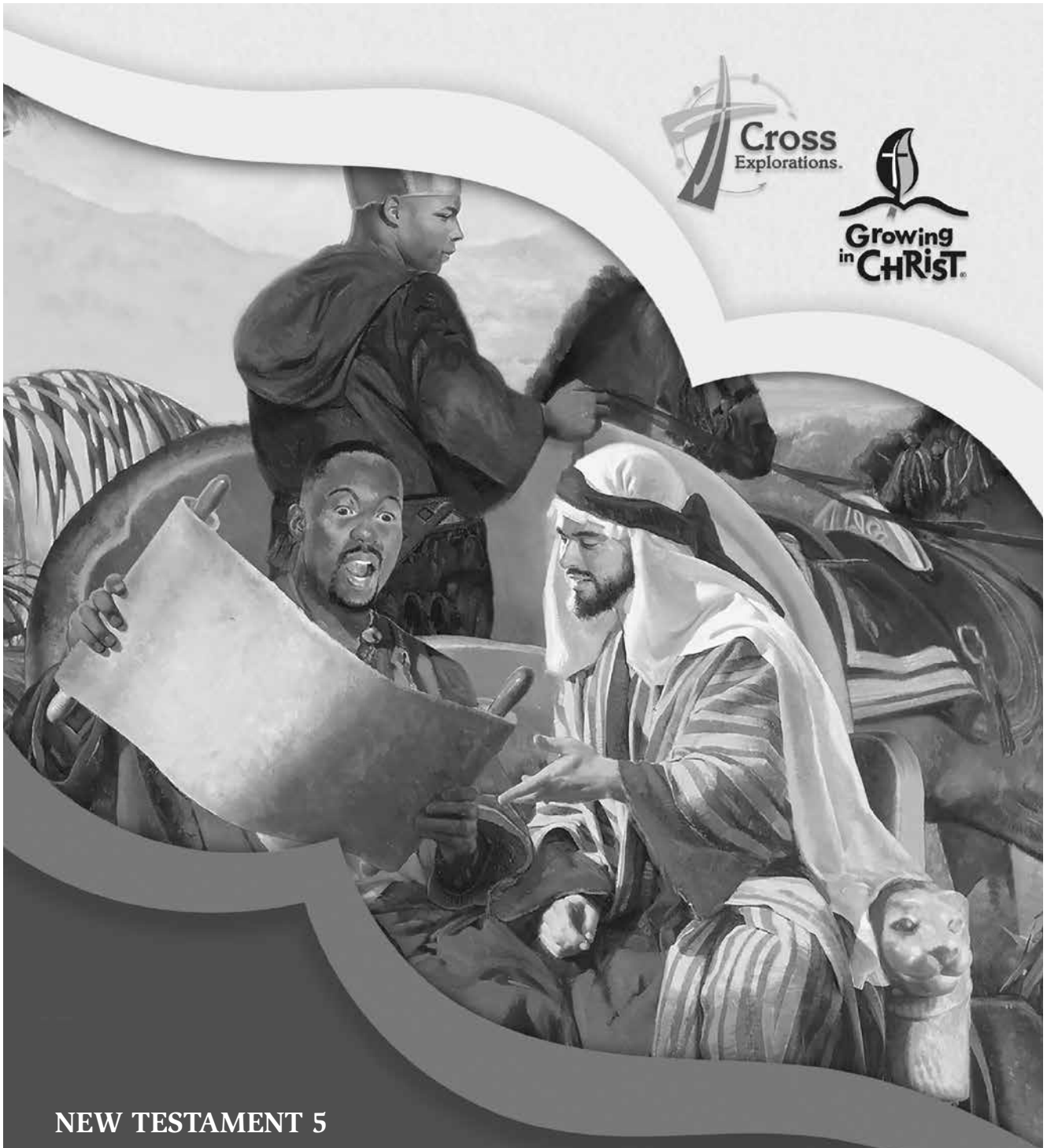




NEW TESTAMENT 5

Adult Bible Study

The Holy Spirit Leads the Apostles

REPRODUCIBLE STUDY PAGES



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Introduction

God promises to strengthen our life in Christ as we study His Word. This Adult Bible Study series provides resources to help you study God's Word, giving you an opportunity to study some familiar, and possibly not-so-familiar, biblical accounts in depth.

Each of the Bible study books has thirteen sessions that are divided into four easy-to-use sections.

Start—Section 1 of each session points participants to the key point for the session and invites discussion and thinking to draw participants into the study.

