

# PENTECOST



## Four Bible Studies

John Birch

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## Introduction

Within the Church year we celebrate Pentecost as the moment the promised Holy Spirit descended on the apostles whilst at prayer on the Feast of Shavuot (or Weeks), which was very much a harvest festival, but one also marking the moment in Jewish history when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and revealed to him the Torah (the first five books of the Bible, or the Pentateuch). Jewish tradition has it that Moses then wrote the words that God dictated to him, either as he descended from the mountain or over a longer period.

The exact origin of the festival in the Christian church is unclear, but it was mentioned in the 2nd century in the *Epistola Apostolorum* from the Eastern church. Date-wise, Pentecost takes place on the 50th day (the seventh Sunday) after Easter Sunday.

As Christians we don't really make much of the Holy Spirit coming at a time of harvest, and maybe miss something in the bigger picture of what was happening, so in these studies we begin at that point and then move on to perhaps more familiar passages. If we have in our mind the image of seed and harvest, then this can translate into Christ being the seed that has died, been planted, and sprung again to life.

What we see at Pentecost is the Spirit of Christ bringing power, confidence, and a fruitfulness into the life of the apostles and those in whom the seeds of faith were sown. Those seeds would, in time, also germinate, grow, and blossom, encouraging a flourishing church throughout the earth.

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Cover picture: Juan Bautista Maíno, *The Pentecost*, c1613, Prado Museum



# SEED & HARVEST

## STUDY ONE



Field of wheat, Drewsteignton, Devon

*'Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.'* Robert Louis Stevenson)



### a) A Celebration (or three)

(Read Deuteronomy 16:9-17, Leviticus 23:15-22)

In Palestine, there were two harvests each year, the first in May/June when the early harvest took place, and a second one in autumn. The celebration of Pentecost always took place in May or early June, symbolising the beginning of the early wheat harvest.

A variety of festivals, celebrations, or observances happened prior to Pentecost. The sequence included Passover, Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits, which celebrated the beginning of the barley harvest. At the Feast of Firstfruits, people offered the first sheaf of the harvest to God and were not permitted to eat any grain or bread made from it until they had presented this thanks-offering.

From this celebration, they would count forward fifty days, or seven weeks, and the fiftieth day would be the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (from the Greek word 'pentecoste,' meaning 50th). In the Christian calendar, we celebrate Pentecost fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, and as Easter is a moveable feast, that means Pentecost can fall anywhere between May 10th and June 13th.

### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?



### Digging deeper...

What might be the significance of any delay in offering the first fruit of the harvest?

Times change. How do you view the provision of raw ingredients from the land as you sit down to eat today?

How do seed and harvest speak into our personal journeys of faith?

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## b) God's Spirit at work in the Old Testament

(Read 1 Samuel 10:3-7, Exodus 33:12-14, Ezekiel 36:24-28)

Samuel anointed Saul with oil before sending him to his hometown of Gibeah, where God's Spirit would come powerfully upon him. Should he need any reassurance of his role as king, there were three signs for him to look out for. God's Spirit entered his life as promised, and Saul was fully equipped to fulfil his calling. Unfortunately, just six chapters later, we find Saul rejected because of his failure to follow God's instructions.

Moses had been meeting with God in a tent outside the main camp of the people, and there was always great anticipation of what God might say to him (we are told God spoke to Moses 'as a friend'). But Moses lacked confidence and was unsure whether he could fulfil the task God asked of him, which was to lead the people. God's answer was straightforward: his presence (or Spirit) would be with Moses, taking away his anxiety, and in its place bringing peace.

The passage from Ezekiel refers to the restoration of God's people as a nation after facing judgement and exile for their past misdemeanours, and there is much encouragement in the promise of God's Spirit in their hearts to help them better serve their Lord. Ultimately, the aim is that all nations will know the one true God.

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### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?



### Digging deeper...

Saul was chosen but later rejected. So, did God make a bad choice?

