

Connection Group Discussion Questions

For the week of May 24, 2015

Acts 2:1-21

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ 'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

The Message

¹⁻⁴ *When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.*

⁵⁻¹¹ *There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn't for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, "Aren't these all Galileans? How come we're hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?"*

Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; Visitors from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene; Immigrants from Rome, both Jews and proselytes; Even Cretans and Arabs!

"They're speaking our languages, describing God's mighty works!"

¹² *Their heads were spinning; they couldn't make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: "What's going on here?"*

¹³ *Others joked, "They're drunk on cheap wine."*

¹⁴⁻²¹ *That's when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: "Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren't drunk as some of you suspect. They haven't had time to get drunk—it's only nine o'clock in the morning. This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen:*

"In the Last Days," God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people:

Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters;

Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams.

When the time comes, I'll pour out my Spirit

On those who serve me, men and women both, and they'll prophesy.

I'll set wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below,

Blood and fire and billowing smoke,

the sun turning black and the moon blood-red,

Before the Day of the Lord arrives, the Day tremendous and marvelous;

And whoever calls out for help to me, God, will be saved."

Connection Questions:

1. What were the primary factors that caused the early church to grow? Describe the effect of Pentecost.
2. How do you interpret the scene where people were speaking in different languages? Why did the outsiders think they were drunk?
3. How can passion ever be a hindrance to our ability to share our faith?
4. How important is focus in having a mature relationship with God? How do you keep focused in today's busy world?
5. Some theologians argue that the reason the early church grew is because of the way they treated outsiders. Does this view give any insight into how our church can grow today?

6. Church statisticians tell us that people believing in Christianity in our culture has been in a decline for the last 10 to 20 years. How can the church change this trend?

7. Shady Grove UMC sponsors several missionaries throughout the world. Laura and Timo Harkonens and their children serve in the French Congo, where they intend to spend their entire lives, despite its limited resources. A pilot in this remote area, Laura shared with our congregation this month that she could see and feel God's presence clearer because it was not as noisy in the Congo. Respond to Laura's reference to noise and what that might mean for our faith development.

8. Bill Hybels talks about a member of his church having the gift of giving. What is your God given gift or gifts and how best do you think you can use your gifts to further God's purpose?

9. Discuss what Shady Grove UMC can do where we are located to best honor God in how we allow the wind of his Spirit to move among us?