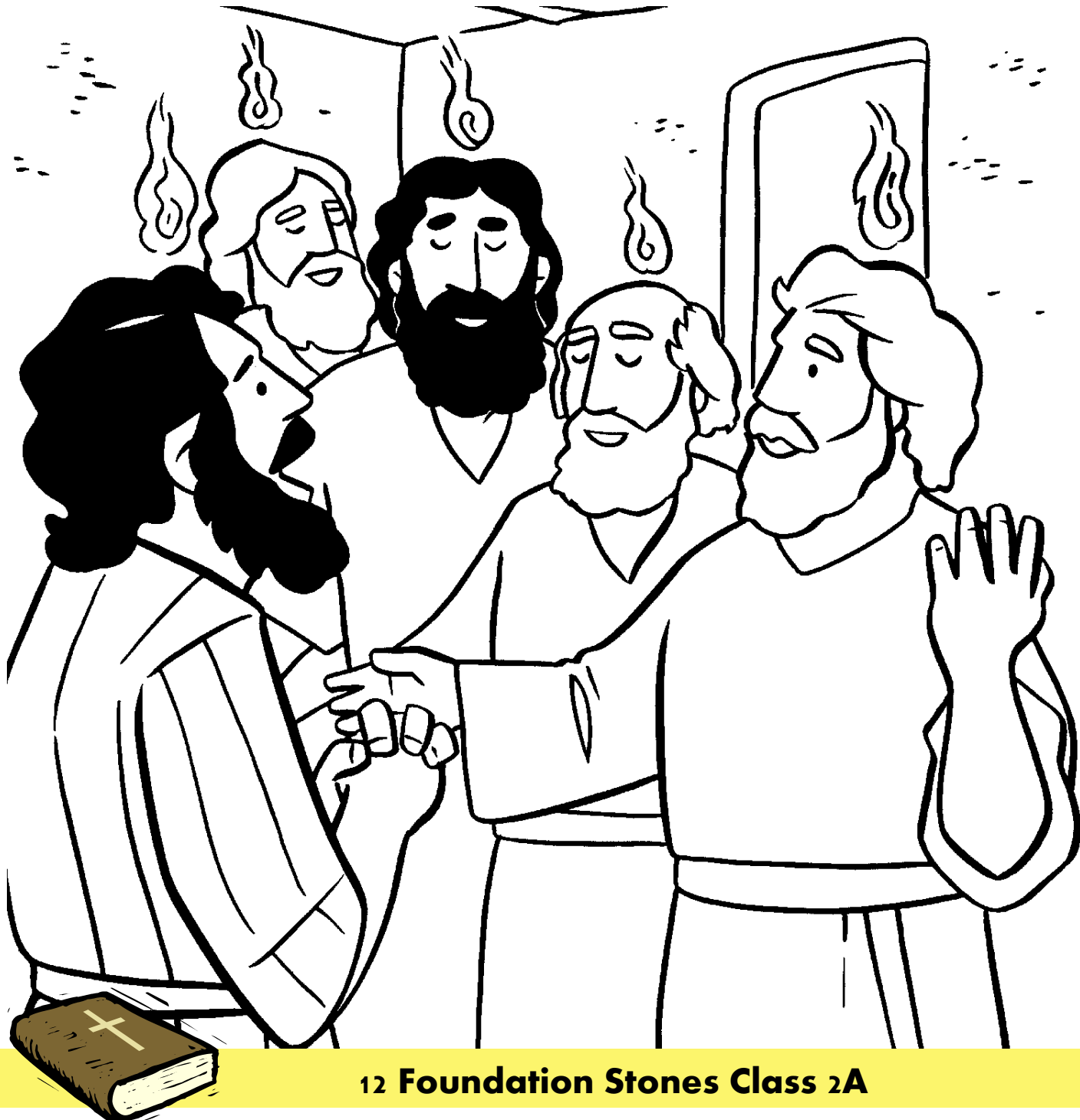


The Holy Spirit

Bible Class: Acts Chapters 1-4



Chapter 1 begins with a reminder of what Jesus had told His followers to do before He ascended.

Jesus commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:4,5,8)

Did they obey? Did they wait?



