

LIVING THE WORD—Week 14 (Sun., April 26 – Sat., May 2)

The God of the Mighty Acts: the Great Story of God’s Relentless Love

Pentecost (Part 2)—God’s Spirit Transforms His People

Acts 2:32-40; Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 5:13-26; Ephesians 3:14-21

Key Verse: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

As we consider the mighty act of God pouring out his Spirit, we looked last week at how God’s Spirit created a new people, the church. In the book of Acts, we see how the Spirit formed a new community and empowered them to fulfill Christ’s mission. This week we are considering how the indwelling Spirit transforms our own hearts and lives.

The Holy Spirit is a difficult concept for most people to grasp. After all, spirit” is not something we can see or touch or readily define. Someone once said that to many Christians the Holy Spirit is just a “gray, oblong blur.” The simplest way I know how to think about the Holy Spirit is that it is the way Scripture speaks of the power and presence of God in and among his people. When God’s Spirit comes on people in Scripture, they often do mighty things—they win battles against Israel’s enemies or deliver prophecies from God or perform miraculous healings.

But that same powerful presence of God is also seen in the lives of believers, as God transforms us into his image. People filled with the Spirit don’t always do miracles. But they do sing, pray, and serve. They are filled with joy and peace, and treat others with patience and kindness. They have courage and self-control. Their lives become more pure and holy. They love. They become more and more like the God who dwells powerfully in them.

The key verse above is a favorite among Churches of Christ—partly because it was a favorite to use in debates with other Christians, but mostly because it speaks of the first response to the good news of Jesus. Too often it is easy to focus on our action (baptism) and God’s mercy (forgiveness of sins), and miss the ethical call in this verse. The verse begins with a call to repentance and ends with the promise of the *Holy* Spirit. It is a verse that calls us to transformed minds and hearts and lives, and which promises the powerful presence of God to help us change.

Next Week: The Coming—Part 1 (Matthew 24-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:24; 1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 20:11-22:5)

Memory Verse (for Weeks 13-16): Ephesians 4:4-6

On the Mountain (“*Love God*”—set aside 30 minutes this week for quiet time with God)

1. Find a time when you can sit alone and uninterrupted. Spend a few moments preparing your heart to meditate on your relationship with God.
2. Read through Ephesians 3:14-21 two or three times. Then pray each line slowly, putting it in your own words and praying it for yourself (“May Jesus live in my heart...” etc.).
3. Pick one line in the prayer and meditate on it. Consider what it would mean in your life if that prayer were granted.
4. Pray this prayer for others (e.g., your family or home church or the Donelson Church).

In the Gathering (*“Love Each Other”*—discuss with your home church or small group)

1. Is it sometimes hard to understand the concept of the Holy Spirit? Why is the Holy Spirit harder to comprehend than the Father or the Son?
2. In Ephesians 3:14-21, how many different ways does Paul express the idea of God in us?
3. Do we sometimes expect the Spirit of God to somehow transform our lives without spending time developing a deeper Spiritual life?
4. What does it mean to set our minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5)? How do we do that? What keeps us from doing that?
5. Do you have anything to share from your time with God, your family, or in the world?
6. If there is time, discuss the “In the World” section below.
7. Pray using the Lord’s Prayer as a guide. Pray especially that the kingdom would come in our lives and in the world.

Around the Table (*“Love Your Family”*—sit at home and talk together as a family)

1. Read the list of the fruit of Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 (Can anyone say them?). Talk about what “self-control” means.
2. What does self-control look like when we are upset with each other? What about when we are eating? What about when we are watching TV or using the computer or playing video games?
3. What could we do as a family to encourage us to grow more in our Spiritual lives?

Into the World (*“Love the World”*—prayerfully consider God’s mission for us in his world)

1. In Acts 2:40 Peter calls on the people to save themselves from “this corrupt generation”? How was that generation corrupt? How is ours corrupt?
2. Before Peter called them to repent, he told them about Jesus. Why is that important?
3. Do you think you could easily summarize for someone the good news of Jesus?
4. Why would someone in the world be attracted to a message about Jesus, about repentance, and about the Holy Spirit?