Study—Section 2 of each session explores a portion of Scripture through the use of a brief commentary and questions that help the participants study the text.

Share—Section 3 of each session helps the participants apply to their lives both God's Law and Gospel revealed in the scriptural account.

Send—Section 4 of each session provides the participants with practical suggestions for taking the theme of the lesson out of the classroom and into the world.

This study is designed to assist both novice and expert Bible students in their study of Holy Scripture. It offers resources that will enable them to grow in their understanding of God's Word while strengthening their life in Christ.

As an added benefit, the sessions in the Adult Bible Study series follow the Scripture lessons taught in both the Growing in Christ and the Cross Explorations Sunday School series. Parents will enjoy studying in depth the Bible stories their children are studying in Sunday School. This will provide parents and children additional opportunities to

- discuss God's Word together;
- extend lesson applications to everyday situations;
- pray together; and
- engage in family activities that grow out of lesson truths.

How to Use This Bible Study

This leader guide gives you all the material you need to teach the thirteen Bible stories for this quarter. The material is designed to be used in an adult Bible study while children are participating in Sunday School. Shorten or lengthen the suggested section times to fit your time frame.

Each lesson includes a brief Bible commentary with the key point, Law/Gospel statements, discussion questions with leader notes, and a front-and-back Reproducible Study Page at the end of the lesson. Make copies of the Study Page to distribute to class members. This format allows for the frequent fluctuation in class size that is common to adult study groups. It is also more economical to order just one leader guide rather than a leader guide and individual student books.

We also encourage you to order the Bible Posters for this quarter. These large works of art will provide your class with memorable visuals of the texts they are studying. (To order, call 1-800-325-3040; ask for CPH stock number 44-4116.)

World History	Dates	Jesus' Life
	6/5 BC	Birth of Christ
Herod Antipas ruled Galilee 4 BC–AD 39	4 BC	
	AD 5	Birth of Saul/Paul
Agents from the Roman Empire begin rule in Samaria and Judea	AD 6	
Roman Emperor Tiberius AD 14–37	AD 14	
Pontius Pilate, Governor of Judea AD 26–36	AD 26	
	AD 29/30	Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension First Christian Pentecost
The Early Church AD 30–100		
	AD 34/35	Stephen martyred Paul's conversion
Roman Emperor Caligula AD 37–41	AD 37	
	AD 40	Gospel preached to Gentiles
Roman Emperor Claudius AD 41–54 Herod Agrippa I, King of Judea AD 41–44	AD 41	
	AD 44	James martyred Peter imprisoned
Emperor Nero AD 54–68	AD 54	
Rome burns; Nero blames and persecutes Christians	AD 64	
	AD 68	Peter and Paul martyred
	AD 90	Revelation written

Preparing the Lesson

Date: _____

God Sends the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1–21

Key Point

At Pentecost, God sent the Holy Spirit to His Church. Through Word and Sacrament, God gives us His Holy Spirit to create and sustain saving faith in Jesus.

Law/Gospel

I sin when I believe that I can understand and trust in God on my own. **By the power and work of the Holy Spirit through His Word, the Spirit grants me faith in Jesus and empowers me to will and do that which is good and God pleasing.**

Context

Pentecost, which means “fiftieth,” occurred fifty days after Jesus’ glorious resurrection on Easter. Forty days after He rose again, Jesus ascended to God’s right hand, and now, ten days later, He fulfills His promise to send the Holy Spirit, who will “bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26).

Commentary

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit introduces Himself in “a mighty rushing wind” (v. 2) and “divided tongues as of fire” (v. 3). However, Acts 2:11 reveals the great miracle of Pentecost. Those who hear the apostles say, “We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter stands and proclaims God’s mighty works of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Peter cites Joel 2:28–32 as his sermon text, and then he proclaims that Joel’s prophecy is fulfilled on Pentecost. Peter’s sermon draws our attention to Jesus Christ and His suffering, dying, and rising. The Holy Spirit comes to us and works through the preaching of Christ and Him crucified and risen for the forgiveness of our sins.

The coming of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel also reverse the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9). In Genesis 11, the people of the world had one language, but they arrogantly sought to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). As a consequence, God confused their language and dispersed them (Genesis 11:7–8).

The coming of the Holy Spirit reverses God’s judgment at Babel. While people around the world may still speak different languages, the Holy Spirit unites them in the Gospel—that is, the preaching of Christ crucified and risen.

