

A Mighty Rushing Wind & Tongues of Fire

Genesis 11:1-9
Matthew 26:69-75
Acts 2:1-41

Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christlikeness of character apart from his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead.

*John Stott
The Message of Acts*

Do you remember what happened at the Tower of Babel?

That story can be found at the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis 11. That's when a group of people living on the plain of Shinar tried to build a tower that could reach heaven. They were actually trying to reach God. But that was a foolish, prideful idea. We can never reach God! Instead God came down to us. We can only know God and be close to him because Jesus left his beautiful heaven and came to where we are.

We know it was a prideful idea because the Bible says the people building the tower wanted to make a name for themselves. So in Genesis 11 we learn that God stopped the people from building their tower. He did that by confusing their language. Before that time everyone spoke the same language. But now they spoke different languages so they were unable to understand each other, and unable to complete the tower.

Today people speak many different languages - English, Spanish, French, Mandarin. But the day the Holy Spirit came, just for that day, people spoke and understood languages that were not their own.



Do you remember Jesus' disciple Peter?

Peter loved Jesus, but he had been very sure of himself. He was prideful too. He thought he was so strong and so brave. But just before Jesus was crucified, Peter denied Jesus. Peter said he didn't know who Jesus was even though he had spent three years with Jesus following him from city to city, watching him heal the sick and hearing Jesus talk about God's kingdom! He denied Jesus because he was afraid that wicked men would hurt him like they were hurting Jesus. Peter denied Jesus not once, not twice, but three times. But that isn't the end of Peter's story. Jesus loved Peter and forgave him. And on the day the Holy Spirit came, Peter was changed.

Do you remember the promise Jesus made?

He promised that God the Father would send the Holy Spirit who would live inside of those who love Jesus. He would give them power. "Wait in Jerusalem until the Father sends you the Comforter" Jesus said. So the disciples stayed together in a house, in a room where they waited day after day for the Holy Spirit to come.

Jesus followers didn't know what would happen. They didn't know what the Holy Spirit would look like or how he would come. But they believed what Jesus had said and they obeyed. They waited. Then on a special day called Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and when he came, three things happened that were supernatural, three things only God could do.



There was a Strange Sound

The disciples heard a loud noise, like the wind blowing very, very hard. But it wasn't the wind. As a matter of fact, nothing was blowing in the room. The disciples couldn't feel the wind on their faces or anything like that. They could just hear the loud noise of wind blowing. That noise filled the entire house.

There was a Strange Sight

Then when the disciples looked at each other they saw something. They saw what looked like little flames of fire. The fire was in the shape of tongues. The little tongues of fire seemed to rest on Jesus' disciples.



There was Strange Speech

The Bible says all of Jesus' followers, all those people who loved Jesus, were filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them words to say. Outside the house, people had gathered from many different countries and they all spoke different languages. They had heard the sound of wind and they were confused because as they listened to the disciples speak, each person could understand the words they were saying. They could hear the words in their own language. The people who were listening said, "we can hear them telling in our own language the mighty works of God!" It was a miracle! Everyone could understand what each other was saying. They were united because they all heard the same language. (That's very different than what happened to the people who were building the Tower of Babel! When the Tower of Babel was built, God used different languages to divide the people and stop them. But when the disciples were speaking different languages, it was because God had sent the Holy Spirit to turn people to him.)

The disciples were there when one of them boldly stood up and started speaking. It was Peter! Just a little while before, Peter had been afraid to tell anyone that he even knew Jesus. He had denied Jesus, but not now! Now Peter was brave as he stood in front of a great crowd of people. Peter told them how Jesus had been raised from the dead and now sits at the right hand of God. Peter told them about the Holy Spirit. Peter even told them to stop sinning and believe in Jesus.

The Bible says when the people heard what Peter said they were “cut to the heart.” That means they understood and were sorry for their sin. They asked Peter and the disciples, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter told them, “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!” Many, many people believed in Jesus that day. The Bible say three thousand believed!

The Holy Spirit had come and things changed. For that day, everyone who heard the gospel could understand, and scared Peter was brave. God had given him courage to tell others about Jesus and to be his witness. Peter was never the same.

The Holy Spirit still comes and lives in the hearts of people who love Jesus. He doesn't come with the sound of wind and tongues of fire like he did on Pentecost. Now he comes quietly to those who believe in God's Son. But He's just as real as he was that day long ago. And he does exactly the same thing: the Holy Spirit gives us power to tell others about Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Father, Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to live inside us, to be our helper and our comforter. Make us brave and strong to obey you, to live the way you'd have us to live, and to tell others about Jesus. Amen.

Questions

Younger Children

- Who came and lived in Jesus' disciples?
- When the Holy Spirit came, what did the disciples hear?
- What did the disciples see?
- What brave thing did Peter do?
- Where does the Holy Spirit live now?

Older Children

- On what day did the Holy Spirit come?
- How was Peter changed?
- How did the people feel when they heard Peter's words?
- How is what happened in Acts 2 different than what happened in Genesis 11?
- How many people believed in Jesus that day?

And Peter said to them, “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!”

Acts 2:38