

SESSION 7

Pentecost

Acts 2 • Exodus 19 • Joel Fulfilled

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Six weeks of planted seeds come up tonight. Participants watch the promise land: a sound from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind (the Breath of Session 1, at scale), tongues as of fire distributed and RESTING on EACH ONE of them (the abiding motif of Session 3, now plural), and Peter standing up to declare, of Joel's prophecy from Session 4, "this is what was spoken." Moses' wish is granted; the few become the all. In the live discovery, participants find Sinai and realize Pentecost is the mountain happening again, with the law arriving this time not on stone but on hearts. This is the summit session. Everything before tonight was climbing; everything after is what the summit means for them.

Catholic Touchstone

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Trinity is fully revealed: Christ, having been glorified, pours out the Spirit in abundance, and the Church is manifested to the world (CCC 731-732). The tongues as of fire signify the Spirit's transforming presence and power (CCC 696). And Peter's own words on the day carry the gift forward: the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are far off.

What You Need to Know

Lead this one hot. You have done six sessions of disciplined withholding: the John 20 glimpse, the sealed oil, the unanswered "when." Tonight you collect. Reread every Thread Watch note from Sessions 1-6 before you walk in; your job tonight is less to teach than to stand back while the room's own memories detonate, and to make sure each detonation gets its second of silence.

What Pentecost was before Pentecost. Pentecost ("fiftieth") is the Greek name for the Feast of Weeks, fifty days after Passover, one of the three great pilgrim feasts, which is why devout Jews "from every nation under heaven" fill Jerusalem in Acts 2:5. Exodus 19:1 places Israel's arrival at Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt, and Jewish tradition, attested clearly in the centuries after the New Testament and possibly earlier, came to celebrate the feast in connection with the giving of the Law; whether the Acts 2 crowd already kept it so is debated, and say as much if asked. What is certain is the typology the Church has long loved: fire on the mountain then, fire on each head now. Hold this until the live discovery hands it to the group.

The details are all callbacks. A sound "like the rush of a mighty wind": *pnoe*, breath, ruah at hurricane force, the four winds of Ezekiel 37 arriving at one address. Tongues as of fire, "distributed and resting on each one of them": the verb of Isaiah 11:2 and the Jordan, now multiplied; the anointing of the One is being distributed to the many. About a hundred and twenty are in the room, and Acts 1:14 says explicitly this included the women, with Mary the mother of Jesus: Joel's "sons and daughters" is literal on day one.

The 3000. At Sinai, while Moses received the law on stone, the people broke it at the golden calf, and about three thousand fell (Exodus 32:28). At Pentecost, the day the Spirit writes the law on hearts, about

three thousand were baptized and came to life (Acts 2:41). St. Augustine built a whole theology of grace on that symmetry, and it belongs to the group tonight if the discovery goes well.

For the parents in the room. Peter's altar call ends with a sentence aimed straight at your tables: "the promise is to you AND TO YOUR CHILDREN" (Acts 2:39). On the Church's first day, the gift is offered across a generation gap. Parents brought their candidates to this study; Peter says the promise was always addressed to both of them at once. Make sure this lands; it is the memory verse for a reason.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Exodus 19:16-19 (God descends on Sinai in fire, with a sound growing louder) is tonight's live discovery: Pentecost is Sinai again, with the law given this time as the Spirit on hearts (Jeremiah 31, Session 4, paid in full).
- Joel 2:28-29 is quoted by Peter with the words "this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel": Thread B resolves on the apostolic dime, not ours.
- Genesis 11:1-9 (Babel) runs under the languages miracle: humanity scattered into mutually incomprehensible tongues is gathered into one comprehension. Tonight's Dig Deeper.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*On the Spirit and the Letter*)

St. Augustine set the two mountains side by side. At Sinai the law was given, written on stone tablets outside the people, and on that day about three thousand fell for breaking it. At Pentecost the Spirit was given, writing the law on hearts, and on that day about three thousand believed and came to life. The letter, he concluded, kills; the Spirit gives life. Same God, same law, new address, opposite result.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*)

St. John Chrysostom noticed the conditions and the choreography. The Spirit came upon disciples who were all together, of one accord, persevering in prayer: unity and prayer set the table for Pentecost. And the one gift arrived divided into tongues, one resting on each, so that no one could doubt that each person, not just the group, had received their own share of the one Spirit.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Lectures, Lecture 17*)

St. Cyril told his candidates that at Pentecost the Spirit came in fire, but a fire that does not destroy: tongues of fire, not to burn but to save, giving light and warmth without consuming what they touched. The apostles were not scorched; they were kindled. The power that fell on that house is the power his candidates, and yours, are preparing to receive.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 696.** Fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions; the tongues as of fire at Pentecost signify the Spirit filling the Church.
- **CCC 731.** On the day of Pentecost the Paschal mystery is fulfilled and the Holy Spirit is poured out; the age of the Church and of the Spirit's outpouring begins.
- **CCC 732.** On that day the Holy Trinity is fully revealed, and the kingdom announced by Christ is opened to those who believe.

