

What would it have been like to be with the disciples on the first Pentecost? The disciples 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.

1. The Holy Spirit was given to each of the disciples.

When devout pilgrims from all over the world heard the sound of their own mother tongues being spoken, they came running to find out what was going on. They were dumbfounded and exclaimed to one another, “They’re speaking our languages, describing God’s mighty works!”

2. The Holy Spirit enabled them to speak to others and to each other about everything that God was up to, telling the story of how God had changed their lives when Jesus had shown up.

In the Old Testament, to prophesy meant to speak for God, or to reveal the heart of God by telling the story of the future with God’s heart in it.

In the New Testament, it means the same thing, including the way the disciples embody the presence of Jesus Christ, and do the things Christ did. Healing, teaching, forgiving, were all things Jesus did with power. This same power is given to Jesus’ disciples.

Paul writes in 1 Cor 14

“Proclaiming God’s truth to the church in its common language brings the whole church into growth and strength. I want all of you to develop intimacies with God in prayer, but please don’t stop with that. Go on and proclaim his clear truth to others. It’s more important that everyone have access to the knowledge and love of God in language everyone understands.” --The Message

3. The Holy Spirit is being poured out on each of us.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Paul describes some of the gifts of the spirit:

wise counsel
clear understanding
simple trust
healing the sick
miraculous acts
proclamation
distinguishing between spirits
tongues
interpretation of tongues.

And this is not an exhaustive list. A spiritual gift is a gift we receive from God that we use to build up the community.

According to John, Jesus says, “Just as the Father sent me, I send you.”²²⁻²³ Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he said. “If you forgive someone’s sins, they’re gone for good. If you don’t forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?”

4. We are sent out into the world to tell others of God’s love and power in Jesus Christ just like Jesus was sent into the world to tell others of God’s love.

Everybody in the community has a spiritual gift, according to Paul. The reason the gifts were given was for the good of others. They aren’t given for the glory of the person who receives them, but so that by exercising that gift, others may see God at work and give thanks and praise to God. Likewise, each of us is sent into the world to witness by how we embody the spirit of Jesus Christ, and in how we interpret to others what it means to us to be loved by God.

As the Father has **loved** me, so I have **loved** you; abide in my **love**.

5. We have each received the power and mission to forgive like Jesus forgave.

Moving from hoping in God to sharing our hope with others isn’t so much a matter of ability or expertise as it is a question of daring to try it. Each of us can find some simple way to communicate our hope in God to someone else. Each of us is the recipient of spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit, and now is the time

for unwrapping those gifts. As we use our gifts, we will find joy and others lives will be touched.

Some people find it helpful to get together with another friend in Christ to talk about their experience of being a Christian in the world. When you look around you, is there someone you could ask to tell you about their experience of God? Could you ask them who God is for them? Could you ask them where they see God at work in their lives and in the world?

The Holy Spirit is constantly working on our behalf, pouring out help, inspiration, spiritual gifts, and everything we need to grow closer to God. The gifts we receive aren't ours to keep, but to use. I know someone who attended a national conference on Christian Education. At the closing worship, the leader asked for volunteers to come up and act out the verses in Genesis about the creation. They got one volunteer for each day of the creation. Seven people stood at the front of the congregation and waited to hear their verse being read. No one had practiced ahead of time.

When it came to the verses about the fish in the ocean, my friend asked her body to do what she did every day in prayer: listen. Except now she asked her body to reflect what she heard. So she let her body mime the verses as they were read. After the service, a group of people came up to her, some of them weeping, to tell her how moved they had been by her interpretation. They asked her where she had learned to do liturgical dance like that, and how long she had been doing it. She was astonished. She had never done that before in her life. She didn't have a gift for dance, and yet God had used her that day to inspire others. That was about fifteen years ago, and she has never done it again. Some gifts are given in the moment, and some gifts are given over time. And all of them are to be used for the good of the community.

What do you love to do? What gives you joy? What do you like to do in your free time? How could you employ what you love for the glory of God? Would you invite others to join you in it, or do it on your own?