts 2, informs us of a new kind of firstfruits in a new kind of harvest. Some people claim that Pentecost ended with the apostles. However, it did not end the harvest season, but began it. How do you know Pentecost was the beginning of something God had started and not the end of it?

Read Acts 2:2. What happened?

The Spirit of the Lord is often described in terms of wind or breath. In Genesis 2:7, what did God do?

In the prophet’s vision in Ezekiel 37:9-10, what did the Spirit of God do?

On the cross, Jesus quit breathing. After His resurrection, however, He commanded them to receive the Holy Spirit. Then what did He do, in John 20:22?

On the cross, Jesus got the wind knocked out of Him (so to speak). After His resurrection and ascension, believers caught His “second wind” as He breathed into humanity and made a new creation. Jesus hinted at this sign when explaining the Spirit baptism to Nicodemus (John 3:8).

Like hikers climbing Mt. Everest, people who try to live for God without His Spirit will gasp for air. Thin atmosphere in the breath-taking views of the Himalayas require climbers to bring bottled oxygen to survive. To go to the higher places in God, you need to tank up on His Breath.

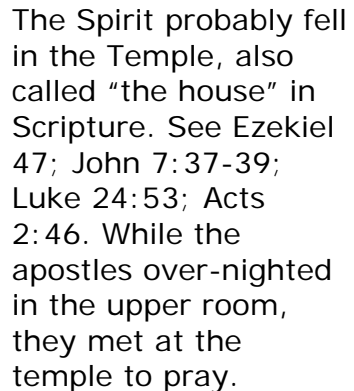
In addition to hearing wind, what dramatic vision did the people see in Acts 2:3?

How did this fulfill John’s prophecy in Luke 3:16?

Pentecost was also an anniversary celebration of the giving of the Law. How did God bring the Old Covenant to Mt. Sinai, in Exodus 19:18?

What does God say about this covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-33?

How did He fulfill this promise at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost?



The Spirit probably fell in the Temple, also called “the house” in Scripture. See Ezekiel 47; John 7: 37-39; Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46. While the apostles over-nighted in the upper room, they met at the temple to pray.

Script Changes

The Spirit of God came upon prophets often to speak to His people. Since they refused to hear Him, He decided to quit talking their language. As a judgment against those who stopped their ears at Him, how did God promise to talk to His people, in Isaiah 28:11?

Pentecost fulfilled this judgment as the believers were blessed with the supernatural ability to talk in tongues. Of the 120 believers gather in Jerusalem, how many does Acts 2:4 say spoke in tongues?

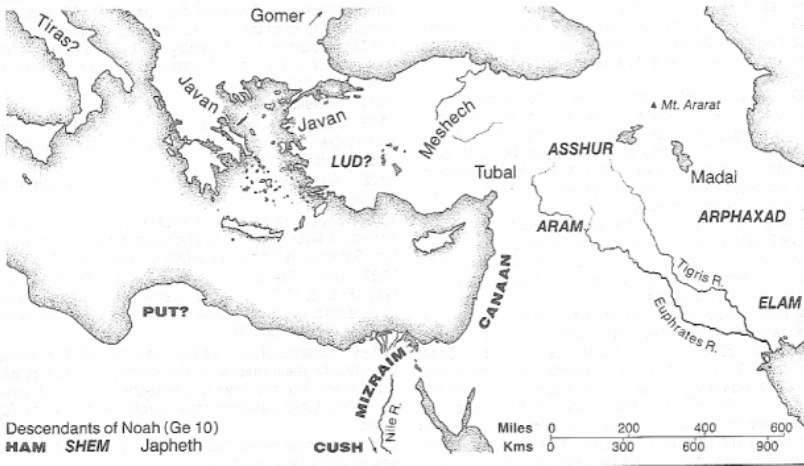
People had crowded around the Temple, Jerusalem's main attraction, for the feast day. Who were these people, in Acts 2:5?

These immigrants and visitors to the Holy City could hear the believers speaking in languages they had learned from their mothers. Shocked, they could not understand how unlearned country folk could speak their own tongues. This confusion echoes an earlier event. In Genesis 11:9, what judgment did God send on the rebellious people?