In John 14:23–31, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to His disciples as He gets ready to suffer, die, rise again, and then leave them. Jesus talks about demonstrating our love for Him by keeping His Word (John 14:23). He promises the Holy Spirit, “whom the Father will send in My name” (John 14:26). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all work together as one to give comfort and peace in the message of the Gospel (John 14:27).

When Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, He explains the Holy Spirit’s “job description” as well: “He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). Jesus also said, “[The Holy Spirit] will bear witness about Me” (John 15:26), and “[The Holy Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14). The Holy Spirit comes not through uncertain dreams, visions, or feelings, but through the certain and comforting message of peace and forgiveness of sins won by Jesus Christ.

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Lesson 1

God Sends the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1–21

1 Start (5 minutes)

Pray O God, You once taught the hearts of Your faithful people by sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit. Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy consolation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You in communion with the same Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Pentecost, *LSB Altar Book*, p. 611)

Many Christians think that because the Holy Spirit is a spirit, He must simply float about, unattached from physical means. Some people appeal to John 6:63, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail,” to demonstrate that the Spirit does not attach Himself to fleshly things. But that is a misinterpretation of the verse, for Jesus is actually contrasting the sinful flesh with the Holy Spirit. If flesh were unsuitable as a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit, then the incarnation would have been impossible. The angel Gabriel told Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you . . . therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

The misinterpreters of John 6:63 stop short of the reality of the Holy Spirit dwelling in Jesus, for He continues in the same verse, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” The Holy Spirit actually attaches Himself to and works through the Word of Jesus. We also see in Acts 2:38 that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given through Baptism. John 3:5 likewise teaches that “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

Today’s lesson is about Pentecost, the day on which the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Jesus’ apostles and they began to preach and baptize. But before Pentecost happened, we find some preliminary giving of the Spirit occurring. Most translations of John 19:30 say that Jesus “said, ‘It is finished,’ and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” Translating the passage this way gives the idea that Jesus simply was giving up His soul; in other words, He died. But this is not a literal translation from the Greek, which would be, “He bowed His head and handed over the spirit,” not His spirit. Further, though the Greek text does not make a distinction between capital and lowercase letters, “the spirit” would then make more sense as “the Spirit.” In this case, the implication is that, at His death, Jesus handed over the Holy Spirit.

Say 1. Compare John 19:34; 20:20–23 with 1 John 5:6–8. What connections between Jesus’ death and the Holy Spirit can we draw from these passages? How would Jesus later hand over the Holy Spirit to His followers?

John’s Gospel makes use of deep symbolism to communicate the Gospel to us. It seems likely that by telling us that Jesus handed over the Spirit at His death, John was indicating symbolically that the work of the cross prepared the way for the giving of the Spirit to the Church, even though the actual outpouring of the Holy Spirit would come at Pentecost. When Jesus’ side is pierced, the blood and water that flow out bring to mind the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, through which the Spirit does His work in the Church. In John 20:20–23, the wounds from which Jesus bled are shown to the apostles, and He breathes the Holy Spirit onto them so that they can go out and forgive and retain sins. The wounds from the cross earned the forgiveness that they would distribute.

In this instance, they receive the Holy Spirit in a different sense than they would at Pentecost, since Jesus had not yet ascended to give them the full gift of the Spirit. The words of 1 John 5:6–8 hearken back to the cross as well, connecting “the Spirit and the water and the blood” together. These three testify to the grace given through sacramental water and blood, reminding us that the Spirit does not just float about unattached but connects Himself to water, words, bread, and wine.

2 Study (15 minutes)

Say 2. Jesus told His disciples not to leave Jerusalem and start their evangelization of the whole world until they were “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). They were to wait for the promise of His Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4), the Holy Spirit with which they would be baptized (Acts 1:5). Even before Jesus’ ministry began, the disciples were being taught to anticipate Pentecost. How does Acts 2:1–4 describe the fulfillment of this prophecy? What does the wind symbolize? What does the fire symbolize? Why is the traditional liturgical color of Pentecost red?

Even before Jesus’ ministry began, the disciples were being taught to anticipate Pentecost in the teaching of John the Baptist: “I baptize you with water, but He who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16).

The remarkable scene in Acts 2:1–4 brings to fulfillment the prophecy of John that our Lord would baptize “with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” After He ascended, He poured out His Spirit upon the apostles to strengthen them for the task of delivering the Good News. The Greek word for “wind” and “spirit/Spirit” are the same, so the wind symbolizes the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. Fire symbolizes purification and cleansing and has come to be one of the chief symbols of the Holy Spirit, who cleanses us from sin in the Church. Naturally, the Spirit’s association with fire is the reason that the liturgical color of Pentecost is red.