Moses was chosen but then seemed insecure and lacking self-confidence. How does this speak into God's calling to us?

God's patience with his chosen people was often tested. They faced judgement and exile; but ultimately were still central to God's plan. What does this say about the character of God?



## c) Looking forward

(Read Isaiah 11:1-2, Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 61:1-3, Joel 2:28-29)

God's promise to the Israelites resembled one made at a marriage, 'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession' (Exodus 19:5), but sadly they failed to keep their side of the covenant. Although God's judgement came down heavily on this people, with the dynastic tree of Jesse reduced to a stump, the good news was that God's grace would be seen through the promised Messiah, filled with the Spirit, fully equipped for his work as the Servant described in Isaiah.



*Tree of Jesse with the Madonna and Child (Cod. St. Peter perg. 139, Blatt 7v), c1260*

It is likely that the prophet had Israel in mind as the servant, but in Jesus' baptism and God's words at that moment, we can see the ultimate fulfilment of that prophetic word. Jesus certainly saw his mission embraced in Isaiah's words, quoting them directly in Luke 4:18-19.

Hosea prophesied the Lord would pour out his anger on an idolatrous Israel, but Joel looks beyond this to better days when, through his Spirit, God would equip all believers, regardless of age, sex, or status.

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### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?

### Digging deeper...

Re-read the first two short passages. How do they describe the work of the Spirit and relate to your own spiritual experience?

Jesus found confirmation within Isaiah's words of his own ministry. How do these connections help us in our understanding of Old Testament prophecy?

Joel talks of 'afterward' in his prophecy. Any spiritual journey can have its peaks and troughs. Can that one word bring encouragement to us, as well as its target audience?



'Most of us spend the first six days of each week sowing wild oats; then we go to church on Sunday and pray for a crop failure.' (Fred Allen)

Q) Is there a grain of truth in this light-hearted quote that we need to be aware of?



## Praying together : Lectio divina

The traditional practice of Lectio Divina in Western Christianity involves reading, meditating, and praying with scripture to foster a closer relationship with God and gain a deeper understanding of His teachings. The pattern below is a simplified version using some verses from this study and can be used individually or within a group.

### Lectio - Reading

Read twice, slowly and attentively, listening for the 'gentle whisper' that is God's word or phrase for today, using this or alternative verses.

*'Moses said to the Lord, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."*

*The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."  
(Joel 2:28-29)*

### Meditatio – Meditation (2-3 min)

As we think of those who first heard these words, and repeat them silently in our own minds, let them interact with our day, our thoughts and concerns... God's word becomes our word for today.

(Group – allow time for those who wish to share the word, image or phrase that has touched their heart.)

### Oratio - Prayer

As we turn to prayer, so God invites us to respond to the word or phrase that has spoken to us. In the quietness or aloud we bring to Him those words, images or people that God has placed on our hearts, and how we might put those words into action.

(Group – allow time if possible for all who wish to share that which is on their hearts for prayer.)

### Contemplatio – Contemplation

We spend a minute or two in silence, enjoying the experience of God's presence and love embracing us.

Glory to the Father,  
and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
Three in One. Amen.



## STUDY TWO

# THE TIME IS NEAR



Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River by John. David Zelenka 2005

*'Many people feel so pressured by the expectations of others that it causes them to be frustrated, miserable, and confused about what they should do. But there is a way to live a simple, joy-filled, peaceful life, and the key is learning how to be led by the Holy Spirit, not the traditions or expectations of man.'* (Joyce Meyer)



## a) The Spirit in Jesus and the disciples

(Read Mark 1:1-3,6-12; Luke 4:14-19; Matthew 10:1-8)

Mark emphasises that what follows in his gospel has strong connections with God's promises in the Old Testament and the bigger story of God's love for all of humanity. Malachi 3:1 talks of God sending a messenger to prepare the way before a coming day of judgement. John the Baptist fulfilled that role, recognising and baptising Jesus as he appeared, and watching as the Holy Spirit descended and God's word confirmed Jesus as 'my Son, whom I love'.

