

ACTS 1–4

The Holy Spirit, Part 1

Summary for Teachers

Theme

Be empowered by the Spirit!—When, why, and how the first disciples received the Holy Spirit. Learn about the difference it made in their lives.

Aim

To give the historical background of when, why, and how the Lord sent the Holy Spirit to the early Christians, based on a study of Acts 1–4, how the Holy Spirit transformed them and how the course attendees can be transformed too! Every attendee should already be filled with the Holy Spirit before taking the course. This class will now challenge them to be used and empowered by the Spirit.

To give a clear understanding that the main purpose of the Holy Spirit is to enable us to witness.

To also give an idea of how to read the Bible in a way that they can absorb the lessons.

Roundup

Opening Activity and Prayer (20 minutes)

Music

Discussion

Prayer for the class

Class Section: Bible Class—Acts 1–4 (85 minutes)

Acts chapter 1

Acts chapter 2

A look at “witnessing”

Acts chapter 3

Acts chapter 4

Closing Activity and Prayer (15 minutes)

Prayer for greater measure of the Holy Spirit

Songs

Get Prepared

- This is a class about the Holy Spirit, so the most important ingredient *is* the Spirit! As teachers, you need to be filled to overflowing beforehand! Your enthusiasm will be contagious. Without the infilling and overflowing of the Spirit on your teaching team, the class could be dry theology, which is not the goal! You want these classes to be alive, a sample of the manifestation of His Spirit. You may even want to take a little time beforehand to read over some of the publications

on the Holy Spirit (such as the Activated magazine #2). Have prayer that you can be the Lord's instrument(s) during this class.

- You might have to teach the class by yourself—that is one person teaching the whole group—but if you can surround yourself with other Spirit-filled people such as some of the more advanced students who are on-fire and manifest a great deal of love for the Lord, it would be an asset.
- Music can play a very important part in this class. Music is a tool that the Lord can use to catapult the students into hungering and thirsting after Him. Try to have music, if possible.
- As this is a Bible class, try to have extra copies of the New Testament (or full Bible) so that each student can read along. (The print should be large enough that this will be easy to read.) If possible, they should take turns reading.
- Between passages, there are series of questions (**Q**) and answers (**A**). Try to discuss the questions and draw out the answers from the students themselves. Depending on how much they figure out, you will need to also explain more according to the answers that are given.
- As there is so much student interaction in this class, we have not included many anecdotes or illustrations, but concentrated on the Bible study itself.
- You should explain to your students that as we learned in the previous classes about not only reading the Word but also prayerfully studying it in order to get the full meaning, that is what we will do during this class. You'll be asking them questions, and these are the type of questions they could ask themselves when they read. Obviously some things you know and they don't, but the point is to get them involved and thinking about what they read.
- Optional Activity: You could invite the students for a special meeting to view the movie, *Peter and Paul* (Anthony Hopkins and Robert Foxworth, 1981) if you have this available on videocassette.
- Related material in *Activated* magazines:
 - Activated* Issue #2, pages 4–6, "Peter's Transformation"
 - Activated* Issue #5, page 15, "Feeding Reading: The Book of Acts"

Student Reading Material

God's Gifts (Get Activated! booklet)

Opening Activity And Prayer

20 minutes

► Music

① *Begin with a short prayer to lead into the music.*

♪ *Select some lively songs from the "Holy Spirit Song Sheet."*

► Discussion

☛ *Ask: Who has memorized since we last met? Does anybody have a verse he or she'd like to quote?*

► Prayer for the class

✠ *Sample prayer: Dear Jesus, we thank You for Your Word that You've given us a yardstick by which we can measure all things, and a guidebook that we can know the way which You'd have us go. Enlighten our minds, Lord, through the Word! If we want faith, faith comes by hearing the Word of God! Increase our faith today, through Your Word. We pray that You would bring us all into one mind and one Spirit.*

Class Section: Bible Class—Acts 1–4

85 minutes

- ① *This class covers the main parts of Acts chapters 1 to 4 with the students. We are not printing here all of the verses, but only the ones that there are comments on.*
- ① *You may want to read each chapter through once without stopping for comment, and then turn to the notes and go back over the chapter, rereading the key verses and discussing. Alternatively, you could read the chapter and stop to comment as you come to the significant verses.*
- ① *Remember, you should try to get the students to find the answers to the questions. Some are more obvious than others. This is going to help them study and pay attention to what they are reading.*

Today we're going to be studying about the Holy Spirit. We'll be studying Acts chapters 1 to 4, with a focus on the Holy Spirit.

► Acts chapter 1

Q? The chapter begins with a reminder of what Jesus had told His followers to do before He ascended. What was that?

A: To wait.

Acts 1:4–5—He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father.

Q? Did they obey? Did they wait?

A: Yes.

Q? Where?

A: In Jerusalem.