Say 3. We are familiar with Peter's previous failures to confess Jesus. Yet on Pentecost, we see a different side of Peter. How does Acts 2:14 portray him? What could account for this change? See 2 Timothy 1:6–7.

We are familiar with Peter's failures to confess Christ: Immediately after confessing that Jesus was the Christ, he denied Jesus His right to be the suffering Messiah (Matthew 16:13–23). Right before Jesus' death, Peter lied instead of risking the chance of suffering for the sake of our Lord, denying that he even knew Him (Matthew 26:69–75).

But at Pentecost, Peter received the Holy Spirit, which gave him confidence to stand before the huge crowd and give a powerful sermon. Actually, the Spirit gave him the words, as Jesus had promised "the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12:12). Paul reminds Pastor Timothy "to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:6–7). (This is another case where most translations use the word *spirit* when it should be *Spirit*.) Jesus promises that the Spirit will be with His messengers, and with God on their side, how could they not be confident?

Say 4. In John 14:26, Jesus tells His disciples that "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." How do John 2:18–22 and 12:12–16 illustrate the working out of this promise?

In John 2:18–22, Jesus was referring to the temple of His body when He told the Jews that if they destroyed it, He would raise it up again. But no one understood what He was saying at the time. Only after the resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit were the disciples able to understand the true meaning of what He spoke then. The Spirit brought Jesus' words to their remembrance, and He helped them believe in the Scriptures and Jesus' words to them.

In John 12:12–16, the disciples did not really understand the reason Jesus was entering Jerusalem to accolades of "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," even "the King of Israel," nor did they recognize that His action was fulfilling Zechariah 9:9. But after Jesus had been glorified—that is, crucified, risen, and ascended—"they remembered that these things had been written about Him and had been done to Him" (John 12:16). The Spirit was the one who brought these things to remembrance.

Say 5. The Holy Spirit allowed the disciples to, in retrospect, understand the true meaning of the words or works of Jesus and of the Old Testament. How does the Spirit work to accomplish in our lives what Jesus did for His disciples in Luke 24:44–47? According to 2 Corinthians 3:12–18, why can't the Jews truly understand the Old Testament? How are Christians enabled to interpret the true meaning of the Old Testament?

The Holy Spirit opens our minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). As Jesus said, much was written about Him in the Law of Moses and the Prophets

and the Psalms (Luke 24:44), and the Holy Spirit guides us to understand the Old Testament in view of Jesus' revelation. The Jews were (and still are) unable to find the true meaning of the Old Testament "because only through Christ is [the veil over their hearts] taken away" (2 Corinthians 3:14). When people are converted by the Spirit, "the veil is removed" (vv. 15–16).

The Spirit gives Christians freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17), that is, the freedom of the Gospel, which is the forgiveness of sins and release from the oppression of the Law. As we behold the glory of the Lord, we grow daily in grace and anticipate our heavenly glory—and all of these things come "from the Lord who is the Spirit" (v. 18). He does His work by proclaiming Christ crucified.

Share (10 minutes)

Say 6. **The speaking in tongues of Acts 2 was a unique, one-time gift of the Holy Spirit so that the Galilean apostles could be miraculously understood by people who spoke different languages. The goal in this case was intelligibility, not incomprehensibility, as is so often the case in churches that speak in tongues. Rather than focusing on speaking in tongues as a spiritual gift, we should contemplate the fruit of the Spirit that Paul describes in Galatians 5:22–26. What does he encourage in this passage?**

Paul tells us to "walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16), which means to live a life of repentance and trust in the Word that the Spirit sends. An important part of the Christian life is the struggle against the sinful flesh. Galatians 5:1 tells us that "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." If we live our life being "led by the Spirit" (v. 18), the Spirit produces fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Remaining in Christ, our sinful flesh is continually pruned, and the Spirit produces good fruit in us.

Say 7. **It seems to be an oxymoron, but we are truly born dead, as Ephesians 2:1 tells us, "You were dead in . . . trespasses and sins." What does the Holy Spirit do to give us new life according to John 3:5–6 and Titus 3:4–6?**

Though we are born dead in sin, the Holy Spirit gives us new life in Baptism, in which we are born again (John 3:5). In Baptism, we are literally "born of the Spirit" and therefore children of God. In Titus 3:5, Baptism is said to be a "washing of regeneration" or "rebirth." He does this "not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy." It also is a "washing of renewal," which means that the Spirit works through Baptism to daily bring us to repentance and newness of life. But most important, we now have a sure and certain hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7). What a powerful gift of the Spirit!