In chapters 4-9 of Luke's Gospel, the author deals with the question of 'Who is Jesus?' and introduces us to Jesus as a teacher, prophet, and healer, but ultimately as 'God's Messiah.'

Jesus' ministry began back home in Galilee, unrolling the scroll in the synagogue and revealing the ultimate truth of Isaiah's words, 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me...'. It is with this same authority that he later sends out the twelve apostles to minister to 'the lost sheep of Israel', knowing they will have all the spiritual strength and wisdom needed to fulfil this mission.

### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?



### Digging deeper...

Is the question, 'Who is Jesus?' one that still needs answering in this world, and how would you frame your response if asked by a friend or stranger?

The words of John the Baptist are clear, that through Jesus, believers will receive the blessing of the Spirit. We see this in the apostles as they began their training. What does that tell us?

'Freely you have received; freely give'. A simple instruction from Jesus, but how easy is that for us in everyday life?

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## b) The journey continues

(Read John 20:19-23, Luke 24:45-49, Matthew 28:16-20)

The disciples had a lot to learn in their relatively short time following Jesus; listening, watching him at work, and getting to know him better in their quieter moments together. They struggled sometimes to understand the bigger picture, and toward the end of this period, Jesus began preparing them for what must follow, both before and after the Cross.

In the readings from John, Luke, and Matthew, he joins the final dots on the puzzle. Jesus' death and resurrection will lead to an evangelistic calling for the disciples, their lives empowered by the Holy Spirit, and he points to Scripture as confirmation. Matthew 28:18-20 was an announcement historically fulfilled at Pentecost.

It is apparent from Jesus' words that the Holy Spirit is more than just a decorative element for the future church, but rather serving as a conduit for the continuation of His work through the lives of believers.

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### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?



### Digging deeper...

Put yourself in the position of one of those disciples. How easy would you have found it to work out what was happening, and its impact on your life?

It's not that long ago (Matthew 26:69ff) that Peter denied even knowing Jesus. From a training point of view, do you think these men were ready for what was to follow beyond Pentecost?

When Jesus first sent his disciples out, it was to the Jews. Now it is to the world. What does this tell us about God's bigger picture seen within the Bible as a whole?



## c) And into Acts

(Read Acts 1:1-11)

Luke's introduction to Acts is a continuation of the one in his gospel, written to give an 'orderly account' of all that Jesus had begun, along with his teaching. Now Luke begins with a catch-up of where he left the disciples, with Jesus blessing them as he bids them farewell and ascends to heaven. But this repetition is important for Theophilus and his readers to understand because of all that follows.

The apostles were being given a commission by Jesus to witness about all that had happened on this amazing journey with Him, culminating in the Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension, and what that meant not just for Israel but the entire world. In a short while, the power of the Holy Spirit would enable this to happen.

Prior to that moment, the disciples were still confused, wondering whether all this was building up to 'the last days' as prophesied by Isaiah (2:2-4, 11:1-16), Jesus' response was that they should concentrate on the matter at hand, their commission to witness to the world, and not speculate about times and dates, as these are God's concerns. The heart of their message must be the living and ascended Jesus, who will return to complete what he has begun.

The description of Jesus ascending in verse 9 resembles the cloud enveloping him on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:7-11) and another which covered the tent of meeting in Exodus 40:34 when 'the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle'. The Hebrew term for this is 'Shekinah', the presence of God in a place.

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### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?

### Digging deeper...



In his introduction, Luke suggests a period of intense teaching for the apostles in readiness for what was to follow. How important is Bible study for Christians, and if the answer is 'very', how can we encourage it?

The apostles had received some on-the-job training when sent out earlier on mission work. What does verse 6 say about their preparedness for the task that awaits them?

How does the Shekinah moment in Luke's story speak into our own Christian journeys?



'Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.'  
(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Q) How does this quote speak into the lives of all believers?



## Praying together : Lectio divina

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### Lectio - Reading

Read twice, slowly and attentively, listening for the 'gentle whisper' that is God's word or phrase for today, using this or alternative verses.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."  
(Luke 4:18-19)*

### Meditatio – Meditation (2-3 min)

As we think of those who first heard these words, and repeat them silently in our own minds, let them interact with our day, our thoughts and concerns... God's word becomes our word for today.

(Group – allow time for those who wish to share the word, image or phrase that has touched their heart.)

### Oratio - Prayer

As we turn to prayer, so God invites us to respond to the word or phrase that has spoken to us. In the quietness or aloud we bring to Him those words, images or people that God has placed on our hearts, and how we might put those words into action.

(Group – allow time if possible for all who wish to share that which is on their hearts for prayer.)

### Contemplatio – Contemplation

We spend a minute or two in silence, enjoying the experience of God's presence and love embracing us.

Glory to the Father,  
and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
Three in One. Amen.



# THE SPIRIT DESCENDS

## STUDY THREE



*Pentecost the Musée Condé, Chantilly, anon*

*'I continue to dream and pray about a revival of holiness in our day that moves forth in mission and creates authentic community in which each person can be unleashed through the empowerment of the Spirit to fulfil God's creational intentions.'*  
*(John Wesley)*



### a) Gathered together

(Read Acts 2:1-13)

For this festival, pilgrims would have flooded into Jerusalem from wherever exiled Jews had settled, and the city's population may well have swelled to a million or more. While later Judaism celebrated the giving of the law at Pentecost, on this day the Spirit's coming signalled the essential difference between a Jewish faith and a commitment to Jesus, the former being Torah-centred and Torah-directed, the latter Christ-centred and Spirit-led – something at the heart of the apostle Paul's teaching.

We read of a powerful wind blowing through the house in which the disciples had gathered (both Greek and Hebrew words can mean 'wind' or 'spirit'), accompanied by a visual image of tongues of flame resting on individuals. Both are associated with the Holy Spirit and God's presence in the Old Testament. Luke's story suggests the fulfilment of passages such as Isaiah 11:11, where God promises to gather Israel's remnant after the exile.

If any spiritual gift would help at this moment, then an ability to speak in the languages of all the regions listed here would be high on the list! Worthy of note is Luke telling us that God's Spirit rested on each of them. Under the old covenant, the divine presence rested on Israel as a whole, or on its leaders for specific purposes. Now, under this Christ-centred covenant, the Spirit rests upon each believer individually.

Reception to what was happening here was mixed, some pilgrims being full of amazement and wonder, and others suggesting the apostles were drunk!

### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?



### Digging deeper...

Did God really need the help of a whirlwind and fireworks?

The crowd of pilgrims came from many countries and would include some whose native language was no longer Aramaic or Hebrew. The gift of tongues given to the apostles was perfect for the moment. Is this how you view the work of the Holy Spirit?

When you hear of miracles of healing and blessings within the context of worship today, do you willingly accept such claims or, like the crowd around Peter, have moments of doubt, and why might that be?

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## b) Peter raises his voice

(Read Acts 2:14-24)

Peter is quick to put a stop to the suggestion that they are merely drunk, as it is only nine in the morning, and Jews would not break their fasting at least for another hour! Instead, he suggests they remember the prophecy of Joel being fulfilled in their presence. God promised his Spirit would pour out on all people, regardless of gender, age, and social status. There would be signs and wonders, alongside a message of repentance and salvation.

To Peter, it is vital those listening understand the importance of this day. Jesus, who they and the Romans condemned to death (despite many signs and miracles) is both Lord and Messiah. In Jesus is the fulfilment of prophecies of old, announcing the gift of the Holy Spirit and salvation to those who turn from their sinful lives and follow him.

But Peter also assures his audience that this was always part of God's purpose, revealed through the prophets, and indeed through Jesus, who had told his disciples, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled' (Luke 18:31)

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### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?