Q? Why?

A: Because Jesus had commanded them to. He had a promise to go with that instruction, like He does with nearly all commandments; most promises have a condition!

Q? If they kept the commandment, what would happen? What is the key verse of the whole Book of Acts?

A: *Acts 1:8—But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me ... to the end of the earth.*

Q? Why do you suppose He told them to wait in Jerusalem? Why didn't they wait someplace out in the country? Why didn't they wait up in Samaria?

A: For one thing, that's where they were at the time. They were right outside the walls of Jerusalem when He gave them this commandment—on the Mount of Olives. They were fasting and praying and waiting on the Lord.

Acts 1:14—These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

But the main reason He had them wait in Jerusalem was so they would be in the right place at the right time for the mighty miracle which was about to happen

Q? All told there were how many?

A: 120. That is quite a number of people in one upper room! It says, “These all continued ... with the women.”

► Acts chapter 2

Now here is the reason and purpose God had them in Jerusalem.

Acts 2:1—Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

They were united in mind and heart and spirit! If we’re not going to be united in mind and heart and spirit, we’ll miss the blessing.

Q? Does anyone know what the Day of Pentecost was?

A: It was the 50th day after Passover, called the Feast of Weeks, or the Feast of the Harvest in the Old Testament.

The Greek word pentekoste meant 50th, so it was the 50th day after Passover. Pentecost was an annual Jewish feast day. What they’d been celebrating for so many thousands of years was now about to happen—the fulfillment of the foreshadowing of this feast! Pentecost was the harvest feast.

Q? Do you think it just happened by accident that it was on the Day of Pentecost that the Lord poured out His Spirit? Why did He have them meet in Jerusalem? Why did He have them stay there together in one accord?—Just for the pouring out of the Spirit? Couldn’t He have poured out His Spirit just as well on the 120 someplace else?

A: He had them there for a witness. The main purpose of the Day of Pentecost was not just the mighty signs and wonders and the supernatural manifestations, which most people seem to think was the main purpose of the power. The Holy Spirit manifestations were only a means to an end! The most important thing is the witness that they were to the crowds of people who had come to Jerusalem for the feast.

Q? What was the most important thing that happened that day? It was not just the outpouring of the Spirit, but it was what?

A: You’ll find it in the 41st verse of the 2nd chapter.

Acts 2:41—Then those who gladly received his [Peter’s] word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Three thousand people received Jesus and were saved! That is the most important thing that happened on the Day of Pentecost!—not the outpouring of the Spirit, believe it or not, although that was essential for it! The one cannot do without the other.

The greatest, most important thing that happened that morning was not the outpouring of the power and a lot of people talking in tongues! It was not all that prayer, but it was the end result—what they accomplished, as an absolutely inalterable effect of that prayer and that praise and that outpouring and that power! That was the final aim and goal of the whole affair, as far as God was concerned—souls saved! Acts 2:41 is the most important verse in the 2nd chapter.

In verses 14 to 39 we have a wonderful sermon by Peter: It is an explanation to the hearers of what was going on, so that they could understand. Through the preaching of the Gospel to the big crowd that the miracle attracted, they had tremendous results! So why did they meet in Jerusalem? The Lord told them to, and now you begin to see God’s reason for it!

Q? Why do you suppose all these people mentioned in the 9th and 10th verses were there?

A: Because there was a big feast day and there were a lot of international visitors in town. Jews came from all over the world for these famous feasts.

To give the Early Christian Church a real send-off and to get them really rolling, the Lord let them preach a couple of sermons (Acts chapter 3) that got about another 8,000 souls saved!

Q? That wasn't all that happened on the Day of Pentecost; what else happened?

A: Look at verses 1–4. They “began to speak with other tongues.”

Acts 2:1–4—Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. (2) And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now look at verses 6–8. The people heard them speak in many languages.

Acts 2:6–8—And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. (7) Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? (8) And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?”

Some say, “They weren't really speaking in anything supernatural; these were all languages that they knew!” Why were the people amazed and why did they all marvel if the disciples already knew those languages? It was obviously a miracle, because the disciples were ignorant Galileans who didn't know how to speak these languages, so their doing so made the people come running! That's why the great crowd came!

Jesus said in Acts 1:8, “Ye shall receive power ... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me.” The main thing is not whether you receive tongues, as long as you receive power for witnessing!—That's the principal purpose! If you get enough power to make you blast off your launch pad and get out and do something for Jesus, then it doesn't matter whether you speak in tongues or you don't! Some people witness with power long before they ever speak in tongues!

Jesus said the Holy Spirit was power for witnessing! When they got that power the first time, they witnessed and they got the results that the Lord said it was for: 3,000 souls saved.