4 Send (5 minutes)

Give participants the text for next week, and encourage them to read it during the week in preparation for next week's class.

For the **Family Connections** section, encourage the adults with children in Sunday School to review their children's Sunday School leaflets together at home. In his explanation of the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther explains how God's kingdom comes to us. Encourage participants to recite these parts of the Catechism in their family devotions this week.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, you might also share this paragraph from the Large Catechism: "The Holy Spirit causes our sanctification by the following: the communion of saints or the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. That means He leads us first into His holy congregation and places us in the bosom of the Church. Through the Church He preaches to us and brings us to Christ" (Large Catechism II 37).

Consider closing the class by reciting the Lord's Prayer together.

Lesson 1 Student Page

God Sends the Holy Spirit Acts 2:1–21

- ① Compare John 19:34; 20:20–23 with 1 John 5:6–8. What connections between Jesus' death and the Holy Spirit can we draw from these passages? How would Jesus later hand over the Holy Spirit to His followers?
- ② Jesus told His disciples not to leave Jerusalem and start their evangelization of the whole world until they were "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). They were to wait for the promise of His Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4), the Holy Spirit with which they would be baptized (Acts 1:5). Even before Jesus' ministry began, the disciples were being taught to anticipate Pentecost. How does Acts 2:1–4 describe the fulfillment of this prophecy? What does the wind symbolize? What does the fire symbolize? Why is the traditional liturgical color of Pentecost red?
- ③ We are familiar with Peter's previous failures to confess Jesus. Yet on Pentecost, we see a different side of Peter. How does Acts 2:14 portray him? What could account for this change? See 2 Timothy 1:6–7.
- ④ In John 14:26, Jesus tells His disciples that "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." How do John 2:18–22 and 12:12–16 illustrate the working out of this promise?
- ⑤ The Holy Spirit allowed the disciples to, in retrospect, understand the true meaning of the words or works of Jesus and of the Old Testament. How does the Spirit work to accomplish in our lives what Jesus did for His disciples in Luke 24:44–47? According to 2 Corinthians 3:12–18, why can't the Jews truly understand the Old Testament? How are Christians enabled to interpret the true meaning of the Old Testament?
- ⑥ The speaking in tongues of Acts 2 was a unique, one-time gift of the Holy Spirit so that the Galilean apostles could be miraculously understood by people who spoke different languages. The goal in this case was intelligibility, not incomprehensibility, as is so often the case in churches that speak in tongues. Rather than focusing on speaking in tongues as a spiritual gift, we should contemplate the fruit of the Spirit that Paul describes in Galatians 5:22–26. What does he encourage in this passage?
- ⑦ It seems to be an oxymoron, but we are truly born dead, as Ephesians 2:1 tells us, "You were dead in . . . trespasses and sins." What does the Holy Spirit do to give us new life according to John 3:5–6 and Titus 3:4–6?

Lesson 1 Student Page

Through the Week

Family Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over their Sunday School leaflets together, sharing with one another what you learned about today's Bible story.

Pentecost celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Luther's Small Catechism provides a wonderful summary of the Spirit's work. In his explanation of the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther explains how God's kingdom comes to us: "God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity."

In his explanation of the Third Article of the Creed, Luther highlights our absolute dependence on the Spirit's work in our lives here and for eternity:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

(Small Catechism, Third Article)

Recite these parts of the Catechism in your family devotions this week.

Personal Reflection

Our Lutheran Confessions are unabashed about where the Holy Spirit is located: "Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given. He works faith, when and where it pleases God, in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake" (Augsburg Confession V 2–3).

In a similar way, the Lutheran Confessions claim that the chief work of the Holy Spirit is to sanctify us by delivering to us the merits Christ has earned through His work:

Neither you nor I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe on Him, and have Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel.

The work of redemption is done and accomplished. Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, and so on. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew about it, then it would become useless and lost. So that this treasure might not stay buried, but be received and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed. In the Word He has the Holy Spirit bring this treasure home and make it our own. Therefore, sanctifying is just bringing us to Christ so we receive this good, which we could not get ourselves. (Large Catechism II 38–39)

Preparing the Lesson

Peter and John Heal the Lame Man

Acts 3

Key Point

We are all lame beggars before God. Through the Means of Grace—God’s Word and Sacraments—God gives us faith to believe in Jesus as our Savior and grants us forgiveness, the cure for all sin.

