

## **The Church God Blesses**

### **Church: The Series • Part 1**

**Church: The Series • Part 2** (will cover this material on 7/16)

*“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and then you’ll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth!”* Acts 1:8 (NIV)

Easter marks Christ’s resurrection, Christmas his birth. Pentecost recognizes the birth of his church. The church is God’s family, and it will last forever. But local churches are not guaranteed to last on earth. In order to receive God’s blessing on our churches we must do these eight things: (1) pray for God’s power; (2) use everybody’s language; (3) employ every member’s talents; (4) be devoted to God’s Word; (5) love each other deeply; (6) worship with joy; (7) be willing to sacrifice; and (8) reach our community for Christ.

Let’s talk it over.

**Open your group with a prayer. This is only a guide – select the points you want to discuss.**

*“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a noise like a strong, blowing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw something like flames of fire that were separated and stood over each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak different languages by the power the Holy Spirit was giving them.”* Acts 2:1-4 (NCV)

1. God’s power comes through prayer. While we don’t see signs today like the first church did in Acts 2:1-4 above, how can our prayers produce miracles? Share some examples.

*“They all began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave each of them the power to express themselves.”* Acts 2:4 (NJB)

2. According to Acts 2:4 above, what power did the Holy Spirit give to the church at Pentecost regarding language? What special languages do we have today that we can use to reach others for Christ?
3. As you read Acts 2:14-21, who will be saved? If we are to receive God’s blessings in our church and lives, we are to employ the talents of all. How could using the talents of everyone in your organization to their fullest potential impact the outcome of what you do? How could this change your witness for Christ? Share some ideas or strategies for making this happen.

*“All the believers continued together in close fellowship... praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”* Acts 2:44, 47 (TEV)

4. Acts 2:44, 47 above suggests two more ways to be a church that receives God’s blessing: (1) love each other deeply, and (2) worship with joy. What are some ways believers in general and your group can exhibit these characteristics in the church and to the world today?

### **Diving Deeper (optional)**

A church that receives God’s blessing must also: (1) be willing to sacrifice, and (2) reach our community for Christ. How does Acts 1:8 (at the top of the page) encourage believers to sacrifice and reach their world for Christ?

If time allows, read Acts 1:8 in several different versions, including The Message or the Amplified version (if you don’t have these versions, try [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)). What, if any, additional insights or information do they provide?

## **Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes**

### **Goals for this Week's Study**

Have your group share memories of the church they grew up in. If they did not attend church as a child, they can recall their first church.

Recognize that to receive God's blessing on our church, lives, and organizations, we must pray for God's power, use everyone's language and talents, be devoted to God's Word, while loving each other and worshiping with joy. Additionally, to reach our communities for Christ we must also be willing to sacrifice. Pray that each of you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit in order to be a witness for Christ.

### **Preparing to Lead Your Group**

**Pray** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.

**Plan** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.

**Ponder your progress** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

### **Using This Sermon Discussion Guide**

This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group you may choose one of the following options: One section of questions; One or two questions from each section

Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.

The questions relating to the five purposes are helpful to develop balance and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can bring your group to an awareness of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.

Personal application is key to everyone's growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, "I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer." It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.

As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change

with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.