

# **Pentecost**



Acts 2; Deuteronomy 16:9-12; Exodus 19-20



In today's Bassline session we'll dig a little deeper into the festival of Shavuot/Pentecost. Turning to Acts 2, we'll explore why so many Jews gathered in Jerusalem and why this important festival was the perfect moment for God to gift his people with the power of the Holy Spirit. We'll also read how the Holy Spirit brought unity to people from across the nations and consider how his power can bring unity today.

## You will need:

- 'Fifty Things to be Thankful For' handout
- Flipchart paper and pens



# Leader's notes:

Give each group member a 'Fifty Things to be Thankful For' handout. Give the group a set amount of time to write down 50 things they are thankful for.

When they have finished, share the lists together as a group. Did they find the handout easy/difficult to complete? Why is it sometimes challenging to remember to say thank you to God?

They can take the handout home as a reminder that they are greatly blessed. If they've struggled to fill all 50 spaces, they can complete the handout at home.

## Say:

Today we are discovering more about a festival that centred around thanksgiving.







#### Ask:

What is your response to the following quote?

'It's one thing to be grateful. It's another to give thanks. Gratitude is what you feel. Thanksgiving is what you do.'

- Tim Keller



#### Ask:

Read Acts 2:1. What is celebrated at Pentecost?



# Leader's notes:

The purpose of this question is to establish whether the group understands that Pentecost was an event that the Jews had celebrated for centuries. Their response may be to mention the coming of the Holy Spirit or the birth of the Church. Point out that verse 1 says, 'When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.' Pentecost was already a big deal, so what were the Jewish people celebrating?

## Say:

To discover the origins of Pentecost, we need to dive into the Old Testament and explore what happened at the Festival of Weeks.

# Read:

<sup>9</sup> Count seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing corn.

<sup>10</sup> Then celebrate the Festival of Weeks to the Lord your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the Lord your God has given you. <sup>11</sup> And rejoice before the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name – you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites in your towns, and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows living among you. <sup>12</sup> Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and follow carefully these decrees.

- (Deuteronomy 16:9-12)

## Ask:

- What were the Jewish people expected to do during this festival?
- Who was included in the celebrations?
- What event were the people asked to remember? Why do you think that was?



# Say:

The Festival of Weeks was a celebration of the Spring harvest. It took place seven weeks after the collection of crops began. The Hebrew name for this festival is Shavuot, meaning 'weeks'. The Greek name for this celebration was Pentecost as the seven weeks totalled approximately 50 days.

## Ask:

What other event was remembered at Shavuot/Pentecost? Turn to Exodus 19-20 if you need a clue.

## Say:

During the festival of Shavuot/Pentecost, the Jews remember the moment that God gave them the gift of his word to provide guidance and teach them how to live his way. They still take part in this festival today. In Acts 2, Jews from across the nations, speaking many different languages, gathered together to take part in this joyous celebration. They were ready to give thanks and willingly gave a generous offering to God.

#### Ask:

Read Acts 2:1 again. Now that you know the background of this celebration, how would you describe the atmosphere in Jerusalem?

# Say:

When you spot a phrase in the Bible like 'When the day of Pentecost came', don't just let it pass you by. Take the time to discover the context behind the words. Now that we know about the festival taking place in Jerusalem, let's watch what happened as the followers of Jesus gathered together.

# Watch:

What Happened at Pentecost and Why It's Important (stop at 2:44)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQhkWmFJKnA

## Ask:

- Why was Pentecost the perfect moment for God to give his followers the gift of the Holy Spirit?
- How did God empower the followers of Jesus to communicate his message to the people?
- Read Acts 2:9-12. How many different locations were represented?
- How did some of the people there react to what they saw and heard?

# Say:

Some in the crowd assumed the followers of Jesus had been celebrating a little too much and that excessive amounts of wine had led to their behaviour. But there was no alcohol involved. This moment was powered by the Holy Spirit. Moments later, Peter stood before the people and preached the gospel.



#### Read:

- <sup>36</sup> 'Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.'
- <sup>37</sup> When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'
- <sup>38</sup> Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptised, 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. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off for all whom the Lord our God will call.'
- <sup>40</sup> With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' <sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.
- (Acts 2:36-41)

#### Ask:

What would it be like to be at an event where three thousand people gave their lives to Jesus?

## Say:

Pentecost is a celebration of so many things, but most of all it is a reminder of the wondrous generosity of our God shown through his gift of not only his son, but also the Holy Spirit.



#### Leader's notes:

If your group would like to learn more about how the Holy Spirit empowered the early Church, watch and discuss the rest of this clip together.

## Watch:

What Happened at Pentecost and Why It's Important (2:44-5:47)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQhkWmFJKnA



## Leader's notes:

The Sound Check section centres around how the Holy Spirit can break down barriers and divisions in our world. Working in smaller groups, ask the young people to write down on flipchart paper all the different ways people create divisions in society. They may want to consider how our identity impacts the groups we belong to or associate with. They can present their ideas in any way that they choose.



Share their ideas together and discuss how political/ideological or religious groups have tried to bring unity (or uniformity) throughout history. Discuss how one group is often elevated at the expense of another, or differences are ignored to create uniformity. The aim is to highlight how none of these are effective methods and often lead to oppression or conflict.

## Say

On the day of Pentecost, we are shown a different way to bring unity, and it comes through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Leader's notes:

Read and discuss the following quote together.

'Is there a power that can unify the divided nations of the earth without subjugating them? Is there a way of making people one, without at the same time making them all the same?

It is precisely that sort of unity which the Holy Spirit brings. And he declares his intention in the matter right at the beginning, on the day of Pentecost, by the miracle he performed.'

- Roy Clements

#### Ask:

- How does the Holy Spirit bring unity to the community gathered together on Pentecost?
- How can he bring unity to our world today?



## Leader's notes:

Read and discuss the following quote.

'Pentecost, then, tells us that we, today, can have an intimate experience of God and can manifest power in ministry. Moreover, the barriers that divided the human race have been broken so that a new humanity is on the way to being created.'

Ajith Fernando



#### Leader's notes:

Place the flipchart sheets from the Sound Check activity around the room, ensuring that there are plenty of felt-tips for the group to use. Give the group time to read and reflect on all



that has been discussed today. As they do, they can ask the Holy Spirit to bring unity in the different groups and situations written on the paper. They can write their prayers alongside the discussion point from earlier in the session.

An optional piece of music is provided for you to use.

#### Watch:

'Prayer to the Holy Spirit' by Saint Augustine – Francesca LaRosa – Official Lyric Video (3:24) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nF2bHZ\_WUKQ

When appropriate, pray with the group and ask the Holy Spirit to bring unity to the situations and groups discussed today.



## Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

#### Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from this session regarding the significance of Pentecost?

# Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.

