

ACTS 2 The Church at Its Best



Setting the Heart

Jesus did some impressive things while He was here on earth: miracles, healings, demonic deliverances, and much more. Yet He told His apostles that they would do even greater things once He departed for the Father in heaven. This seems impossible—until we see what happened in the book of Acts. As you prepare for your personal study, ponder Jesus’ promise of “greater things.” Pay special attention to our responsibility in experiencing these “greater things.”

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

John 14:11–12

Before you begin, pray about your level of faith in Jesus. Perhaps you need to pray, as the apostles did in Luke 17:5, “Increase our faith!”

Digging In

Since the book of Acts is actually a history book that records the events of the church’s origins, one of the best ways to understand it is to look for all the action that takes place. Action is easily found by asking the question “What is happening?” while you read. Read Acts 2:1–13 using your Scripture sheets. As you read, underline each occurrence that helps answer the question “What is happening?” We’d also like to make a couple of recommendations:

- 1.) Mark the Scripture in a way that helps you make a clear distinction between the events. (You may want to number each event.)
- 2.) Pay attention to detail!

After you’ve finished marking, list below the sequence of events in the passage. As you make your list, look for new observations. Do you see anything you’ve missed before? What do you notice about the people involved?

What happened?

Insight

Pentecost was the Jewish celebration of the Feast of Weeks, which was established by God with Israel after their exodus from Egypt (see Ex. 34:22, Lev. 23:15–21, and Deut. 16:9–11). Also known as the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of the Firstfruits, this celebration took place fifty days after the Passover. The title “Pentecost” comes from the Greek word *pentēkostos*, which means “fiftieth day.” Consequently, the initial reason for a crowd to have been in Jerusalem on this particular day was to celebrate a feast prescribed by Jewish law. On this particular Pentecost, God had additional plans in mind!

Digging Deeper

You may have noticed in Acts 2:11 that all the nationalities were hearing the “wonders of God” in their own languages. As the crowd tried to make sense of the situation, Peter stood up and led the people beyond a simple “hearing” of the wonders of God, into an understanding of these wonders. As Peter began to speak, he urged the people to “listen carefully to what I say” (2:14). Since this is the sermon that launched God’s church, we’d be wise to do the same!

Read Acts 2:14–36 using your Scripture sheet, and mark the following:

1. All references to the Jews (Men of Israel), perhaps with a ✡. Be sure to include pronouns like “you” and “your.”
2. All references to God, perhaps with a cloud ☁. (Also look for pronouns like “He,” “Him,” or “His.”)
3. All references to Jesus, perhaps with a cross †. (Again, remember the pronoun thing!)

You may need to read the passage more than once to find every reference. Then list below everything Peter had to say about each of the parties you marked.

The Jews

God


Jesus

Taking It Inward

Before we see how Peter’s audience responded to his sermon, take a few minutes to respond to it yourself by answering the five questions on the next page.

1. Looking at your lists on the preceding page, what did Peter emphasize about the relationship between God and Jesus?
2. What role did the Jews play in this scene?
3. How is your life a testimony to the fact that Jesus is both *Lord* (master and owner; one having full power and authority) and *Christ* (the anointed One of God; the Messiah)?
4. Have you ever denied Jesus His proper place as Lord of your life? In what ways?
5. What adjustments do you need to make in order to be a testimony to the fact that Jesus is Lord of your life?

Digging Deeper—Part 2

Now let's see how Peter's audience responded to his sermon. Read Acts 2:37–47 from your Scripture sheet, and mark every reference to those who accepted Peter's message. You might want to use the *ichthys* symbol , which became a sign of the early church. Remember to watch for pronouns like "they" and "them."

When you've finished marking, list below everything you learn about those who accepted Peter's message.

Those who accepted the message

Taking It Inward

The impact of Peter’s sermon speaks for itself. The spiritual atmosphere created by the responsive crowd in Acts 2 is one that many in the church long for today. Perhaps you’ve longed for this type of atmosphere in your church or youth group, but it seemed impossible! Is it impossible—or is it God’s standard for His people? Use the following questions and exercises to evaluate your spiritual life and the life of your youth group in light of the activities in Acts 2.

