

Lesson 3

Empowered for Life

Have you ever been asked to be responsible for an important task? If you say “yes,” you need to know that you are prepared and actually able to do it.

Jesus gave His followers the great responsibility of continuing His mission to seek and save the lost. This task was much bigger than what the disciples could accomplish on their own. But in John 14:12, Jesus had given His followers this promise, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.” This promise may seem hard to grasp. But Jesus was talking about the greater things that His followers would do. These greater things would be done through the help of the Holy Spirit, who would come to dwell within them on the day of Pentecost.

The book of Acts opens with the coming of the Holy Spirit, which was the beginning of the Christian Church. The activity of the Holy Spirit is evident all through the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit was at work convicting people of sin and bringing them to faith in Jesus. He strengthened believers to go forward in unity and to proclaim God’s Word. The Spirit gave them power to heal the sick and to speak out boldly in the face of opposition. He helped them to understand and follow God’s direction.

Who is the Holy Spirit? We know about God the Father, who created all things and sent His Son to the world. We know about God the Son, who died on the cross for us. But what do we know about God the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God.

[TM note: Gen 1:1-2 reference the Spirit in creation, Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38 reference the Spirit as God in the conception of Jesus Christ and God speaking through the Holy Spirit to the prophets in Acts 28:25 and @ Peter 1:20-21]

What attributes of God does the Holy Spirit have?

The *attributes* of God are characteristics that set God apart from mankind.

Hebrews 9:14	He is <i>eternal</i>
Psalms 139:7-10	He is <i>everywhere (omnipresent)</i>
Romans 15:13	He is <i>powerful</i>
I Corinthians 2:10-11	He is <i>all-knowing (omniscient)</i>

The Holy Spirit does the Work of God.

What work does the Holy Spirit do?

Titus 3:5	<i>renews us in Christ</i>
I Corinthians 6:19	<i>dwells in us</i>
Acts 1:5	<i>comes to us in baptism</i>
John 16:13	<i>awakens us to the things of God</i>

The explanation to the Third Article of the Creed talks about the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at work in the world today and lives in every believer. List what the catechism says the Holy Spirit does for believers.

- He *called* me through the Gospel
- He *enlightened* me with His gifts
- He *sanctified* and *preserved* me in true faith
- He *preserves* the church in union with Jesus
- He daily *forgives* abundantly all my sins.

Into the Word: Acts 2:1-47

TM note: It is important for students to understand the difference between a “holy day” and a holiday. A “holy day” was designated by God in the Old Testament as a time for the Israelites to come together to worship God. Examples would be Passover, Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Weeks and Feast of Booths . This is different from a holiday, for example our Fourth of July, a national Holiday. Today in the Christian church year, Christmas and Easter would be “Holy days” to celebrate the Birth and death of Christ.]

The day of Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks, was a holy day celebrated by the Jews. This was an annual festival commanded by God in which all the people were to gather together in Jerusalem. So Jews were gathered from all over in the temple. God did amazing things through the believers that day.

1. Number the following events in order based on Acts 2:1-13:

- 5 believers used the gift of speaking in tongues to praise God's mighty works
- 6 some people in the crowd mocked the believers and accused them of being drunk
- 2 believers began speaking in many languages (tongues)
- 4 the crowd was amazed and perplexed
- 1 believers gathering in Jerusalem suddenly heard a mighty wind and saw tongues of fire
- 3 believers from Galilee amazed others from around the world because they heard their native language being spoken.

2. Peter gave a sermon in order to explain to the crowd what was happening. What did Peter say of Jesus?

v.24 *God raised Him from the dead*

v.33 *He sent the Holy Spirit*

v.36 *God glorified Jesus.*

3. What accusation did Peter make against the Jews?

v.23 *They nailed Jesus to the cross, and put Him to death.*

v.36 *They crucified Him.*

4. In verse 37, how did the crowd respond?

They were “Pierced to the heart”--the felt sorrow for what they had done and asked Peter what they should do.

