

3.4

THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will live my life under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

FOCUS VERSES

Ephesians 5:18

¹⁸And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit

LESSON TEXT

Joel 2:28–29;

Acts 1:8;

Acts 2:1–39;

Ephesians 5:15–18

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God is pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh.



Thinking About Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What is something that impacted you most as you read through the Bible Reading Plan, the Lesson Text, and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did this affect your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

LESSON CONNECTION

Nothing like it had ever happened in Jerusalem. Men and women poured out of an upper room, down the steps and into the street. They were ecstatic, faces glowing with joy, words of praise to God tumbling from stammering lips. They were noisy too—noisy enough to draw a crowd of pilgrims who had travelled to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost from all across the known world.

As these festivalgoers gathered, they were amazed to find these Galilean Jews—who were known for having little formal education let alone foreign language skills—speaking in their own languages. Men from the island of Crete, Arabians from the desert, Parthians from the Asian steppes, Medes from the far northern mountains, and travelers from as far away as Rome all heard these Galileans proclaiming the wonderful works of God in a multitude of languages, including their own.

Amazed, the gathered crowd turned to one another and asked, “What does this mean?” As often happens when the supernatural is manifest, many were quick to dismiss it and mock. They said, “These men are full of new wine. They’re drunk!” It’s amazing what ludicrous explanations people will come up with to avoid facing the truth. But Peter, that brawny, fiery fisherman was not about to let this false assumption stand. He stood up with the other apostles and declared, “These are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.” It was only nine o’clock in the morning! The initial outpouring of the Holy Ghost had both empowered the disciples and drawn their first crowd. Now it was time for Peter to preach.

He stepped to the edge of the upper-room balcony and felt the anointing of the Holy Ghost stir within him. His mind became flooded with Old Testament prophecy and words Jesus Himself had spoken over the past three and a half years. He opened his mouth and began to speak as he looked out across his audience of thousands: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words” (Acts 2:14, NKJV).

SG TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: Describe the scene you have always pictured in your mind when you hear about Peter preaching on the Day of Pentecost.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection on page 335.

I. THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST

- A. Joel's Prophecy
- B. Jesus Told His Disciples to Tarry in Jerusalem
 - » *Why do you think so many of those who heard Jesus tell them to wait in Jerusalem were not there when the Spirit finally came?*
- C. The Promise is Unto You and All Who Are Afar Off
- D. The Promise of the Holy Ghost Is for Me

II. THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST

- A. The Day of Pentecost
- B. They Were All Filled with the Holy Ghost
- C. Peter Preached Jesus
 - » *Why do you think that in the midst of such an incredible supernatural outpouring of the Holy Ghost, Peter refocused the listeners' attention on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus?*
- D. "Men and Brethren, What Shall We Do?"
- E. "And Ye Shall Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost"
 - » *Can you think of other religions that lay out a very difficult path to salvation? Explain. **V***
- F. I Will Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost
 - » *If you have received the Holy Ghost, what is your personal testimony of that experience?*

III. THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST

- A. Ye Shall Receive Power
 - » *Can you think of a time when the Holy Ghost empowered you to be an overcomer or a witness? Explain.*
- B. Be Not Drunk with Wine, But Be Filled with the Spirit
- C. I Will Live My Life Under the Influence of the Holy Ghost

Internalizing the Message **I**

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For the Holy Ghost to be poured out on all those who are hungry for Him
- That we would live our lives under the influence of the Holy Ghost

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST

A. Joel's Prophecy

This was not some strange occurrence, Peter assured the crowd. There was biblical, prophetic precedent for it. Peter began preaching, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Joel is known as the prophet of Pentecost, because he foretold these events (Joel 2:28-29). Peter was telling the devout Jews gathered in Jerusalem that day that prophecy was being fulfilled right before their eyes. Those who had traveled from across the world to bring their firstfruits to the Temple were seeing the firstfruits of God's new harvest of souls being brought into the Church. And before the day was through, three thousand more would join that joyful harvest celebration!

