



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

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the promised gift

Scripture Story: Acts 2:1-39.

Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 4, 5.

Key Text: Acts 2:2-4.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The Holy Spirit is one of the greatest gifts that God offers us, but do we see Him as a gift worth receiving? Do we see the Holy Spirit as a force that works in evangelistic efforts, or perhaps as the voice of our conscience, but nothing more?

In Luke 11:13 Jesus makes the analogy of God as a father giving good gifts to his children. But when the punch line comes, Jesus doesn't say "This is how God will give you what you want"; He says, "This is how God will give you His Holy Spirit." It almost seems like a cop-out, doesn't it? How many other things do we want or need? Perhaps we want good grades, the ability to get into a good school, the gift of good friends, the ability to fit in. . . . So many things seem much more important in a teenager's life—even in an adult's life! It almost seems like the beautifully wrapped gift, opened to expose a bag of tube socks.

But that is only if we misunderstand who the Holy Spirit is and what He wants to do in our lives! The Holy Spirit is God Himself, and He wants to lead us into all good things. God created us with the needs and desires we have, and the Holy Spirit will show us how to fulfill those in a lasting, godly way. And when others see that we have something different, they will want to know what the difference is.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the immense gift of the Holy Spirit in their own personal lives. (*Know*)

- Sense the love God has for them to offer them such a gift. (*Feel*)
- Choose to ask for the Holy Spirit's leading in their lives, and tell others why they have something so special. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Holy Spirit, Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs, No. 5

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth (Gen. 1:1, 2; 2 Sam. 23:2; Ps. 51:11; Isa. 61:1; Luke 1:35; 4:18; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-13; Acts 1:8; 5:3; 10:38; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Peter 1:21).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Ask the students to think of the one person they love most in the world. With that one person in mind, ask

them the following question: If money weren't an issue, what would the perfect gift for that person be, and why?

Look at each gift. How big is that gift? Is it lavish, such as a house or an airplane? Is it simple, such as a handwritten letter, or a family heirloom? Is it the gift of time? Why is the gift perfect for that person? How much thought must go into choosing that perfect gift?

God loves us infinitely more than we could ever love another person. How much more thought must have gone into the gift He offers us?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"One of America's famous attractions of years gone by was the firefall of Yosemite National Park.

"On a summer evening tourists from around the world would gather below Glacier Point for the dramatic show. At precisely the stroke of nine a voice rang out across the waiting camp, 'Let the fire fall!'

"And 3,000 feet above the floor of the valley, a voice answered, 'The fire falls!'

"Flaming embers poured over the precipice into the darkness of the summer night. They cascaded down the sheer white granite of the mountain wall. No one who saw the firefall would ever forget it.

"Throughout Scripture, fire symbolizes the presence of God. When you encounter God's fiery presence, your life is changed forever. Moses entered the presence of God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-6). The high priest experienced the presence of God between the cherubim in the Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary (Exodus 25:22). Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and the fire fell. First Kings 18:38 describes the scene with the words 'Then the fire of the Lord fell.' The fire of God's presence consumed Elijah's altar. The people fell on their faces and cried out, 'The Lord, He is God.'

"The fire of Pentecost transformed Peter into a powerful proclaimer of the gospel. More than 3,000 were baptized in one place in one day. The fire continued to fall on these early disciples until the 'word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly' (Acts 6:7, NKJV). The disciples turned the world upside down. The Spirit's power transformed not only them but their families, their friends, and their communities.

"God longs for His fire to fall again. He longs to consume the dross of sin in our hearts so the fire of His presence can light the world. He longs for the day

when the world will be aflame with His love. It happened at Pentecost and it will happen again. Oh, God, let the fire fall!" (Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 75).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes we don't know the value of the gift we have been given! It might seem ordinary or uninteresting. But the gift of the Holy Spirit is of inestimable value not only for our own spiritual lives but in our everyday lives and interactions with others. This is why we have to take seriously our prayer life. We need to plead with God for the gift of the Holy Spirit to be effective in our Christian lives and ministry.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- What was the physical sign of the Holy Spirit in this story? How would it have felt to see this happen?
- What miracle did the Holy Spirit perform? Why?
- What do you think the Holy Spirit did for them personally and individually?
- What was the reaction of the people watching? What would your reaction have been?