Thread Watch

Thread A: The Breath. RESOLVES TONIGHT. Genesis breath, Ezekiel's four winds, the Jordan dove, the locked-room breathing: all of it arrives as the sound of a mighty rushing wind filling the house. When the group reads Acts 2:2, pause and ask what six weeks of this study make them hear in that wind. Take multiple answers. This is the payout; spend it slowly.

Thread B: From the Few to the All. RESOLVES TONIGHT. Peter quotes Joel and says "this is what was spoken." Have someone recite Numbers 11:29 from memory one last time immediately after the Joel quotation is read. Moses' wish, Joel's promise, Peter's declaration: let the room hear all three in one minute of the same evening.

Thread C: The Oil. Still sealed. Fire rests on each one; the anointing is being distributed. Say nothing. Two more sessions of evidence, then the seal question, then the rite.

The two-stage pattern. Session 1, Question 6 planted "God gives the Spirit in His own order and His own time" over the dry bones' two-stage rising, and Session 6 left open why men who received the breath still had to wait. Tonight partially answers it: the waiting ended in power. Next week, Samaria makes the two-stage pattern unavoidable. Do not preview it.

Session Goals

1. Participants have read Acts 2:1-13 aloud and named, from their own memory, at least three planted echoes (wind, fire resting on each, the crowd, sons and daughters).
2. Participants have found Sinai themselves and can explain in their own words why the Spirit fell on the feast of the Law.
3. Numbers 11:29, Joel 2:28, and Acts 2:16 have been heard together in the same minute.
4. The group has faced the "unrepeatable event" objection at full strength, and met Acts 2:39 as Peter's own extension of the gift.
5. Every household leaves with the Come Holy Spirit prayer and has prayed it once together before walking out.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 80 minutes; this is the one session where running long is better than cutting deep. To land at 60 if you must: drop Win question 1 (keep question 2), skip the Dig Deeper box on Babel, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute. Never cut the Sinai discovery, the three-voices minute (Moses, Joel, Peter), or the closing prayer sung or spoken together; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit. For six weeks we have watched You promised: breath for the dry bones, a wish on the lips of Moses, oil on the head of David, an outpouring signed by the prophets, a dove that stayed, a Paraclete pledged in an upper room. Tonight the waiting ends. Fill this house as You filled that one. Fall on each of us, and hold nothing back. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. What is the best grand opening, launch, or first day you have ever been part of? What made it electric?
2. Describe a time you were close to real wind or real fire: a storm, a bonfire, something with power in it. What did it feel like to stand near it?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Day (Acts 2:1-13)

Households read Acts 1:1-14 at home: the waiting room. Now the waiting ends. Have your best reader read Acts 2:1-13 aloud, unhurried. Then sit in three seconds of silence before the first question.

Question 1. Start with verse 2: "a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house." You have been in this study for six weeks. What does that wind mean to you that it could not have meant six weeks ago? Say everything you hear in it.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Take several answers; the room has earned this question. The harvest available: ruah, the breath-wind-Spirit of Genesis 1:2, arriving not as a whisper but at gale force; the breath that made dust a living man in Genesis 2:7; the four winds Ezekiel summoned into the valley so that a dead nation stood up as an army, and here are about a hundred and twenty people in a house becoming the beginning of a new people; the breath Jesus gave the Ten in the locked room, now scaled from a breath to a wind. Six weeks of breath, and tonight God exhales. When the harvest slows, name Thread A out loud for the first time: you have been following the Breath since the first night, and it just arrived.

Question 2. Now verse 3, and read it precisely: "there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them." Two words in that sentence should ring a bell from Session 3 and Session 5. Which words, and what is God doing by choosing them?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"Resting," and "each one." A tongue as of fire RESTED on each: not the same word in the original languages as Isaiah's "rest" or John's "remain," say so if asked, but unmistakably the same motif this study has tracked from Isaiah 11 to the Jordan: the Spirit who abides, now arriving to stay. And it rested on EACH ONE: not on the group as a blur, not on Peter as the new Moses while the rest watched, but one flame per person. The anointing that rested whole on the Anointed One is being

distributed without being divided. Note also who "each one" includes: Acts 1:14 has just told us the company included the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus. Sons and daughters, on day one, by name.

Question 3. Peter stands up (read Acts 2:14-18) and explains the uproar with one citation: "this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel," and he quotes the passage this group found for itself three weeks ago. And behind Joel stands something older still. Can anyone give it from memory?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29). Now assemble the chain out loud, all three links inside one minute: Moses WISHED it in the wilderness; Joel PROMISED it after the locusts; Peter, on the street in Jerusalem, points at what is happening and says THIS IS THAT. A wish became a promise became a Tuesday morning. Then name Thread B for the first time: from the few to the all, followed since Session 2, resolved by the first pope's first sermon. Let the room have its moment. Some groups applaud here. Allow it.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is in the second book of the Bible, then that Moses is in it.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. *"A mountain wrapped in smoke, because the LORD has come down on it in fire. The whole mountain trembles. A sound, like a trumpet, grows louder and louder. The people stand at the foot, trembling too. It happened in the third month after leaving Egypt. Find the mountain."*

When found, have the discovering table read Exodus 19:16-19 aloud. Then tell the group what feast fell on the day of Acts 2: the Feast of Weeks, fifty days after Passover, which Jewish tradition came to associate with the giving of the Law at Sinai.