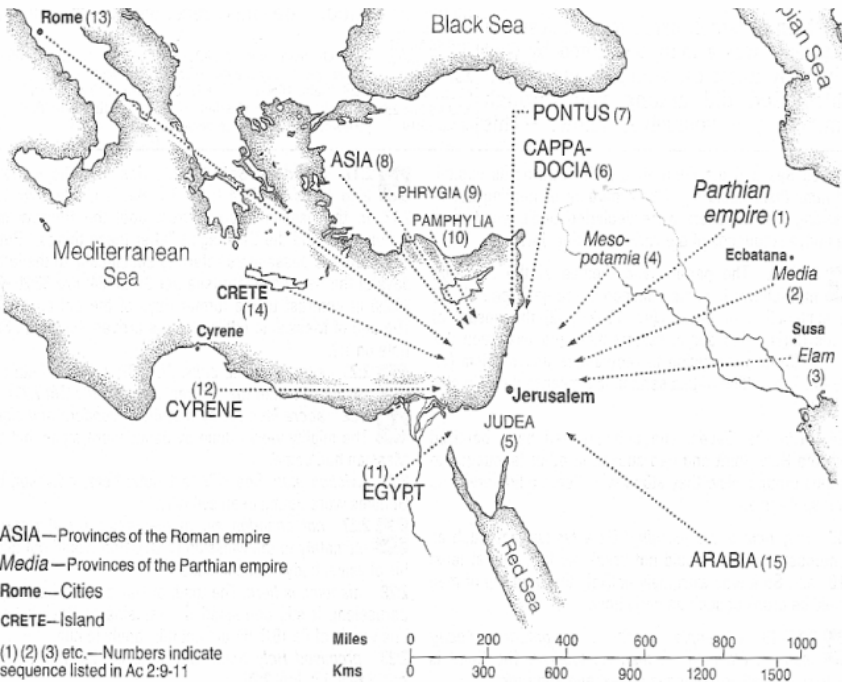
What a great plot! What a twist of irony! When humanity united together against God (Genesis 11:1-4), He divided them with multiple languages. Now in Acts, those who have reunited with Him, He brings together in one Spirit with multiple languages. What once brought division now brings unity.

The maps here indicate the expansion of the tribes of people after Babel compared to the reuniting of languages at Pentecost. All sixteen grandsons of Noah form the major tribes of earth (Genesis 9:18-19; 10:2, 6, 22) and are represented by the languages spoken at Pentecost.

Dispersion of People



Places Listed In Acts 2



Source: http://www.anglicanbiblechurch.us/Messages/Images/acts2_maps.png, accessed 4-13-2011

The Star of the Show

Peter could have messed up the Day of Pentecost. The gospels record a few of his mistakes and this could have been just one more. Instead, this moody person had his act together for the most dramatic moment in history. He did not get offended at the hecklers who accused them of being drunk. His ministry methods teach us volumes.

Peter did not get the listeners to focus on his experience. He could have said, “I was just sitting there with my eyes closed when wham I started speaking this language and wondering ‘What is happening?’ And then I felt this tingly feeling and was like...”

Fortunately, Peter used the experience at hand to get people to look at God’s Word. How can you use your testimony to point people to the Scriptures?

Next, the Apostle Peter presented Jesus. Peter knew he was only an emcee for the day’s events, not the main attraction. Believers must anchor their witnessing in the word of God and pointing people to the God of the Word. How can you use your testimony to present Jesus?

In Acts 2:16-21, Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-32. Why?

What story does Peter tell in Acts 2:22-24?

Next, Peter quotes from Psalm 16:8-11. This helped the listeners (who knew David’s writings) see how Jesus’ life had been written as a victory before any of this happened.

Peter then quotes from Psalm 110:1 which presents Jesus as exalted over all creation with all the authority of the Father. How does this message contrast against what he says about his listeners' actions in Acts 2:23 and 2:36?

We see then a progression in soul-winning: get attention, present Scripture, introduce the glory of Jesus, and show the hearer his or her wrongs against Him. Why is it important for you to contrast the greatness of Jesus against how the unbeliever's actions bring Him to shame?

Those of the crowd who were moved by Peter's words wanted to know what to do after hearing the message. How did Peter answer their question in Acts 2:38?