### Digging deeper...

Quoting the prophet Joel, Peter mentions prophecy, visions, and dreams. Might these three words be describing the same thing?

Rejection and the Cross may have been within God's plan, but how could those who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday have changed, so quickly, their opinion of who he was?

Does the Church globally display the same inclusiveness as God displays in Joel's prophecy, and where might it perhaps do better?



## c) A gift for all believers

(Read Acts 2:32-41, Acts 11:11-17)

Luke presents a precis of Peter’s speech to the crowd, filling the gaps in their knowledge of who Jesus was, and what that should mean for both individuals and the nation – Jesus was not just a teacher, prophet, or even troublemaker, but so much more. For Peter, the evidence is overwhelming, as Jesus is both Messiah (Christ) and Lord, sitting at the right hand of God.



Baptism of Cornelius, Francesco Trevisani, 1709

There may well have been people in the crowd who in recent days had cried ‘Crucify!’ when the soldiers paraded Jesus in front of them. If so, their response is far more positive now, and Peter tells them to repent and make a commitment to Christ through baptism, whereupon they will receive forgiveness and the promised Holy Spirit.

And we are told that around three thousand who heard Peter’s words responded, adding substantially to the number of believers.

In Acts 11, we glimpse into the life of Peter in his new role as missionary, responding to some zealous Jews concerned that he’d been eating with Gentiles. He recalls his meeting with Cornelius and family when the Holy Spirit came down on all of them as Peter ministered in their house. It convinced him that God treated these Gentiles in the same as Jewish believers, and therefore, in God’s eyes, all are equal.

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### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?

### Digging deeper...

How important is personal testimony (2:32) in matters of faith?

Peter’s message is that ‘This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away’. How would you embrace the words ‘far away’?

Peter seemed to take a while to fully appreciate that the blessing of Pentecost was for all believers. How has your faith and knowledge of God grown along your own spiritual journey?



‘It’s easy to write for God and about God, because what a thrill to remind the church that the Holy Spirit of God is in you. What a rush! What an amazing blessing!’ (Francis Chan)

Q) Do we share the enthusiasm of Francis Chan, or what can hold us back?



## Praying together : Lectio divina

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### Lectio - Reading

Read twice, slowly and attentively, listening for the 'gentle whisper' that is God's word or phrase for today, using this or alternative verses.

*'In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your young men will see visions,  
your old men will dream dreams.  
Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
and they will prophesy.'*  
(Acts 2:17-18)

### Meditatio – Meditation (2-3 min)

As we think of those who first heard these words, and repeat them silently in our own minds, let them interact with our day, our thoughts and concerns... God's word becomes our word for today.

(Group – allow time for those who wish to share the word, image or phrase that has touched their heart.)

### Oratio - Prayer

As we turn to prayer, so God invites us to respond to the word or phrase that has spoken to us. In the quietness or aloud we bring to Him those words, images or people that God has placed on our hearts, and how we might put those words into action.

(Group – allow time if possible for all who wish to share that which is on their hearts for prayer.)

### Contemplatio – Contemplation

We spend a minute or two in silence, enjoying the experience of God's presence and love embracing us.

Glory to the Father,  
and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
Three in One. Amen.



# THE JOURNEY GOES ON

## STUDY FOUR



Stained glass with the Holy Spirit from the Vatican Basilica

*'Spirituality is not a formula; it is not a test. It is a relationship. Spirituality is not about competency; it is about intimacy. Spirituality is not about perfection; it is about connection. The way of the spiritual life begins where we are now in the mess of our lives.'*

*(Mike Yaconelli)*



### a) The Spirit gives life

(Read Romans 8:1-11,14-15; Ephesians 1:13-14)

Paul has spent a chapter talking about law and sin before he turns, in Romans 8, to life in the Spirit. He freely admits to the occasional struggle faith-wise himself, 'What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do' (7:15). It can be so easy to slip into the old ways, but Paul adds, 'Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!' (7:25). Now he declares there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, and through the Spirit believers can find freedom, peace, and life. And that's the point where he considers most of his readers are.