► A look at “witnessing”

We've talked about how the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to enable us to witness. “Witness” according to the dictionary means to testify. So how can we testify of our faith? There aren't too many of us that are either ready or in a position to stand up in front of a crowd of 3,000, but that's not the only method of witnessing! There are many ways we can share our faith with others, and the Lord does expect us to do this. Who has some ideas?

① *At this point, you can open a discussion and quickly brainstorm some ideas of how to share our faith. Write up the students' ideas on a whiteboard. You can then offer more suggestions, including any of the following. (Some may or may not be appropriate depending on local conditions and the type of people attending the class. It is up to your prayerful discretion which suggestions you make.)*

- Talking to our family members about what we are learning.
- Talking to people at work or place of study about Jesus and His salvation.
- Talking to people when we're out shopping and doing business and letting them know God loves them.
- Giving out tracts.
- Including some sort of a witnessing message in the letters we write.
- Inviting people to meet other believers (such as at fellowship meetings).
- Offering *Activated* subscriptions.

① *Conclude the discussion by explaining that we'll look at these suggestions in more detail in a later class.*

Now look at verses 17–20.

Acts 2:17–20—And it shall come to pass in the Last Days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. (18) And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. (19) I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. (20) The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

Look at verse 42.

Acts 2:42—And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

This verse tells us what the four necessary things for new believers are:

1. "Doctrine"—good teaching.
2. "Fellowship"—the meeting together of believers like we are doing here.
3. "Breaking bread"— sharing your food, your material blessings.
4. "Prayer."

Q? What were the results?

A: Wonders and signs.

Acts 2:43—Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Look at verses 46–47.

Acts 2:46–47—So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church [body of believers] daily those who were being saved.

After the Day of Pentecost got the results the Lord intended, the apostles began to really go to work. They didn't confine their religion to the temple. They went "house to house."

Notice here that the word "church" doesn't denote a building, but the body of believers.

[Optional] The meaning of the word "church"

Although we often think of the word "church" as referring to a building, this is not its original meaning. In almost every verse in the New Testament where you find the word "church," it has been translated from the Greek *ecclesia*, which is synonymous with the Hebrew *kahal* of the Old Testament, both words meaning simply an assembly. There is no clear instance of it being used for a place of meeting or of worship. In the days of the Early Church, the believers mostly gathered in their own homes for worship.

Romans 16:5a—Greet the church that is in their house.

A special building is not essential for worship. Our attitude to the Lord is more important than a location.

John 4:24—God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

Acts 7:48—The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands.

1 Corinthians 3:16—Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Peter 2:5—You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Q? How could the Lord add to the church daily, if they only went to church on Sunday?

① *If you wish, you can spend a few minutes discussing the idea of serving God daily rather than just once a week.*

► Acts chapter 3

In Acts Chapter 3 and 4 we read more about the results of the disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3:1—Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

Now look at verses 2–3.

Acts 3:2–3—And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; (3) who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

Then came one of God's great setups: This lame man was sitting by the temple gate. Pentecost was the first setup God designed to get the Word out to a lot of people. Now He picks another setup that is going to get the message out to even more! He picks somebody that people had seen day after day at the gate of the temple.—Everybody in town knew he was a lame man and a beggar.

Q? Along came Peter and John, and what happened?

A: Peter says, "Sorry, we haven't got any money, but we'll pray for you! If you'll trust the Lord and us, God will give you something better than money!" So a great miracle happened: The man is healed, and the people were filled with wonder!

Acts 3:4–10—And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." (5) So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. (6) Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." (7) And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. (8) So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God (9) And all the people saw him walking and praising God: (10) And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

Q? When Peter saw what was happening, did he leave the temple and keep them wondering?

A: No. They were wondering what was going on and Peter was ready to tell them! He took advantage of the opportunity to preach them a sermon, like he did on the Day of Pentecost.

Acts 3:12—So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

We'll turn now to Chapter 4 to find out the results of this miracle.

► Acts chapter 4

Q? After the healing of the lame man, Peter had another wonderful opportunity for preaching the Word, and what was the result? He preached them a pretty stiff sermon, and what happened?

A: Five thousand were saved.

Acts 4:4—However, many of those who heard the Word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

Q? What happened after that?

A: Peter and John got tossed in jail.

Acts 4:1–3—Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, (2) being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. (3) And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

Q? Why could Peter preach such good sermons?—Because he had such a good education?

A: It was the work of the Holy Spirit!

Acts 4:13—Now when they [the religious leaders] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Q? Did the religious council figure that they were “highly educated and learned men”?

A: No. They marveled because they saw that same power in Peter and John that Jesus had when He walked the earth. They were bold, despite the fact they hadn’t had any formal education. They just went ahead and witnessed anyhow, and they had tremendous power! It was obvious they had been with Jesus: They had the Master’s power to do the Master’s work!