Yes!

Why?

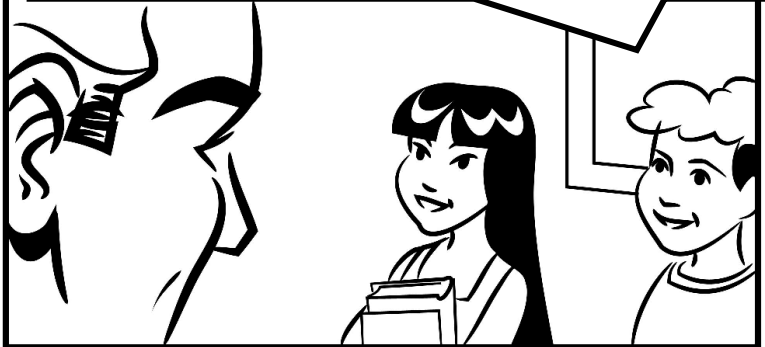
Because Jesus had commanded them to. He had a promise to go with that instruction, like He does with nearly all commandments; most promises have a condition!



If they kept the commandment, what would happen? What is the key verse?



You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere. (Acts 1:8)



Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem ... They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus. (Acts 1:12,14)

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

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

Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. (Acts 2:2-6)

Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! ...What you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:14-18)

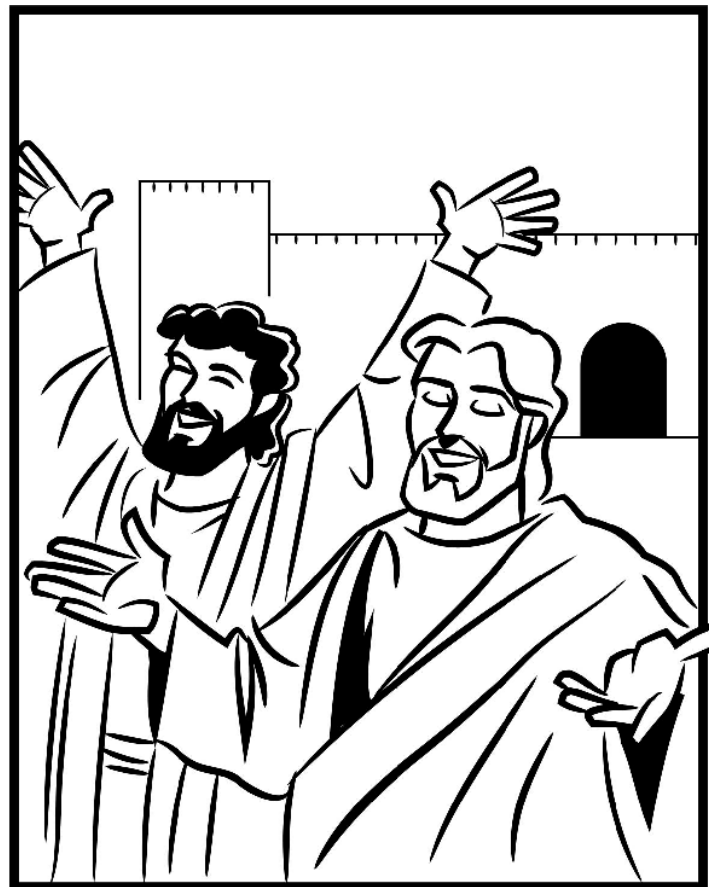


In Acts 2:14-39 we have a wonderful sermon by Peter: It is an explanation to the hearers of what was going on, so that they could understand. Through the preaching of the Gospel to the big crowd that the miracle attracted, they had tremendous results!

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 the end result:

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. (Acts 2:41)

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:

- Talking to our family members about what we are learning.
- Talking to people at our place of study about Jesus and His salvation.
- Talking to people when we're out and letting them know God loves them.
- Giving out tracts.

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

Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.

...Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!" (Acts 3:1-6)

Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded! They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John. (Acts 3:7-11)

After the healing of the lame man, Peter had another wonderful opportunity for preaching the Word. He preached them a pretty stiff sermon, and five thousand were saved.

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees.

