

Acts 2:1-13 | Empowered by the Holy Spirit

InterVarsity Bible Study Guide (60 minutes)

WELCOME (7 minutes)

Icebreaker: What show are you currently watching? If you're not watching anything, how do you spend most of your free time?

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)

Each time we meet, let's be careful to work well together as a group. We are coming from many different backgrounds, so the purpose of these group norms is to help everyone feel welcome so they can fully participate:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

As your leader, I will help us remember our group norms. Also, as members of this group, feel free to speak up if you notice we are straying from these norms.

INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)

In Acts 1 we see Jesus ascend into heaven, but instruct his disciples to wait in Jerusalem to receive the promised Holy Spirit so that they can become his witnesses. Despite Jerusalem being unsafe for this minority sect, they obeyed Jesus, remained in Jerusalem, and prayed constantly, until this major turning point in Acts 2.

Pentecost is a Jewish holiday that would have brought Jews from all over the surrounding countries back to Jerusalem. Pentecost was always 50 days after the Passover celebration, which commemorated Moses receiving the law on Mt. Sinai after God liberated the Israelites from Egypt through the Red Sea (Exodus 14-20). This particular Pentecost was also occurring 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus. As an agricultural festival, the common practice at Pentecost was for farmers to bring the first sheaf of wheat from their crops and offer it to God as a sign of gratitude and trust that the rest of their crops would be fruitful.

SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?

- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Acts 2:1-13 NIV

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)

Let's discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. What might it have been like to be the disciples? What about the crowd? What were they experiencing with their senses?
2. What connections do you see between the Holy Spirit coming on Pentecost and the meaning of that celebration (see background notes in the introduction)?
3. How would you describe the disciples before and after they receive the Holy Spirit?
Bonus: How is this event related to the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9?
4. Why does God orchestrate an event in which everyone hears the wonders of God being preached in their own heart languages?
5. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Just as Jesus foretold, the disciples have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. This group of unqualified, uneducated, untravelled and youthful guys remained obedient to Jesus. They waited and prayed and here we see them, filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking about the wonders of God in various different languages. Yet, this isn't just happening on any old day. This is happening on Pentecost, the day that celebrates firstfruits and the giving of the law, the ultimate direction for life. God is underscoring how the giving of the Holy Spirit is a new way of life by which all who believe in Him will be empowered to carry out his purposes in the world. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit transformed the community of believers back then and throughout this history of the church.

The Spirit empowers people for God's mission.

Let's discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group's discussion of the text.

- A. What does a life empowered by the Holy Spirit look like for you? What teaching have you received in the past about the Holy Spirit, and how does that teaching inform your current posture towards the Spirit?
- B. What would it look like for you to welcome and be empowered by the Holy Spirit in an increasing way in your life?

CLOSE (2 minutes)

Let's pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

Tips for leading the group discussion:

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying "What else?" instead of commenting on every response.*