The religious leaders that observed them couldn’t understand how come they had so much courage and so much nerve and so much boldness! “They perceived that they had been with Jesus.” Peter and John knew what Jesus taught, they knew how Jesus lived—they knew Jesus! They didn’t have anything else but Jesus and boldness, but they really got results.

Q? What was the final analysis of these enemies?

A: They couldn’t deny the proof!

Acts 4:14—And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

There was the proof, what could they say against it? The men were so bold and had such power of Jesus and such proof of the power standing by their side!

Acts 4:16—Saying, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.”

We can see from this chapter that the first crisis of the Church was Peter and John being arrested.

Q? What type of a crisis was it? Internal or external?

A: It was an outside attack—persecution.

Q? What was the result of this crisis? Why did the Lord allow them to get tossed into jail? Why couldn’t He have spared them from that apparent defeat and that terrible shame and reproach?

① *Spend a few minutes discussing why the Lord might have allowed this to happen.*

Q? Think a bit about Peter. This was the same man who some weeks earlier had denied Jesus. Now he is determined to witness, no matter what the cost. He then spoke boldly before huge crowds of people. What brought about such a transformation?

A: The Holy Spirit.

(For more on “Peter’s Transformation,” see *Activated* magazine #2.)

Now look at verse 24.

Acts 4:24—So when they heard [what had happened], they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.”

The disciples got together to share what had happened and praised the Lord together.

Now look at verse 31.

Acts 4:31—And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness.

Q? Were they scared stiff now because they had been told not to speak in this Name any more, and not to preach Christ?

A: No! They spoke the Word of God with boldness.

Now look at verse 32.

Acts 4:32—Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

God had a marvelous plan for His believers—as told in the book of Acts!—A blueprint for a way of life! This is the pattern for missions! This is the way His followers ought to live and act and spread the message! This is a pattern, an example, and it's still going on! God has a spiritual pattern for His followers: Prayer, praise, study, teaching, doctrine, and witnessing activity.

Q? What was the result, economically, for the believers?

A: They may not have had all they wanted, but none of them lacked anything they needed.

Acts 4:34—Nor was there anyone among them who lacked.

Now look at verse 33.

Acts 4:33—And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

The apostles became powerful witnesses as a result of all they were experiencing and because of the moving of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

[Optional] What is an “apostle”?

“Apostle” is a person sent by another; a messenger; an envoy. This word is generally used as designating the body of disciples to whom Jesus primarily entrusted the organization of the believers and the dissemination of the Gospel, “the twelve,” as they are called (Matthew 10:1–5; Mark 3:14; 6:7; Luke 6:13; 9:1).

[Optional] Is the gift of tongues an essential manifestation of the Holy Spirit?

This subject does not need to be brought up in your class, unless one or more of your students has questions about it. In that case, here is an explanation:

The answer simply is that tongues is just one of the gifts (which we will be learning more about in the next class).

There are those who say that what happened in Acts 2 means that everyone who receives the Holy Spirit must speak in tongues. But wouldn't it also hold true in that case that the other supernatural signs in the first verses would also have to be manifested in or on those filled with the Spirit? Besides speaking with tongues what were they? “A sound as of a mighty rushing wind and as it were cloven tongues of fire sitting upon each one of them.”.

[Optional] Do you get automatically filled with the Holy Spirit when you get saved?

It is a good idea to include asking for the power and infilling of the Holy Spirit in the salvation prayer. However, being baptized with the Holy Spirit can be a separate experience which follows salvation (Acts 19:1–7).

Closing Activity and Prayer

15 minutes

► Prayer for greater measure of the Holy Spirit

Do you want to see an illustration of what the Holy Ghost baptism is like? Do you want to see what the baptism of the Spirit is like?—That’s the Greek word. Baptisma means a complete immersion, a complete overflowing.

① *Teachers: This could be illustrated by bringing a glass, a pitcher of water, and a shallow bowl or tray (to catch the overflow of water). Place the glass in the bowl, pour in the water until the glass is overflowing.*

All of us here have already received the Holy Spirit, but sometimes if we’re feeling a little dry or in spiritual need, it is helpful to pray for a fresh infusion. A greater measure of the Holy Spirit can certainly benefit all of us. We can do that together now if you would like.

① *Have prayer. You could lay hands on the students if the circumstances are appropriate. Your prayer can be based on the following:*

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We ask You for a “renewing of the Holy Ghost!” (Tit.3:5). Please give us all a greater measure of Your Holy Spirit, that Your mighty power can fill and inspire us! We can’t do all of the things you want us to by our own power or will, but we know You can work through us, as You have done through your followers over the ages. You tell us “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit!” (Zec.4: 6). Empower and inspire us. Please give each of us a greater measure of love, and greater power to witness. Amen!

► Songs

If you have time left, sing some more songs from the “Holy Spirit Song Sheet” or any other inspirational songs. End the meeting with a final word of prayer for safekeeping