Law/Gospel

Disability and illness are physical symptoms of sin in the world. **Through His Son, God gives me forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation—the cure for all sin.**

Context

In the days following Christ’s ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples remained in Jerusalem, making daily visits to the temple for prayer and to share the message of Christ with those who were there.

Commentary

As Peter and John were going to the temple, they encountered a lame man begging for alms at the gate of the temple. Alms are money or food for the poor; more generally, however, alms are acts of mercy. The lame man, therefore, though he had in mind money or food, was asking in a general way for an act of mercy.

When Peter and John heard this man’s cry for mercy, they responded with the only mercy worth giving, the only mercy they had. They gave him the power of God unto salvation. They preached Christ and Him crucified.

Thus, just as the paralytic was healed so that we may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins (Matthew 9:1–7), likewise this lame beggar was healed, receiving from Peter and John God’s own gift: mercy.

The church is a mercy place. It inhales God’s mercy in Christ’s death and resurrection through Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, the Lord’s Supper, and even the sermon. It exhales that selfsame mercy in love and service to one’s neighbor.

Before God, we are all lame beggars. On account of sin, our plea before God cannot be for justice, equity, or fair treatment by the Law. To ask for that is simply to ask for hell.

Our plea, like that of the lame man, is a cry for mercy. Our plea is a cry for undeserved love on account of Christ’s death and resurrection. Through the Means of Grace—through God’s Word preached and His Sacraments administered—we receive God’s mercy. Through those means, God bestows on us what Christ accomplished on the cross two thousand years ago—the forgiveness of our sin. “For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation” (Small Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar). On account of this, we are once again able to stand before God.

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Lesson 2

Peter and John Heal the Lame Man

Acts 3

Start (5 minutes)

Pray Lord God, heavenly Father, in the lame man begging outside the temple, You give us a picture of our spiritual deformity before You. Through Peter and John, You healed the lame man and thus give us a picture of how You heal our spiritual disease through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Bless us as we study Your Word of truth so that we may be comforted in Your mercy and may be led to show acts of mercy to those in need around us; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Ask 1. What is the connection between physical illness or any physical impairment and the Bible's teaching on sin? How do our Lord's cross-won forgiveness and life give us a different viewpoint on physical illness?

Physical illness, or a physical impairment, in its many manifestations, is a horrible consequence of sin. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God and ate the forbidden fruit, sin and death entered the world. As a result, the world and all who inhabit it are in bondage to sin, death, and all of their effects, including physical illnesses and their consequences. Everything from the common cold to chronic diseases to mental illnesses to physical impairments is a symptom of the greater disease of sin and death, which also testifies to humanity's broken relationship with God the Creator.

Therefore, when Jesus becomes flesh and enters the world, He comes to liberate us from our bondage to sin and death and their resulting symptoms of illnesses and disabilities. When Jesus dies on the cross and rises on the third day, He not only wins forgiveness of sins, but He also conquers death.

We can even think of the many times during His earthly ministry when He healed many people with frail and diseased bodies. These miracles were both an attack on the dominion of sin, death, and Satan and a foretaste of the feast of eternal life to come. Sin, death, and the devil have been conquered by Christ's death and resurrection, and on the Last Day, we will fully experience healing and liberation from all diseases, illnesses, and disabilities.

2 Study (15 minutes)

Say 2. Read Acts 3:1–10. How does Peter heal this lame man (vv. 6–7)? What is important about Peter (and John) performing this miraculous act of mercy?

While the lame beggar may have expected a donation of money or food, Peter and John can give only one thing: the healing mercy of Jesus Christ. So, Peter gets the man's attention by saying, "Look at us." Once he has the beggar's undivided attention, he explains that he does not have exactly what the beggar is expecting. But he does have something better! When the lame beggar received only money or food, he remained in his lame, beggarly condition. However, Peter and John would give him release from that broken, fallen condition. They would give him Jesus! So Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" Not only did Peter speak that word, but he also physically reached out and took the man "by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong." Peter healed the man with both his preaching of Jesus and his physical touch!

What is important about this great, miraculous act of mercy? Peter (and John with him) performed the same kind of merciful act as did the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry. Just as Jesus before them, Peter and John speak the healing, merciful word of Christ and show it with their actions that heal and restore. These two apostles carry on and continue the work and ministry of Jesus Himself. They work with what we now call "Word and Sacraments." They proclaim the healing word of the Lord of Life, and they give out that healing and life in tangible, physical ways.

Ask 3. How does the lame man respond to the gift of his miraculous healing (v. 8)? How do the people, the community, respond to his healing (vv. 9–10)?