5. What did Peter tell them to do? v.38

- They were to *repent (turn away from their sin)* and be *baptized*.

6. Many believed the Word that day. 3000 were baptized (v.41).

7. To what activities did the believers devote themselves?

v.42 *they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

8. Most importantly, what was God doing in the church? v.47

The Lord was adding more people every day who were being saved.

Memory Verse

“And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. “
Acts 2:38

Extra Memory Challenge:
Acts 2:39

“For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

New Ideas:

“...Men from every nation under Heaven”



Discussion Questions

Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. Why might God have chosen a holy day like Pentecost to send His Holy Spirit to the believers instead of immediately after Jesus ascended to heaven?

The time of year was very important--Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, was one of the days God had commanded His people to come to the temple in Jerusalem to worship and sacrifice. Having so many extra people from so many countries in Jerusalem for Pentecost allowed the Gospel to spread quickly to all those countries, as the new believers left Jerusalem and returned to their homes.

2. Some believers today may overemphasize certain gifts of the Holy Spirit, like the gift of speaking in tongues or healing, etc. According to the Bible, what should be our most important focus? Look up these verses:

- I Corinthians 13:1-3 *Speaking in tongues is a gift of the Spirit, but without love tongues are empty noise and meaningless.*
- I Corinthians 14:1-5 *Our focus should be on prophesy or teaching more than on speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues benefits the speaker, and God understands it, but to benefit the whole church, teaching and prophesy are more important.*

3. Discuss God's work in Peter's life from the time of his denial of Christ (Matthew 26:69-75) to his preaching boldly (Acts 2).

The credit for Peter's change goes to the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a believer can replace shame with confidence or a timid heart with a bold one. The Holy Spirit working in Peter's heart enabled him to preach with boldness to the crowds at Pentecost, and for his whole life after.

4. Discuss how the Holy Spirit worked through the preaching of Law and Gospel in Peter's sermon (especially see vv.37-38).

Law is defined in the catechism as "the divine Word which tells us what we must do." Gospel is "the glad tidings of the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Savior". Where Peter speaks of what the Jews did to Jesus, for example, he is preaching Law, intended to convict the listeners of their sin. Where he speaks of the works and promises of God to mankind, he is preaching Gospel, intended to give hope of forgiveness of sins.

Daily Devotions

Monday	John 12:25-27, 16:5-15
Tuesday	Romans 8:18-27
Wednesday	I Corinthians 12:4-11
Thursday	Galatians 5:22-25
Friday	Ephesians 4:1-6
Saturday	II Thessalonians 2:13-17
Sunday	II Peter 1:16-21

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CONFESSIONS, CREED, AND CATECHISM

[TM note: Read the Athanasian Creed from the catechism or encourage students to read it throughout the next week.]

* Lesson 3: History and Content of the Athanasian Creed

Believers in every generation must be united in their understanding of the nature of God and His work in saving mankind. The truths of Scripture (especially Jesus' divine and human natures and His relationship to the Father) must prevail. Centuries ago, when the beliefs of the church were challenged by its enemies, it became necessary to develop creeds or statements of faith to keep the biblical, apostolic teaching pure.

The Athanasian Creed, probably written in the fifth century A.D., addresses these issues and is also a clear statement of the unity (one God) and diversity (three persons) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though this creed is named after the orthodox teacher Athanasius, it was not written by him. The Athanasian Creed closes with: "This is the true Christian faith. Unless a man believe this firmly and faithfully, he cannot be saved."

[TM reference: *Students may not know the meaning of the word orthodox. Webster's dictionary defines the word as conforming to generally approved beliefs, conforming to the Christian faith*]

1. Who is Jesus according to John 1:1-4, 14-18?

The Son of God, who truly became a human being.

2. Why is it important that we understand that Jesus is man and that Jesus is God? (see *Luther's Small Catechism and Explanation* questions 155 and 156)

In order that He might suffer and die for us. In order that His death and His blood might have everlasting power to atone for sin.