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Luke 3:21, 22; Luke 12:9-12; John 20:19-22.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The Matthew Henry commentary sheds some light on this story:

He points out that this miracle happened during a feast day that brought Jews from countries far and near to celebrate. This would contribute to maximizing the gospel to all nations, since the miracle of the languages would be more public and its fame would spread sooner and farther.

The Feast of Pentecost, which was being celebrated in Jerusalem at the time of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, was a celebration of the law being given on Mount Sinai. Pentecost would now be a benchmark for the gospel as well. Passover took on a second



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Independent Thinking

Teachers who make a difference are those who make learning engaging for their students. They make the content of the lesson come to life so much so that the students are drawn to the subject matter and they don't even realize that they are being taught. Make your objective to attract attention not to yourself but to Jesus and His Word shining through everything you say and teach.

This week, think about your role in the classroom. Do you allow the students to come to conclusions on their own? Do you give them the credit for their guided realizations?

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had his mission confirmed with a vision of burning coals. Isaiah's mission was confirmed with a coal of fire touching his lips (Isaiah 6:7). Sin finally will be destroyed in a lake of fire, and the earth will be purified with fire. Our characters are said to be purified like metal in fire. Fire is a very important symbol both before and after Christ's ministry, showing the continuity of what Christ was teaching.

Matthew Henry makes a connection between the dividing of tongues at the Tower of Babel and the dividing of tongues of fire at Pentecost. He suggests that at the Tower of Babel the dividing of tongues separated people and made it difficult for the true worship of God to continue with those who had already set it aside. However, with the dividing of the tongues of fire at Pentecost (and with the subsequent miracle of languages) people from nations far and near were brought back together through the Holy Spirit.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask the students to think of one gift that God has given them. What do they do with that gift? With the blessing of the Holy Spirit, what limits are possible with that gift?

For example, perhaps one student enjoys writing. What do they do with that gift? Perhaps they write poetry, or contribute to the school paper. What could the Holy Spirit do with that gift if they would ask Him?

importance with Jesus' death, and now Pentecost was experiencing the same "doubling up" of significance.

The tongues of fire that rested upon each of the followers of Christ were also highly symbolic. First of all, John the Baptist had declared that Jesus would baptize them with the Spirit and fire. This is an example of that: the outpouring of the Holy Spirit paired with the tongues of fire that appeared over their heads. We are reminded of God's appearance to Moses in the burning bush. It was there that He declared His name: I AM Who I AM. The law, celebrated at Pentecost, was given in fire on Mount Sinai. Even Ezekiel (in 1:13)

Teaching From the Lesson

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book The Acts of the Apostles. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

Perhaps that student could become a great writer for God, given even more talent than they could imagine because of God's special blessing. Encourage the class to think big!

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The Holy Spirit was promised to us long, long ago. God has not forgotten His promise, and we can still claim that gift. The problem is that many people don't see the value in the gift of the Holy Spirit. It seems boring or theological. People don't see how it could fit into their lives. They don't see what the Holy Spirit is offer-

ing to them personally. He is not offering overblown church services with people falling down in a faint. He is offering courage, wisdom, discretion, contentment, and a sense of one's purpose on this earth.

The Holy Spirit is given to us to help us gain all those things we crave. The Holy Spirit will lead us into joy and contentment. He will also give us the courage to stand up and say where our happiness comes from. We don't need to preach. We just need to tell our own stories. There is no better sermon than a happy, successful young person saying "My life is different because of God."



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Acts of the Apostles (or Unlikely Leaders)*, chapters 4, 5.