

Transition:

Pentecost means different things to different people. Depending on your background, Pentecost can mean a day, a movement, a feast, a doctrinal position, or it may mean nothing at all. The word itself comes from the Greek word for 50, since the Jewish feast of Pentecost came 50 days after Passover. In that context, Pentecost was a celebration of the first harvest. For Christians, Pentecost is a holiday in which we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the early followers of Jesus. Before the events of the first Pentecost, there were followers of Jesus, but no movement that could be called the Church. The followers of Jesus were all gathered in Jerusalem, as Jesus instructed, and no one was fulfilling the Great Commission – to preach the Gospel and make disciples. So, Pentecost was the day the Church was established – the Holy Spirit brought the Church into existence and empowered it. Pentecost marks the day when the message about Jesus began to be proclaimed all over the world.

Tell the story:

Tell the story (with passion!) the best as you can, don't stop and teach, try not to make points, just tell the story. Perhaps leave some parts out or make a mistake, just to see if your group catches it! Mention the context of the story: the preceding and consequent verses, prophecy, promises, and God's purpose for these events.

Rebuild the story:

Chronologically rebuild the story by asking questions. Have the group look for what was added or left out by looking in their Bibles and going back over the story. Then have someone else tell the story the best they can – just like you modeled the first time.

Discussion Questions:

1. In John 20:22: "He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." But shortly after, in Acts 1:4: He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father." Why? Did the Holy Spirit leave them in the few weeks between John 20 and Acts 1? What is the difference between the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?
2. In Matthew 3:11, it is promised that "He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." What is the biblical meaning of the baptism with fire?

Fundamental:

There were thousands of Christ's followers in Jerusalem at that time, but the Holy Spirit came down on the 120 who were gathered together and praying in accord. This was God's endorsement of an assembly – the Church. This event reveals the Church as the agency that God is using to expand His Kingdom. Pentecost helps us interpret the Book of Acts as the playbook for a healthy church in any culture and prepares us to fulfill the Great Commission wherever God sends us – out to our neighborhoods or halfway across the world. Pentecost was the first event to show us that Spirit baptism is a distinctive work of grace in the life of a Christian, separate from the salvation experience.

Homework/Challenge:

1. Since the Pentecost is about being empowered to fulfill the Great Commission – to preach the Gospel and make disciples, tell the Gospel to at least one person this week and arrange to meet with that person once a week to talk about what you learn in small group.
2. Study the difference between the Gift of Tongues and Speaking in Tongues ("prayer language"): differences in purpose, use, effects, and manifestations.

Discipleship Tip:

Many believers have been taught unbiblical doctrines about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some have had negative experiences with other people who claim to have received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Prepare yourself for difficult conversations. Study the subject well. Be prepared to say that you don't know the answer to a question and then, find the answer. Prepare to be patient and pour your love on these disciples, so that they see the fruit of the Spirit in you and be drawn to Him in you.

Prayer:

Jesus, we are grateful that you did not want to leave us alone in this world after You had to return to the Father, but You sent Another Helper to take Your place and be with us – to remind us of the truth You have taught, to interpret Scriptures for us, and to empower us to be just like you and to fulfill the Great Commission. Continue to guide us through this study and empower us to live according to what we learn.