Paul calls the Spirit 'the Spirit of God' and 'the Spirit of Christ' because Christ's presence is in a believer's life through the indwelling Spirit as the means and power through which God's work can be done. Not only that, but Paul talks of believers adopted into the heavenly family as children of God.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul refers to believers as 'sealed' with the Holy Spirit, in the way cargo or letters might have a seal to guarantee contents and ownership. This seal verifies they belong to God.

### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?



### Digging deeper...

Paul is honest about his own failings because he knows this might help others struggling on their own journeys of faith. How important is this in our own journeys as a church or fellowship?

How would you describe the 'life' that is given by the Spirit of Christ to believers?

Paul covers so much in these verses, but regarding the Spirit, which of his descriptions speaks loudest to your own experience?

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## b) In the life of the apostles

(Read John 20:19-23, Luke 24:45-49, Matthew 28:16-20)

Paul's language is quite diplomatic in Romans, as these aren't churches he has planted or visited, but he knows enough about them to be encouraged by the faith of these people, and admits that some of what he's saying is simply to remind them of the truth they already knew, that God had called him to 'be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles' so that they might receive the seal of the Holy Spirit. He emphasises it is through the power of the Spirit, rather than his own efforts, that he has achieved so much in teaching, signs, and wonders, from his base in Jerusalem to Illyricum (in the Balkan Peninsula).

The believers meeting together in Jerusalem were very aware of the power of the Spirit that Paul spoke of, as within their fellowship they not only listened closely to the teaching of the apostles, but were in awe of the way God's Spirit was visible in their ministry, again through signs and wonders. This flourishing group of believers in Jerusalem have become a model of the early church that has influenced millions of Christians since.

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### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?



### Digging deeper...

Paul had been a determined persecutor of believers, but now his determination has a different focus. What can we learn from the life and transformation of this man?

Ministry and calling can take many forms. How is that seen in the ordinary life of both fellowship and community?

What does the passage from Acts 2 tell us if we remember that frightened group of disciples keeping out of sight after the arrest of Jesus?



## c) The Spirit in the Church

(Read Galatians 3:1-6, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Ephesians 3:14-21)

It would be nice to think that growth in the early church was smooth and without issue, but we are talking about human beings and their understanding of God (as indeed is most of the Bible). Paul has earlier addressed the Galatians as 'brothers and sisters' but now his frustrations surface, as he questions their understanding of how they received God's Spirit and experienced such signs and miracles.



All Saints Church, North Cerney, Cirencester

This happened, he tells them, not through any physical act of theirs, but simply through their response to the message preached, and that is how they should continue, just as Abraham did, their lives made righteous by faith and not by works.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains that the gifts of the Spirit are given individually but for the good of all, to be shared and used. The list he gives provides a picture of the variety of God's gifts rather than a definitive list, but they are certainly ones needed in the building up and strengthening of the early church in so many countries.

Paul's heartfelt prayer in Ephesians is appropriate for all believers, whether individuals or as a fellowship. It is trinitarian in outline, as he prays his readers might possess the strength of the Spirit by knowing the presence of Christ in their lives, and thus be filled to overflowing with fullness of God!

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### On the surface...

Does an image, verse or phrase stand out, and what does it say to you?

### Digging deeper...

How easy is it to get the balance right with faith and works?

Denominations vary in their understanding of the gifts of the Spirit, particularly that of speaking in tongues. Where should our focus be, as individuals or church?

Read again Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3, and which verse (or verses) speaks to you at this moment?



'In truth, I have done nothing alone. God has called me and has been my pilot. The Holy Spirit has been my comforter, my guide, and my power source.'  
(Reinhard Bonnke)

Q) How well does this sum up your own journey?



