

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

MAY 30 - JUNE 3, 2022

COMMON
QUESTIONS
ABOUT JESUS APR 24 - MAY 29

MONDAY

Read **Numbers 28:26; Leviticus 23:15-21; Acts 2:1-4**

The term *Pentecost* is familiar and *Pentecost Sunday* may be familiar too, but probably not like Christmas or Easter. How much do you know about the history and significance of Pentecost?

The word *Pentecost* comes from the Greek word *pentekoste*, meaning “fifty.” In Hebrew, Pentecost is called *Shavuot*, the Jewish festival also known as the Feast of Weeks, which occurs 50 days after the Passover. Among Jews, Pentecost traditionally celebrates the summer harvest and God’s related provision.

The New Testament significance of Pentecost: Jesus’ resurrection occurred during the Feast of Unleavened Bread; 50 days later the Holy Spirit came down upon believers at Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus’ disciples, knowing that Jesus had risen from the dead, thereafter began to proclaim God’s salvation in Christ publicly. At the first Christian Pentecost, the Holy Spirit enabled believers to speak the Gospel in tongues, which was miraculously understood by all: “*The multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language*” (Acts 2:6). The Apostle Peter preached powerfully at that first Christian Pentecost.

Pentecost in the New Testament birthed the Christian church, just as God's giving the Law to the Jews at the first Pentecost (Exodus 20) established Israel as a nation. Though a non-Jewish remnant accompanied the Jews during the Exodus, ancient Judaism was not very inclusive. True Christianity, conversely, is open to all who accept Jesus Christ, regardless of one's faith background. No one is beyond God's reach!

Contemporary Christians commemorate Pentecost seven Sundays after Easter. Since Easter Sunday is not a set calendar day every year, neither is Pentecost.

There are several significant things about Pentecost that are fundamental to Christianity. First, Pentecost is important in both the Old and New Testaments; each time God is launching something new. Interestingly, at the first Pentecost, 3,000 Jews perished due to unfaithfulness (Exodus 32:28), whereas at the first Christian Pentecost, 3,000 new believers came to Christ (Acts 2:41). Secondly, Pentecost was where the Holy Spirit was given simultaneously to many, filling and equipping new believers. Thirdly, Spirit-provided conviction and gifts to Peter and others enabled them to share Christ boldly amidst extreme persecution.

QUESTIONS

Look at the Pentecost story in Acts 2. Can you accurately describe what Pentecost is and its related significance to the Christian church? Do you believe that you could witness like Peter about your faith in Christ, given the Holy Spirit's indwelling?

TUESDAY

Read **Genesis 1:26; Acts 2**

Yesterday we considered Pentecost in the New Testament and how the disciples and new Christ followers were then filled with the Holy Spirit. The believers' resultant conviction about Jesus and His resurrection was so strong that they witnessed openly, many more subsequently receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior. As Christians, we know the Holy Spirit as part of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father and Son, Jesus, are generally better understood; the Holy Spirit, however, is less well-known, harder to characterize and comprehend.

For me the Holy Spirit has always been a given that I grew up knowing, being taught—assumed to be true—and never really questioned. However, I never truly, fully comprehended the Holy Spirit and His mission within the Trinity.

In Darrell Johnson's book, *Experiencing the Trinity*, the author lays out a compelling explanation of the Trinity. Johnson suggests that when the Word of God came to earth as Jesus Christ in a mission to save humankind, the Father had an elevated position within the Trinity, the Son and the Holy Spirit taking subordinated roles. Each Person in the trinitarian Godhead functions and contributes uniqueness to fullness,

goodness, power, love and majesty of God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are equally God, each working in concert. And per today's Genesis 1:26 passage, we are made in the likeness of the triune God.

In Acts 2 and its events occurring at Pentecost, we see: God the Father at work, setting His plan of salvation in motion via Jesus' life, death and resurrection; Jesus' mission of salvation and reconciliation with God now fully embraced by His disciples and other new believers; and those believers then received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, empowering them to share their faith in Jesus, many ultimately dying willingly for their faith as Christian martyrs.

I am reminded of a song I used to sing with the Glenkirk Choir, "Come, Holy Spirit": "Come, Holy Spirit, dwell here among us. We need Your power." Today we need such Holy Spirit power more than ever! Come, Holy Spirit!

QUESTIONS

Have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life? If so, how—what were the circumstances? How might you experience such presence yet again? How do you understand the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)? Which aspects of the triune God are easiest for you to grasp? Which are hardest?

WEDNESDAY

Read **Acts 2; Matthew 28:16-20; John 4:1-42**

Have you ever felt compelled, so fired up that you need to tell another about your faith in Jesus Christ? This may have been prompted by a “mountaintop experience,” perhaps the byproduct of a retreat or a conference you attended, a Sunday sermon that stirred you, or another personal experience or view of God’s work in another’s life.