Notice that only serious seekers will be interested in the plan of salvation. Nicodemus asked before Jesus told about the new birth (John 3:4, 5); Cornelius asked before Peter came with the message of salvation (Acts 10); since John's disciples in Ephesus wanted to know about this Holy Ghost they had never heard of, Paul presented Jesus, and they obeyed the plan (Acts 19:1-6).

Practice reaching the lost the way Peter did: tell stories and share scriptures. Jesus told a lot of stories and asked questions to get people thinking. Those who were hungry came closer to Him to know more. Hungry souls do not have to be force fed. Enjoy sharing the good news.

Who can you tell about Jesus and this new life in Him?

Encore! Encore!

The drama of Pentecost was not a one-night show. *Time* magazine reported this movement among the top one hundred influential events of the millennium:

The flame of Pentecostalism was first lighted when Charles Fox Parham declared in 1901 that speaking in tongues was a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit. It might have sputtered if not for William Joseph Seymour, a black preacher who listened to Parham through an open door in his Houston Bible school. Soon, Seymour set out for Los Angeles, where his own baptism in the Spirit in 1906 brought him an enthusiastic following. Within two years of founding a mission in an abandoned church on Azusa Street, his multicultural ministry sent missionaries to 25 countries.

Pentecostalism is a religion of the heart. Since a personal experience of God is as important as doctrine, it is an adaptable faith; by the end of the 1960's, Protestants and Catholics had both begun to embrace the gifts of the Spirit in Charismatic renewal movements. Worship services may feature speaking in tongues, shouting and swaying, and spiritual healing. Today about a half billion people call themselves Pentecostal or Charismatic, and Pentecostals alone outnumber Anglicans, Baptists, Lutherans and Presbyterians combined.¹

This movement cannot be copied or sold. Some think speaking in tongues is only a side-show that God abandoned long ago. However, He still moves people to speak the wonders of God in unknown languages (Acts 2:11).

Missionary Bill Drost faced a co-worker who ridiculed his testimony about God giving him the gift of the Holy Ghost. Working in a coal mine at the time, Bro. Drost had to endure the ridicule and sarcasm of the elevator shaft operator.

¹ Kenneth F. Haney, [*Baptism of Fire*](#), Stockton, CA, 2001, 34-35..

One day, this man began deriding him terribly. He began to mock the way Pentecostals sing. Then he began to imitate speaking in tongues, saying, “See? Anybody can do that. It’s nothing but a bunch of gibberish!”

As the elevator descended, this man continued his artificial talking in tongues as he lowered the elevator with Bill Drost and other workers. After they dropped out of view, the man got so carried away in his caustic mockery that he leaned too far back. The elevator wheel picked him up by his sweater and began spinning him around. Each turn banged his head against the ground. He was gruesomely battered and bloody. Once someone saw what was wrong, they got him free and rushed him to the hospital. He never talked again.¹

Not only does God viciously defend this wonderful gift He has given His people, He continues to give it out generously. At the General Conference of the United Pentecostal Church on October 3, 2010, God made history again with another show-stopping event. This Sunday night crusade in Houston brought together a crowd of over 13,000 people with over 20,000 internet connections watching the service from remote locations.

Anointed singing, worship, and testimonies went forth to build an atmosphere of expectancy for those gathered. 600 trained altar workers and 1,000 truth-preaching ministers stood ready as spiritual midwives to assist others in the new birth. Jack Cunningham spoke mightily under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, preparing seekers to receive the Promise.

Rather than be confined to the platform area, God poured out His Spirit throughout the crowd. New believers received their personal Pentecost all across the floor and up in the balconies of Houston’s Toyota Center. Conservative estimates determined that over 3,000 people were filled with the Spirit for the first time that night.²

¹ T. Wynn Drost, [*Dedicated to Revival*](#), Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 2000, 24-25.

² David K. Bernard, “General Conference Report 2010,” [*Pentecostal Herald*](#), Dec 2010, 40.

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Life! *Journal*

Acts 2:1-4

**And when the day of Pentecost
was fully come, they were all
with one accord in one place.**

**And suddenly there came a sound
from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind,
and it filled all the house
where they were sitting.**

**And there appeared unto them
cloven tongues like as of fire,
and it sat upon each of them.**

**And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,
and began to speak with other tongues,
as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

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