B. Jesus Told His Disciples to Tarry in Jerusalem

The arrival of the Holy Ghost surprised the Jewish pilgrims that day, but on the other hand the disciples had been waiting for it with expectation for about ten days. After rising from the dead and spending forty days with them, Jesus had ascended to Heaven. But just before He ascended, He gave them a command to "not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me" (Acts 1:4).

Jesus did not tell them exactly when the Holy Spirit would come. He simply told them, "Not many days from now" (Acts 1:5, NKJV). Perhaps this was a final test to see who really wanted the Holy Spirit more than anything else and was willing to watch and pray for as long as it took to receive it. However, of the nearly five hundred disciples Jesus gave this command, only 120, were still there tarrying and praying in the Upper Room when the Holy Ghost fell.

C. The Promise is Unto You and All Who Are Afar Off

Just as Joel, Ezekiel, and others had prophesied, the Holy Ghost had been poured out. Just as Jesus had promised, the promise of the Father had come upon the believers. Now Peter wanted everyone within earshot to know that this promise was not only for the exclusive few. Peter reached deep into his figurative pocket and pulled out the keys Jesus had given him, unlocked the door to the kingdom of Heaven, and flung it wide open. This Holy Ghost was a treasure too precious to be hoarded by a few. He told the people assembled there, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

Why do you think so many of those who heard Jesus tell them to wait in Jerusalem were not there when the Spirit finally came?

D. The Promise of the Holy Ghost is for Me

Those words of Peter still echo down through the centuries to us today. “All that are afar off” did not just mean those physically distant from Jerusalem, but all those separated from that Day of Pentecost by both time and space. The promise of the Holy Ghost is for you and me today. God has not withdrawn this most incredible of all gifts. God did not love Peter and John any more than He loves us today. All those who seek it in faith will receive it. Simply pray, “Come, Holy Spirit!” and expect that God will respond, and He will. If God gave this wonderful promise of the Holy Ghost to the apostles and disciples in the early church, He will give it to you today.

II. THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST

A. The Day of Pentecost

It was no coincidence that this first Spirit outpouring happened “when the day of Pentecost was fully come.” The Feast of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Ingathering, was a harvest celebration. It was called the “day of first fruits” because on this day the people of Israel were called to begin bringing their offerings of first fruits to the Temple. The celebration centered around a Sabbath rest day and a holy convocation or gathering.

The prophet Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years earlier saying, “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear” (Isaiah 28:11-12).

B. They Were All Filled with the Holy Ghost

By saying that they were “all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues,” the Bible shows that the Holy Ghost again is no respecter of persons. God did not only fill Peter, James, and John because they were Jesus’ inner circle. He did not just fill the apostles because they were closest to Jesus. He did not limit the infilling to Jesus’ earthly family because they were closely related to Him. No, the Holy Ghost is for whosoever will. Everyone there that day who had the faith to obey Jesus by waiting, watching, and praying was filled with the glorious gift of the Holy Spirit!

C. Peter Preached Jesus

Although Peter began preaching by pointing to the Old Testament prophecies foretelling the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, it is also interesting to note that his preaching very quickly returned to focusing on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst

of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (Acts 2:22-24)

Why do you think that in the midst of such an incredible supernatural outpouring of the Holy Ghost, Peter refocused the listener's attention on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus?

D. "Men and Brethren, What Shall We Do?"

The response of Peter's audience was instantaneous. They were convicted and spurred to action, but they did not know what to do. What was the appropriate response to the realization that Jesus had died and risen for them and that they were each personally guilty of sin? They asked a question each of us must ask in our own lives before salvation can come, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). They offered no excuses. No deflection or procrastination. Theirs was an honest, direct question as a response to conviction.

E. "And Ye Shall Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost"

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38)

Teacher Option:
Show Video to either take the place of the question or to help illustrate it.

Remember, these were devout Jews. They had been taught all their lives the intricate and costly trespass offerings that were required to blot out their guilt. Perhaps they were expecting more of the same—a list of animals to be sacrificed, how the blood was to be used, how the meat was to be burned, and what grain or oil offerings were to accompany the sacrifice. Maybe a scapegoat would be released into the wilderness. Perhaps a weeks-long ritual of cleansing would be required, washing the body and clothes, shaving the head, and an inspection by the priests or something similar. But no, Jesus had already fulfilled all those types and shadows. He had done the hard work of salvation already.