Perhaps this characterizes what the new believers felt at Pentecost in Acts 2. The disciples and other believers, 50 days after Jesus’ resurrection, came to appreciate that this Man, Jesus—who had taught them, who they knew had been crucified and risen from the tomb to overcome death—was God Himself (the Son). What news could be more exciting and meaningful than this—that Jesus was the promised “*Immanuel ... God with us*” (Matthew 1:23)? This revelation was life-changing for the early believers as it should be for us today. Our response to such good news should be eagerness to share our story of personal, saving faith and belief in our Lord whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Jesus commanded His disciples accordingly in Matthew 28:19-20, the Great Commission. We are to share the Good News of the Savior, who loves and forgives each of us right where we are. This same Lord loves us too much to leave us where we are; thus, God guides our lives

to shape us into increasing Christlikeness. This same Redeemer wants a personal relationship with each of us and loves us unconditionally forever! Isn't that amazing?

What does it look like to go tell the world about Jesus today?

In John 4:1-42 we see how the Samaritan woman at the well was met by Jesus where she was, with all her baggage. Despite failed personal relationships and across cultural boundaries, Jesus showed her God's amazing grace and love. She recognized Him as the promised Messiah, leading her to tell others in her village about Him. Others from her village also came to salvation in Jesus (John 4:39), her witness being a catalyst. Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well demonstrates one way to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to an ever-hurting, needful world.

QUESTIONS

If you truly believe that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, would you be open to sharing that amazing news with those who do not know Christ? If so, how will you go about this? Whom do you know in particular who needs to hear this Gospel ("Good News") from you?

THURSDAY

Read **Proverbs 22:6; Isaiah 6:1-8**

I have been privileged to be involved in youth mission trips as a student at another church, as a financial supporter for such trips, and then as an adult leader on Glenkirk youth mission trips. These experiences are life-changing and faith-building, and they provide so many unexpected lessons.

Youth mission trips provide students with an opportunity to experience sharing God's Word, light, and love to a world desperately needing Christ. While such trips create unforgettable, life-changing memories for participants, God uses them also for many other kingdom purposes.

The sponsoring church can partner with the youth in various ways: by serving as adult leaders on the trip; by praying for them; by sharing through updates and reports; and through financial support. The fellowship exhibited via these trips edifies the students and leaders, mission partners, and those served. The time away from a student's "normal" life allows the Spirit to work in his or her life powerfully.

Personally, I have found God with "arms wide open," waiting for me and others to say, "I am available for what you have for me, Lord. Send me!" Then I would buckle up, expect the unexpected and pray for openness to what God has planned. A few examples:

- On a Vancouver mission trip with Glenkirk youth, I stood on street corners with two students and a “free prayer” sign. In two hours we had 20+ people stop and ask for prayer—God is so good!
- During this same Vancouver trip, I served among people in an Alzheimer’s facility—God gave me a life experience useful for caring for older relatives now facing similar challenges!
- On multiple Glenkirk West Virginia mission trips, we built relationships with families in a disadvantaged community, repairing homes that had needed this for years. God opened our eyes to life outside of Glendora; we knew that He is at work there, too!
- On multiple Glenkirk Alabama mission trips, we learned of the different life in Alabama—that there is hope in Christ there, too. The relationships developed there have been a blessing; many of these students are now active in Glenkirk Sunday morning worship!

QUESTIONS

You don’t have to be a youth, have a youth, or physically go on a youth mission trip to be a part of one. Would you consider partnering with a youth mission trip or sponsoring a college student accordingly? If you have ever been a part of a youth mission trip, what do you remember about how God was moving during the trip?

FRIDAY

Read **Galatians 5:22-24; Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

In this week's devotionals, we've considered: Pentecost and the excitement that surrounded it in Acts 2; the empowering of the Holy Spirit; sharing our faith; and the many impacts of youth mission trips. Today let's again consider the Great Commission as conveyed in Matthew 28:18-20.

In 2019, right before COVID hit, I joined a short-term mission team to India with Glad Tidings India (GTI Hope), witnessing the difference that GTI Hope is making among the people of India firsthand.

I experienced Vacation Bible School, a Christian school, and women and men who had learned to read as adults, most of them believers. I witnessed two men being baptized in a lake, and I was blessed to preach a sermon in a church with the help of a translator, among many other life-changing experiences. God shared this amazing opportunity with me and the Indian people served by GTI Hope, many of whom previously had not known of Jesus. I met Bible teachers and mission workers who were "sold out" for Jesus Christ, even risking their own lives for the Gospel. I was awed by their joy. The vast majority of the Indian people I met who had come to know Jesus were joy-filled, their lives in Christ rising above worldly status or material wealth.

As a career engineer of 31 years, *joy* is not a familiar word in my professional vocabulary. But since returning from India two years ago, I have sought out joy and the joy of our Lord in particular. Joy is a fruit of the spirit as shared in Galatians 5:22-24.

What I take from my experience in India is that the joy that we have in knowing Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior was very evident among the Christian people whom I met in India. I feel convicted to exude the joy of Christ in my life more consistently. I want all who know me to see that the source of my joy is my relationship with Jesus Christ, "*Immanuel ... God with us*" (Matthew 1:23), my Lord and Savior.

QUESTIONS

Would you be open to a short-term global mission experience? If you are physically not able to, you could get involved in a mission organization via financial and/or prayerful support. What do you do with the joy you find in knowing Jesus Christ? In what ways do you show that joy to others and the world around you?

Sources

- These devotionals owe much to Darrell Johnston's *Experiencing the Trinity: Living in the Relationship at the Centre of the Universe* (Vancouver: Canadian Church Leaders Network, 2021).