These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead. They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning. (Acts 4:1-3)

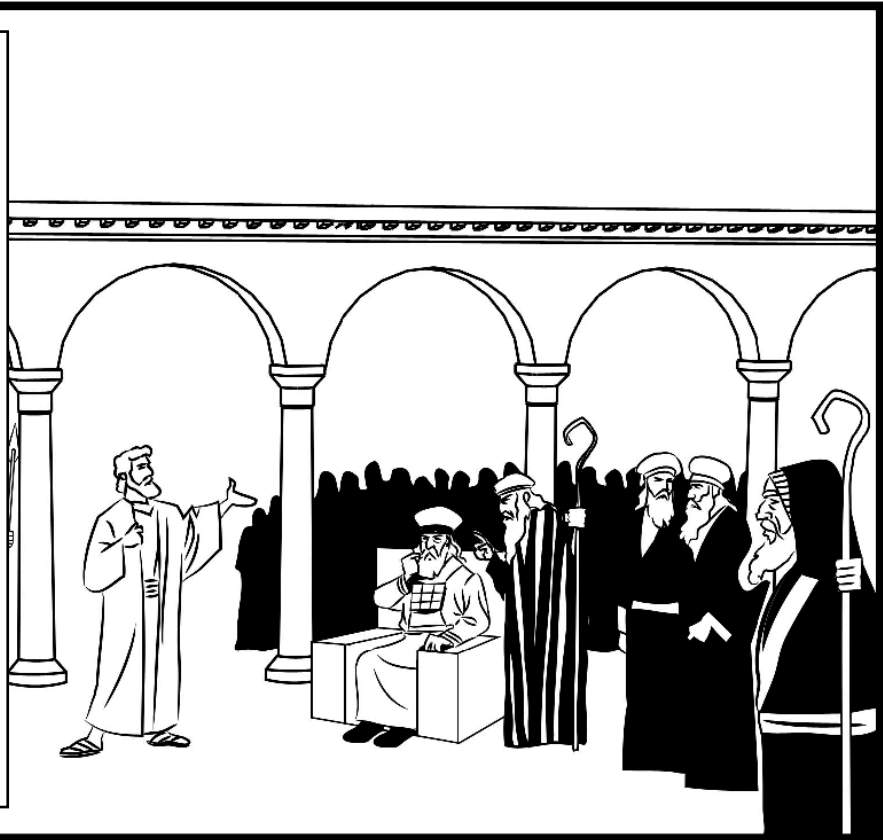


The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?"

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of our people, are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead."

The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:5-10,13)

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? The Holy Spirit!



[The council] commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”

The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn’t know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.

As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God.

After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:18-24, 31)

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.



The Believers Share Their Possessions

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. (Acts 4:32,34-35)

God is the very Spirit of love itself (John 4:24; 1 John 4:8), so when He fills you with His Holy Spirit, your heart overflows with love—love for Him and love for others.

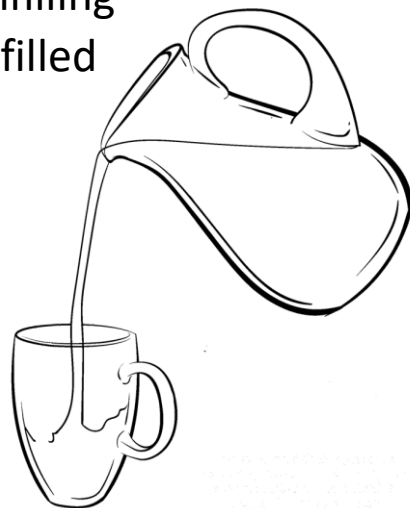
Do you get automatically filled with the Holy Spirit when you get saved?

If you have received Jesus as your Savior, then you have already received a little of that Holy Spirit power. But that doesn't mean that you've received the full measure of the Holy Spirit.

A glass of water makes a good illustration. If the glass has at least some water in it, you could say that it's a glass of water, even though it's not a full glass.

Many Christians are like glasses with just a little water, a bit of God's Spirit. But those who have prayed for an infilling of the Holy Spirit are like glasses that have been filled till they overflow.

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.



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!