Question 4. Lay the two scenes side by side: Sinai and Pentecost. Build the parallel columns together on paper: what matches, and what has changed?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Matches: God descends; fire; a sound from heaven growing overwhelming; a gathered people at the bottom of it; a covenant moment; even the timing, the feast tradition linked to the Law. The Church has read Pentecost in the light of Sinai from early on; offer the columns as that venerable reading, not as a claim Acts spells out. Changes, and each one is the gospel: at Sinai the fire stayed on the summit and the people were fenced back on pain of death; at Pentecost the fire leaves the mountaintop and lands on each person's head. At Sinai God gave the law written on stone, outside them; at Pentecost He gives the Spirit who writes it on hearts, the very thing Jeremiah promised in Session 4. And one more, for the table that finds it: at Sinai, the day the stone law arrived, about three thousand fell at the golden calf (Exodus 32:28); at Pentecost, the day the Spirit arrived, about

three thousand received the word and were baptized (Acts 2:41), which St. Augustine read as three thousand brought to life. He set the two numbers against each other and said it in six words: the letter kills; the Spirit gives life.

The Push-Back: You Cannot Schedule a Hurricane

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. Pentecost was a once-in-history event: the founding of the Church, with founding-day signs. There has been exactly one day of tongues of visible fire, and everyone knows it. So when the Catholic Church tells teenagers that Confirmation is "their personal Pentecost," it is writing checks Acts never signed. No wind will fill your parish hall. No fire will rest on anyone's head. Calling a quiet ceremony a Pentecost is marketing, borrowing the grandeur of an unrepeatable event for a rite that demonstrably does not repeat it. The honest thing is to admit Pentecost happened once, to them, and is over.

Question 5. Two things need sorting: the event and the gift. Read Acts 2:38-39, Peter's answer to the crowd on Pentecost itself, and work out which parts of the objection stand and which fall.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede the event, fully: the founding of the Church happens once, like the Resurrection, and its founding signs, the wind heard in the street and the visible flames, are not promised to anyone again. Any Confirmation prep that implies otherwise is setting candidates up to feel cheated, and the objection is right to burn it down. But now the gift. The crowd asks what to do, and Peter, on Pentecost itself, answers: repent and be baptized, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; "for the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." The man standing in the wreckage of the once-for-all event declares its gift transferable: to his hearers, to their kids, to people not yet born on continents not yet reached. The founding-day signs, the wind heard in the street, the visible flames, belong to the founding and are not promised as normative afterward (though Acts itself records tongues again on later occasions, at God's pleasure); the gift is for everyone the promise names, which, read closely, is every person at your table. The honest remainder: HOW the gift reached the next people after that day, by what act, through whose hands, is a question tonight's text does not answer. Acts does answer it, in detail, and that answer is the next two sessions.

DIG DEEPER

Genesis 11:1-9. If time allows: at Babel, one proud humanity grasping at heaven was scattered into languages that could not understand each other. At Pentecost, people "from every nation under heaven" each hear the mighty works of God in his own tongue. God does not delete the languages; He fills all of them. Babel scattered; Pentecost gathers, without flattening anyone. The Church is born multilingual on purpose.

One Last Glimpse

Read Acts 8:14-16 aloud yourself, without introduction.

The apostles in Jerusalem hear that Samaria has received the word of God, and they send Peter and John, who pray for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; "for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Say only this, and then stop: baptized believers, and the Spirit had not yet fallen on them, and the apostles got on the road about it. Sit with how strange that is. Next week we find out what the apostles did when they arrived, and it is the reason this study exists.

Send: Closing Questions

1. The fire rested on each one: nobody at Pentecost got a group gift. Where in your faith life have you been hiding in the group, and what would it mean for the flame to have your name on it?
2. Peter said the promise is "to you and to your children." One generation is sitting next to the other at this table. What do you want the promise to do in the person beside you?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Learn a beloved traditional prayer to the Holy Spirit by heart, and pray it together once a day: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth." Pray it out loud together right now before leaving, once, so the week starts tonight.

Closing Prayer

Leader and all together: *Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." (Acts 2:39)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 7, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Acts 1:1-14** (read at home this week: the upper room)
- **Acts 2:1-13** (Build, Scene One: the day of Pentecost)
- **Acts 2:14-18** (Build, Scene One: Peter quotes Joel)
- **Numbers 11:29; Joel 2:28-29** (recited and recalled: the three-voices minute)
- **Exodus 19:16-19** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, Sinai)
- **Exodus 32:28; Acts 2:41** (the two three-thousands, in the answer box)
- **Acts 2:38-39** (Push-Back answer: the promise is to you and to your children)
- **Genesis 11:1-9** (Dig Deeper: Babel reversed)
- **Acts 8:14-16** (One Last Glimpse: Samaria)

Catechism: CCC 696, 731, 732.

Voices: St. Augustine of Hippo (On the Spirit and the Letter); St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on Acts); St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures, 17).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 7, one per household.