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### Lectio - Reading

Read twice, slowly and attentively, listening for the 'gentle whisper' that is God's word or phrase for today, using this or alternative verses.

*'For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."'*

*(Romans 5:14-15)*

### Meditatio – Meditation (2-3 min)

As we think of those who first heard these words, and repeat them silently in our own minds, let them interact with our day, our thoughts and concerns... God's word becomes our word for today.

(Group – allow time for those who wish to share the word, image or phrase that has touched their heart.)

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(Group – allow time if possible for all who wish to share that which is on their hearts for prayer.)

### Contemplatio – Contemplation

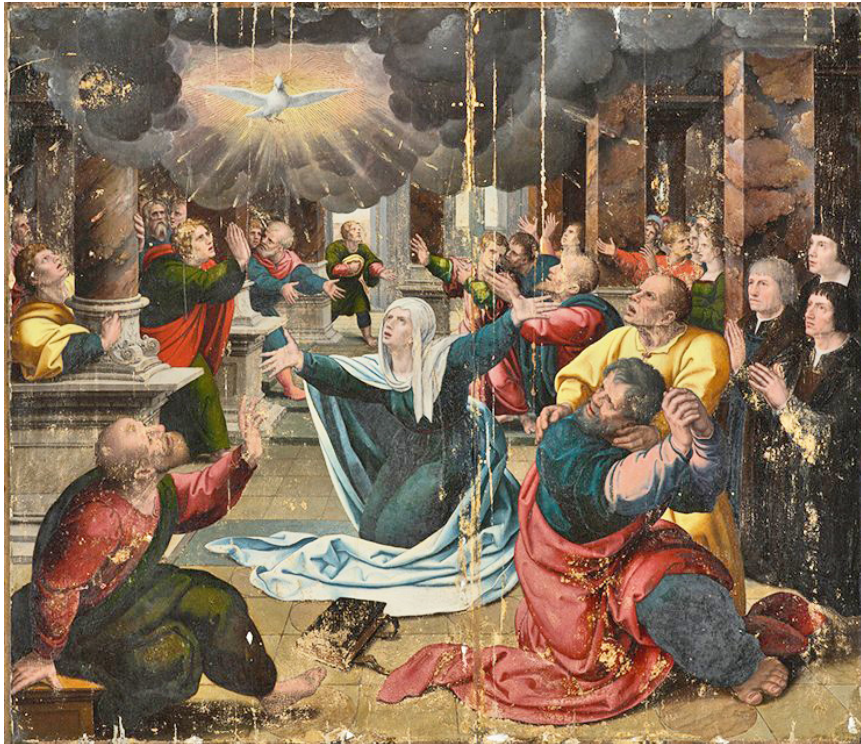
We spend a minute or two in silence, enjoying the experience of God's presence and love embracing us.

Glory to the Father,  
and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
Three in One. Amen.

# VISIO DIVINA

All Visio Divina, or 'Divine seeing' requires of us is a few minutes of quiet, while we look at an image, what the artist might say to us, even putting ourselves into the artwork, and allowing God to speak to us.

The four stages of Visio Divina, assuming we are relaxed, quiet and with a copy of the picture in front of us, are listed below the image.



*'The Pentecost' by a follower of Bernard van Orley, c1530*

1. Look at the picture slowly, noting the colours, people, places, and things. Start in one corner and work your way around it. Remain with the image for one to two minutes. If you would like, jot down a few words about what you see, particularly anything you missed at first glance.

2. Take a second and deeper look at the picture. Where can you see movement and what relationships do you see? Engage your imagination. Where might you be standing within the picture, and from that perspective what deeper meaning emerges?

3. Respond to the image with prayer. Did the image remind you of an experience, person or issue for which you'd like to offer thanksgiving or intercession? Offer that prayer to God.

4. Be still. Breathe deeply. Relax your shoulders, arms, and legs. Rest in this quietness and let God speak.

# REFERENCES

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