1. What was the immediate reaction of the crowd when Peter finished speaking?
2. How many accepted the message?
3. Why do you think Peter’s sermon was so powerful?
4. As a leader of young people, what can you do to deliver God’s Word with this type of power?

It’s obvious that Pentecost wasn’t a one-day spiritual high (like the ones youth today so often experience at youth camps, retreats, concerts, and other gatherings). Acts 2:42–47 describes the lasting effect of Peter’s message as seen in the activities that continued long after the “peak experience” had ended. In the space below, we’ve listed these activities so that you can consider them one by one. Underneath each activity, list some practical disciplines or things you and your youth group could do to imitate the actions of the believers in Acts 2.

1. Deliver and receive the Word of God through the Spirit of God (as Peter did).
You _____ The Group _____
2. Be devoted to the gospel and what it teaches (the apostles’ teaching).
You _____ The Group _____
3. Be devoted to fellowship (and breaking of bread) with God’s people.
You _____ The Group _____
4. Be devoted to prayer.
You _____ The Group _____

ACTS 2 The Church at Its Best



Acts 2

- 2:1** When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
- 2** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.
- 3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.
- 4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.
- 5** Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.
- 6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.
- 7** Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?”
- 8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?
- 9** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
- 10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome
- 11** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”
- 12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”
- 13** Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”
- 14** Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.
- 15** These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!
- 16** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
- 17** “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.
- 18** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.
- 19** I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.
- 20** The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

22 “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

23 This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

25 David said about him: “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, 27 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

29 “Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.

30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand

35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.””

36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, 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.

39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

- 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
- 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.
- 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.
- 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.
- 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,
- 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

ACTS 2 The Church at Its Best



Materials Needed

For this session you'll need Scripture sheets for Acts 2, colored pencils (at least three colors per student), a chalk/dry-erase board, and student journal pages for Session 2. Students will need their Bibles, pens, and notebooks.

Session Intro

Prayer

After your students have gathered, remind them of the relationship between studying God's Word and listening to His Spirit. Pray that the hearts of your students will be responsive to what God reveals in this session.

Goal of Session 2

- Students will see how God can work through people who are seeking to be led by His Spirit.

Review of Session 1

Ask the following questions:

- Who wrote the book of Acts? How do we know?
- What were Jesus' final instructions to the apostles before leaving the earth?
- In what way did the apostles obey these instructions?
- Where has all the action in Acts taken place so far?

Open

Do a quick word association exercise with your group by asking: *What comes to your mind when you hear the word "Pentecost"?* Some possible answers from students might include:

- wind, fire
- Pentecostal
- speaking in tongues
- Pentagon

Share with your group (from the "Insight" exercise of your Personal Prep) that *Pentecost* was an annual Jewish feast that was celebrated fifty days after the Feast of the Passover. As we'll see in Acts 2, this particular Pentecost began as a tame Jewish feast that soon got out of hand!

Digging In

Share with your students that the book of Acts is actually a history book that records how the church got started. One of the best ways to understand a history book is to look for the action that takes place. Action is easily found by asking the question "What's happening?" while you read.

Have your students read Acts 2:1–13 (using their Scripture sheets) and underline each event that helps answer the question "What's happening?" Before they begin, make the following recommendations:

- 1.) Mark the Scriptures so that you can make a clear distinction between the different events.
- 2.) Pay attention to detail!

After most have finished, spend a few minutes as a group constructing a sequence of events of Acts 2:1–13. List your students’ responses on the board, and allow them to challenge each other on the correct sequence. Your finished list should look similar to the one below, but it’s okay if it’s not as detailed.

What happened?

- the apostles were sitting in a house
- God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven were staying in Jerusalem
- a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven suddenly
- it filled the whole house
- the apostles saw something like tongues of fire that separated
- it came to rest on each of them
- ALL of them were filled with the Holy Spirit
- they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them
- a crowd gathered after hearing a sound
- each person in the crowd heard the apostles speaking in his/her own language
- the crowd asked how the Galilean apostles spoke all their languages
- some thought the apostles were drunk

Before you move on, you may want to spend a couple of minutes discussing this sequence of events, asking the following questions:

As we put these events on the board, did you make any new observations about this passage?