Can you think of other religions that lay out a very difficult path to salvation? Explain. ▼

F. I Will Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost is for everyone and anyone! It doesn't matter what your heritage is, what your ethnic background is, what your social status is, how good or bad a person you may be, or what faith tradition you grew up in. The Holy Ghost is for "all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). The very fact that you're here means God is calling you to receive His Spirit today.

If you have received the Holy Ghost, what is your personal testimony of that experience?

III. THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST

A. Ye Shall Receive Power

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both

in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

The Holy Ghost gives us power to be witnesses. Once you receive the Holy Ghost, you do not have to be afraid to share what God has done for you. Proclaim the truth in love. Let Jesus speak through you as the Holy Ghost brings to your remembrance all the Scriptures and preaching you have heard. Do not worry about whether you will have the right things to say. The Holy Ghost will teach you and guide you in what to speak if you just have the courage to step out in faith and rely on His power.

Can you think of a time when the Holy Ghost empowered you to be an overcomer or a witness? Explain.

B. Be Not Drunk with Wine, But Be Filled with the Spirit

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)

How often does a drunkard seek another drink? As often as possible, right? It is rare for a drunkard to push back and say, "That's enough for me." This excess leads to a false illusion of happiness and well-being and ultimately to all kinds of tragedy and destruction in their lives. But by contrast, if we as Christians have that same constant thirst for the Spirit, it will lead to true righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

C. I Will Live My Life Under the Influence of the Holy Ghost

Those who heard the disciples speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost thought they were under the influence of alcohol but they were not under the influence of liquid spirits; they were under the influence of God's Holy Spirit! The devil offers drunkenness as a cheap substitute for being filled with the Spirit. Someone intoxicated will stagger back and forth under the influence; a believer walks circumspectly and wisely down the straight and narrow when he or she is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Everything God creates is in complete opposition to what the devil and the world have to offer and is incomparably better!

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE I

(Nathan Maki shares the following story.)

Teacher Option:

Show image to help illustrate the Internalizing the Message section.

When I was in university, I spent two years walking the streets of downtown Ottawa every Tuesday to hand out sandwiches and socks to the homeless and panhandlers. An estimated 80% of those people were suffering from some form of substance abuse—usually alcohol. As we went out month after month, I noticed a strange pattern. Early in the month the people we helped would often have liquor bottles close to hand and the smell would be strong on them. But towards the end of the month, they would have bottles of Listerine and their breath would be fresh with mouthwash. I asked my team leader about it. He explained that early in the month they had money from their government checks and could afford to buy alcohol. But by the end of the month, they were out of money and so bought the cheaper alternative of Listerine. They would literally drink this mouthwash because it has just enough alcohol content to stave off their withdrawals until the next check arrived. What a tragic picture of the false substitute the devil pawns off on people and the destruction it brings.

My own family suffered the devastation of alcohol addiction, with several family members dying of cirrhosis of the liver or accidental death due to intoxication. But a faithful couple from a small Pentecostal church in Winnipeg, Canada, would drive half an hour across town every Sunday to pick up a little girl from the wrong side of the tracks and take her to Sunday School. Being just a child, some days she would sleep in and wouldn't go out when they honked. They would turn around and drive half an hour back to the church. And the next Sunday morning they would be waiting outside her house again. No blame. No pointed fingers. Just a constant love flowing from the Spirit. That little girl would one day be filled with the Holy Spirit in that little Winnipeg church. She would go on to finish high school, the first in her family to do so, and then go on to Bible college. There she met my Dad, and the rest is history. Yes, that little Sunday School child was my Mom. I am the firsthand beneficiary of people who chose not to be drunk with wine or anything else the devil has to offer but rather to be filled with the Spirit.

Will you make that same decision today? Are you thirsty for something real? Will you reach out and drink deeply of the Holy Spirit? Only the years will show the lasting impact that decision will bring.