In verse 8, we see how the beggar responds to his physical healing: "And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God." Now that his feet and ankles are made whole and strengthened, he can walk and leap. Remember, he had been lame from birth, so this was all joyously new to him!

Not only does he enjoy his newfound physical abilities, but he also enters the temple to praise God. Not only is he restored physically, but he is also restored spiritually: he has received forgiveness and new life from Jesus of Nazareth, and as part and parcel of that restored relationship with God, he enters the temple to worship, to praise the God-man who healed him.

This man's healing is not just a private matter between him and Jesus! No, his healing brings "wonder and amazement" from people around him. The beggar is restored, that is, forgiven and healed by Christ Himself—and that restoration includes being joyously united with the people around him. So the people and the community around him join in the joy, the gladness, and the worship.

Say 4. Read Acts 3:11–26. How does Peter preach Jesus to the crowd gathered at the temple (vv. 12–16)? In verses 17–20, Peter echoes the message that he proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost. What does he exhort the people to do, now that they’ve heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Compare Acts 2:38 and 3:20. Taking both passages together, what outcome flows from repentance?

In both Acts 2 and Acts 3, Peter first preaches the bold and joyous message that Jesus of Nazareth is God’s Son who suffered and died, but whom God raised from the dead. In Acts 3:12, Peter puts the miraculous healing of the beggar in its proper perspective: the man was not healed by his or John’s “power or piety,” but rather by the grace, mercy, and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Once this joyous news rings in the ears of his hearers, Peter then exhorts them to “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out” (3:19). He exhorted the same thing in Acts 2 when the people asked, “What shall we do?” (2:37). In that chapter, Peter said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (v. 38). No, we do not repent in order to grab on to Jesus and His forgiveness. Rather, once we hear the message of sins forgiven and life freely given in Christ Jesus, then we live lives of repentance and faith as we hold on to that undeserved mercy.

And what does it mean to repent? Literally, the word means “have a new mind” or “have a new way of thinking.” It means that we learn to think of and view our sins differently, and we learn to think of and look at God differently, because of Jesus Christ. Instead of treating our sins lightly and trying to cover them up, we learn to expose them and confess them. After all, our sins make us lame before God. And instead of viewing our life as the way to impress God with our good deeds, we instead learn to rest in His healing mercy and live in the joys of His forgiveness and life.

We also notice what Peter says about the outcome of this repentance. In Acts 2, Peter said that repentance would lead to receiving the Holy Spirit. In Acts 3:20, he gives this outcome of repentance: “That times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus.”

We can take these two verses as two ways of saying the same thing. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we also receive the refreshing faith and life that come from the presence of the Lord. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we also receive the Christ, because, as Jesus said, “The Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me” (John 15:26).

Ask 5. What exactly does Peter say about heaven and Jesus in Acts 3:21? How do incorrect translations of this text obscure the Gospel, especially when we consider the Lord’s Supper?

In light of some mistaken translations, it is important to know what Acts 3:21 actually says as it flows out of the previous verse. Speaking of Jesus (the last word in v. 20), a literal rendering of the Greek would read: “Whom it is necessary that heaven receive until the time of the restoration of all things which God spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets from the ages.” Notice that the verse talks about heaven receiving Jesus. Here, Peter refers to our Lord’s ascension (see Acts 1:6–11).

The translations that refer to Jesus and say, “Whom heaven must receive,” are faithful to the original Greek. Some Bible translations, however (e.g., the New International Reader’s Version and the New Revised Standard Version), mis-translate the Greek. They refer to Jesus and say He “must remain in heaven.” This superimposes a notion that the original Greek does not have. When Peter says, “Whom heaven must receive,” he refers to Jesus’ ascension to heaven (Acts 1:6–11). When the erring translations say He “must remain in heaven,” they add the false Reformed notion that Jesus must literally stay in heaven, that He cannot be on earth until the Last Day.

This mistaken notion that Jesus must “remain” in heaven obscures the Gospel because it ends up denying that Jesus is present in His Holy Supper, “under the bread and wine” (Small Catechism). We see Reformed teaching chiefly in modern Evangelicalism, where the real presence of Jesus in His Holy Supper is denied. That faulty theology led translators to change the rendering and meaning of Acts 3:21 and translate this passage as “must remain in heaven.”

But when we remain true to the biblical text, we see that Peter talks about Jesus’ ascension, and we also remain faithful to other Scripture passages that talk about Jesus actually being here on earth in His Holy Supper (see Matthew 26:26–28; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23–26; and John 6:53–57).