Was it actual wind and fire that rested on the heads of the apostles? What was it?

What was significant about the onlookers who heard what was happening?

Digging Deeper

Obviously, the crowd that’s in town for Pentecost is made up of Jews (including the apostles) from many nations. With this in mind, have your students read Peter’s sermon (Acts 2:14–37) using their Scripture sheets. Tell your students that this is the first sermon preached since Jesus’ departure, and that we should follow Peter’s own instructions to “listen carefully.” In order to “listen carefully,” have your students mark the following as they read:

1. All references to Jews (Men of Israel), perhaps with a ✡. Remind the group to watch for pronouns like “you” and “your.” These should be marked the same way.
2. All references to God (including pronouns like “He,” “Him,” or “His”), perhaps with a cloud ☁.
3. All references to Jesus, perhaps with a cross †. (Again, remind them of the pronoun thing!)

Since they're looking for three different things, your students may have to read the passage more than once, each time looking for something different. This is a great way for them to begin "hiding the Word in their hearts" (see Ps. 119:11).

When they've finished marking, discuss what your students learned about the Jews, God, and Jesus. As they share their observations, record them on the board in three columns. There is space for this on their journal pages as well. Your lists may look similar to this, but don't worry if they're not as thorough:

<u>The Jews</u>	<u>God</u>	<u>Jesus</u>
<i>-Peter calls them "fellow Jews"</i>	<i>-said He would pour out His Spirit in the last days</i>	<i>-accredited by God to do miracles</i>
<i>-Jesus did miracles among them</i>	<i>-did many miracles through Jesus</i>	<i>-handed over for God's purpose</i>
<i>-Jesus was handed over to them</i>	<i>-will show wonders in heaven, signs on earth</i>	<i>-at right hand of God</i>
<i>-they put Jesus to death</i>	<i>-God raised Jesus from the dead</i>	<i>-received the promised Holy Spirit</i>
<i>-Israel is to be assured that God made Jesus both Lord and Christ</i>	<i>-He promised David that he would always have a descendant on the throne</i>	<i>-is pouring out "what you see here"</i>
	<i>-God has made Jesus Lord and Christ</i>	<i>-He is Lord and Christ</i>

Taking It Inward

After you've listed several things on the board, ask your students to write on their journal pages what they think Peter's main points are. After a few minutes, ask volunteers to share their responses, and write these on the board. You should work with the group until they come up with some points similar to these:

- God has made Jesus Lord and Christ*
- the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus*
- God raised Jesus from the dead*


Now ask your students to respond to one or more of the questions below. (These are also printed on their journal pages.) You will probably need to help your students understand the difference between the words *Lord* and *Christ* as titles for Jesus. If you accept Jesus as the *Christ*, you are believing what Jesus said about Himself—that He is the Son of God and the promised Messiah. Accepting Jesus Christ as *Lord* indicates a deeper level of personal submission. If Jesus is your *Lord*, then He must be the central authority figure in your life. He's your Master, your Owner, your Boss!

To what extent is Jesus Lord of your life?

How is your life a testimony to the fact that Jesus is both Lord and Christ?

Are there any areas of life in which you're keeping Jesus from being Lord? What are they?

Digging Deeper—Part 2

Now that your group has responded to Peter’s message, take a look at how his audience responded. Ask your students to suggest a symbol that could be used to represent (and mark) the first Christians. If they’re short on ideas, you can suggest the *ichthys* or “sign of the fish” . Then ask your group to read Acts 2:37–47 using their Scripture sheets. Have them mark with the agreed-upon symbol every reference to those who accepted Peter’s message. Remind them to look for pronouns like “they” and “their.”

After a few minutes, ask your students to share what they learned about Peter’s audience, and record their responses on the board. As they discuss this passage, your board will begin to look something like this:

Those who accepted Peter’s message

- were cut to the heart
- were baptized
- 3,000 in number
- they devoted themselves to:
 - the apostles’ teaching
 - prayer
 - fellowship
 - breaking of bread
- they were filled with awe
- stayed together
- sold possessions and gave to anyone in need
- met together daily
- broke bread in their homes
- ate together with glad and sincere hearts
- praised God
- enjoyed each others’ company
- the Lord added to their number daily

Taking It Inward

Those in Peter’s audience who accepted his message were the first converts to Christianity after Jesus left the earth. This chapter is a great picture of the way the church should be—but your students will probably agree that compared to this scene, many of our churches today are seriously lacking! Discuss the following questions:

What stands out to you about the atmosphere of these first believers?

What were they doing right in order for God to be adding to their numbers daily?

Do you think it would be possible for us to experience this atmosphere in our personal lives and in our group? Why or why not?

Share with your students that these first Christians weren’t doing all these activities in order to grow in number. They were operating out of the repentance that resulted from the realization that God had made Jesus—whom they had crucified—both Lord and Christ! This next exercise is designed to help your group imitate the activities of these early Christians. However, it’s crucial

Student Section

Reproducible Student Pages

These pages are also available for download at
inword.org/innnergized. You'll find password
information printed on the title page of this book.

Steps to Becoming a World-Changer



ACTS 2 The Church at Its Best



EVE OF PENTECOST



DAY OF PENTECOST



Digging Deeper

Use this chart to list things you learn about the Jews, God, and Jesus from Acts 2:14–36.

The Jews	God	Jesus

Spot Guide



Taking It Inward

Peter's Main Points

To what extent is Jesus Lord of my life?

How is my life a testimony to the fact that Jesus is both Lord and Christ?

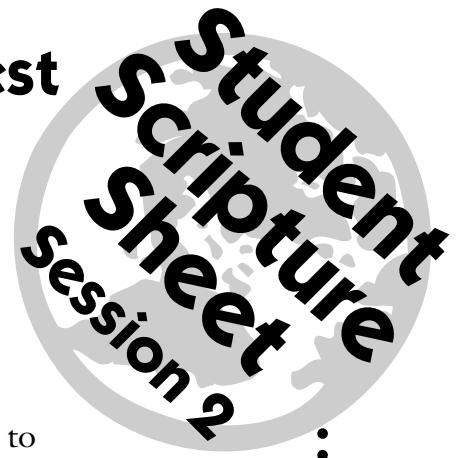
Are there any areas of my life in which I'm keeping Jesus from being Lord? What are they?

Taking It Inward

Listed below are all the activities of the people who became Christians following Peter's sermon in Acts 2. Prayerfully read the activities, and write down some ways you and your group could imitate each activity.

1. Deliver and receive the Word of God through the Spirit of God (as Peter did).
Me _____ Our Group _____
2. Be devoted to the gospel and what it teaches (the apostles' teaching).
Me _____ Our Group _____
3. Be devoted to fellowship (and breaking of bread) with God's people.
Me _____ Our Group _____
4. Be devoted to prayer.
Me _____ Our Group _____
5. Sell possessions and goods, and give to anyone who is in need.
Me _____ Our Group _____
6. Meet together regularly.
Me _____ Our Group _____
7. Share meals with each other with glad and sincere hearts.
Me _____ Our Group _____
8. Praise God.
Me _____ Our Group _____
9. Enjoy the company of each other.
Me _____ Our Group _____

ACTS 2 The Church at Its Best



Acts 2

- 2:1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
- 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.
- 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.
- 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.
- 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.
- 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.
- 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?
- 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?
- 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
- 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome
- 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”
- 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”
- 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”
- 14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.
- 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!
- 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
- 17 “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.
- 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.
- 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.
- 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

22 “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

23 This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

25 David said about him: “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope,
27 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

29 “Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.

30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “The Lord said to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand

35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’

36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, 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.

39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

- 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
- 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.
- 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.
- 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.
- 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,
- 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.