Share (10 minutes)

Ask 6. **What does the story in Acts 3:1–10 teach us about life in our Lord’s “one holy Christian (catholic) and apostolic Church” (Nicene Creed)? Think of where the healing takes place, how it happens, and what happens in response to the healing.**

The healing of the lame beggar took place at the temple, that is, the place of worship. Our place of worship, the Church, continues the work and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ by bringing spiritual and physical healing to all within her pale. When we hear the Good News of forgiveness, life, and salvation that come from Jesus Christ crucified and risen, we receive the best healing of all—spiritual healing. When we receive new life in Holy Baptism, we are restored to life with God for eternity. When we partake of Holy Communion, we actually meet Jesus in our midst, under the bread and wine, and He grants us healing in the forgiveness of sins and His divine love.

Because the Church is our place of healing, she continues to proclaim the Lord’s healing to all who enter her gates and doors. This is why the Church remains faithful to the liturgy as it has been passed down through the centuries. That liturgy—the Divine Service and the services of daily prayer—bestow the best healing possible for our souls that are sick with sin. As the Augsburg Confession says, “Nearly all the usual ceremonies [of the Divine Service] are also preserved. . . . For ceremonies are needed for this reason alone, that the uneducated be taught what they need to know about Christ” (AC XXIV 2–3).

Also, since the Church is the place of Jesus’ spiritual healing on earth, she is also called be to the place of physical healing and mercy. Christians are called to

show mercy to their needy neighbors, just as Peter and John did for the lame beggar. And when we Christians show the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, we get to see our fellow human beings restored to their proper humanity. We even get to rejoice with our neighbor when he or she is restored to full life in Christ's Church!

4 Send (5 minutes)

Give participants the text for next week, and encourage them to read it during the week in preparation for next week's class.

For the **Family Connections** section, encourage the adults with children in Sunday School to review their children's Sunday School leaflets together at home. Challenge class members to learn the Second Commandment and its meaning from the Small Catechism. Also draw their attention to the exercise on the Student Page for connecting the Second Commandment with the Bible story in this lesson.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, point out the questions on the Student Page. Encourage class members to put themselves in the shoes of the lame man in order to see how they need God's mercy in Christ Jesus. Also encourage them to put themselves in the shoes of Peter and John in order to learn how to give alms and show acts of mercy to people in their community.

Lesson 2 Student Page

Peter and John Heal the Lame Man Acts 3

- ① What is the connection between physical illness or any physical impairment and the Bible's teaching on sin? How do our Lord's cross-won forgiveness and life give us a different viewpoint on physical illness?
- ② Read Acts 3:1–10. How does Peter heal this lame man (vv. 6–7)? What is important about Peter (and John) performing this miraculous act of mercy?
- ③ How does the lame man respond to the gift of his miraculous healing (v. 8)? How do the people, the community, respond to his healing (vv. 9–10)?
- ④ Read Acts 3:11–26. How does Peter preach Jesus to the crowd gathered at the temple (vv. 12–16)? In verses 17–20, Peter echoes the message that he proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost. What does he exhort the people to do, now that they've heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Compare Acts 2:38 and 3:20. Taking both passages together, what outcome flows from repentance?
- ⑤ What exactly does Peter say about heaven and Jesus in Acts 3:21? How do incorrect translations of this text obscure the Gospel, especially when we consider the Lord's Supper?
- ⑥ What does the story in Acts 3:1–10 teach us about life in our Lord's "one holy Christian (catholic) and apostolic Church" (Nicene Creed)? Think of where the healing takes place, how it happens, and what happens in response to the healing.

Lesson 2 Student Page

Through the Week

Family Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over their Sunday School leaflets together, sharing with one another what you learned about today's Bible story.

With your family, learn the Second Commandment and its meaning from the Small Catechism. As you rehearse this commandment and meaning, try to connect it to the story of Peter and John healing the lame man.

How did Peter and John call upon God's name in the face of the lame man's trouble? After he was healed, how did the lame man pray, praise, and give thanks to God? Where did he pray, praise, and give thanks?

Personal Reflection

Put yourself in the shoes of the lame man. When you are sick, how does your sickness actually proclaim the reality of your bondage to sin and death in a fallen world? How does the forgiveness, life, and salvation of Jesus help you to view and deal with your sickness in a God-pleasing way?

Now put yourself in the shoes of Peter and John. How can you call on God's name to help others in need around you? How can you give alms to the poor, needy, and sick in your community? How can you give them the greatest act of mercy by proclaiming the healing (forgiveness) of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen?