

The Wind of the Spirit...

June 2022 (5 June - 2 July)



During the month of June we enter the season of Pentecost. This is a time when we begin to think about the change that came over the fearful followers of Jesus. The Wind of the Holy Spirit brought new life and understanding to men and women who had been hiding in the upper room fearful for their lives.

All one hundred and twenty of them had a miraculous communal experience of a mighty wind blowing through the room where they all were hiding and they all had the same experience of great heat, like tongues of fire resting on their heads. This had a purifying and life changing effect on all of them.

They became bold and spoke out to others all around them about the mighty power of God. Those who listened were also baffled because they could understand what they were saying despite the fact that they couldn't speak Aramaic. In other words the Holy Spirit used them to speak directly into the lives of peoples from all different nations and languages who had gathered in Jerusalem.

This month we will be asking ourselves the question: do we need to encounter a new visitation of the Wind of God in our churches? Is this what is needed in order that we can speak to others about Jesus?

During the month of June we we will study together and reflect upon what the Bible teaches about: God's purposes for his creation, how the Holy Spirit works shaping us into the likeness of Jesus, why we need to understand our human limitations, and finally that there is always a daily cost involved in following Jesus.

While it would be astounding if in our gatherings to worship we could experience the wind and the fire, those earlier followers' experience, scripture still teaches us that going in search of such experiences will in themselves never help us uncover the mighty presence of God. We will come to learn that the most powerful experience of God being with us is the still small voice within us saying "What are you doing here?", encouraging us to re-think our priorities. The voice deep within saying, "This is the way walk in it".

The Wind of the Spirit need not always be noisy to be disturbing. The Wind of the Spirit can be like the breath of God whispering in our ear "Come follow me..."

Each week of the four week theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and prompts for thought.

Revealing God's purpose (5 June)

In week 1 the material uses the story of Pentecost to teach how the Wind of the Spirit at Pentecost reversed the meaning of the story of Babel in Genesis. God's long term purpose is to bring all things together in unity in Christ. The Holy Spirit takes words and tongues and controls them. It is not glossolalia that is most powerful – it is the tongue of a Spirit controlled believer. This insight enables us to believe the whole of creation has a future. This will shape the way we live our short earthly lives and the plans we make for the coming generations. To think further about the bigger picture of the purposes of God read Ephesians 1: 9-11.

1. Acts 2:1-21 & Genesis 11:1-9

2. Joel 2: 18-29 & 1 Corinthians 2:1-11

3. Ezekiel 11:14-25 & 1 Corinthians 2:12-16

4. Psalm 19: 14 & Luke 1: 26-38

5. Proverbs 3: 13-18 & Ephesians 1: 17-19

6. Proverbs 3: 19-26 & Ephesians 4:1-6

7. Proverbs 4:1-9 & Luke 2: 41-52

1. **Revealing God's purpose.** Babel Reversed — Unity restored — God's purpose to redeem a lost humanity — Pentecost is the visual sign of God's coming unity and restoration of all things into one unity of purpose and love (see the epistle to the Ephesians).

2. **Inspiring faith — flying the kite.** This knowledge of God's purposes is not something we gain from mere study it is revealed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God makes it clear to our understanding. We have to fly our kites to catch the wind. Each small act of faith helps complete the plan. Kite flying should be the daily purpose of prayer.

3. **Doves love the promise of homecoming.** These scriptures help us see that God is continually revealing his purpose to bring about unity and peace in the world. The story of the gathering together of Israel is a larger story about the 'gathering in of all the nations'. God's homecoming plan. This understanding helps shape our attitude towards refugees and people from different cultures. The dove as a sign of the Spirit is a picture of the homing bird settling to rest. When the Spirit rests upon us we are home.

4. **God's purposes will be fulfilled.** When we walk in the power of the Spirit we can only speak that which we have been given. Learning to keep control of our tongues is a gift of the Spirit. The psalmist echoes the same thought, Psalm 19: 14, words that were often spoken before a sermon was ever preached.

5. **The power of moving in the Spirit.** Living and moving in the Spirit we find we have wisdom beyond our years, things are revealed that are not taught. We see things as they were meant to be. The eyes of our understanding are opened and the words we speak are measured.

6. **The wisdom of seeking unity and peace.** If it is God's intention to bring all things together in Christ. We who seek to follow Christ need to display that love of unity and peace in our lives. Let us work for it in the world .

7. **Get wisdom, get understanding.** Two wonderful passages highlighting the need to search after wisdom and understanding. While it is a gift from God it is a gift that is revealed to those who search after it. In seeking it, is this gift we are told we will find.

Shaping us into peacemakers (12 June)

The writer of week two has been asked to reflect upon how the wind of the Holy Spirit comes to shape our lives and our actions into the likeness of Jesus so that we pray daily "Your will be done". We become peacemakers, making the most of every opportunity, allowing the Holy Spirit to shape our lives as we respond to suffering, through kindness and compassion.

1. Psalm 8:1-8 &
Romans 5:1-5

2. Proverbs 7:1-4 &
Ephesians 4:7-15

3. Proverbs 8: 4-21
& Ephesians 5:
15-20

4. Daniel 1:8-21 &
Luke 1:46-53

5. Genesis 24:1-9 &
Romans 2:17-29

6. Job 6:14-30 &
Galatians 3:15-22

7. Psalm 43: 1-5 &
Matthew 9:27-34

1. **Shaping us into peacemakers.** The overarching vision for the whole of creation living and working in harmony begins in the heart of the individual finding our peace with God. Jesus Christ is our peacemaker and we in turn are called to make peace and be reconciled to each other with a peace beyond understanding.

2. **Shaping us into our full stature.** We are called through the teaching and example of the prophets, evangelists and pastors to grow up into the fullness of what we can be in order to give God the glory and bring others into the unity and family of God.

3. **Shaping every opportunity.** Let wisdom direct your thinking. Take each opportunity as a chance to bring glory and honor to God. Sing your songs of praise on a daily basis. Let peace with God change your outlook.

4. **Shaping our response to suffering.** When God calls us and we obey his calling he will lead us through the difficult times. Living in the light of his word may be difficult but his grace is all sufficient for the day.

5. **Shaping our thoughts and actions.** The true fulfilment of the law is not seen in the observance of outward rituals, they have their place, but the true fulfilment of the law is carried out inwardly in a person's thought life which shapes our actions. The true sign of obedience touches our hearts. God will always make it possible to have a change of heart.

6. **Shaping our lives with kindness.** The Job reading starts, "Anyone who withholds a kindness from a friend..." Abraham was known as the friend of God. God will not withhold his kindness and his promise to the seed of Abraham. To people of faith who trust God like Abraham did.

7. **Shaping our hearts with compassion.** If ever there were two men cast down in soul it was these men. The presence of Jesus lifted them up. He gave them the courage to believe and trust God and the healings took place. Taking time to be around Jesus in our prayer life can lift us from the place of despair to the place of hope.

Exasperation and examination (19 June)

In week three the writer is asked to consider how the Wind of the Spirit blows away all our pretences. In the presence of an almighty creative loving God we find ourselves faced with the weakness of our humanity. Our human wisdom is limited and our ability to sustain our spiritual lives on our own strength impossible. The pitfalls and failures of being human force us to come to an honest assessment of who and what we are.

1. 1 Kings 19:1-15 & Luke 8:26-39
 1. **After the fire.** There are always consequences after an amazing act of God. Elijah had called down fire but he felt the fear of the consequences. Jesus heals Legion, but in doing so there is an aftermath. Learning to hold our nerve when God is at work is one of the most challenging things to come our way. Verse 39 of Luke chapter 8 suggests staying put and living through the consequence perhaps has the greatest effect on others. Elijah ran away only to be told to go back to where the started.
2. 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31
 2. **God's power and Wisdom.** In this passage Paul gives us an insight into how we should live our Christian lives. The transformative power of the cross cannot be understood by human wisdom. Instead we are invited to see the glory through our weakness.
3. Ephesians 2: 11-22
 3. **Reconciles Jews and Gentiles through Christ.** If God can reconcile Jews and Gentiles through Christ there is nothing that God cannot reconcile back to himself. The power of the cross exasperates all our human understanding of justice and love. "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate" (1 Corinthians 1:19).
4. Luke 9: 37-43a
 4. **Exasperated at those who should know better.** Here in this passage Jesus is exasperated by religious people, "who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof..." (2 Timothy 3: 5).
5. 2 Corinthians 13: 5-10
 5. **A call to self-examination.** This passage follows on from yesterday's challenging verses. If we say Christ lives in us then let us live and act as though we truly believe it.
6. Galatians 4: 8-20
 6. **The danger of following the wrong path.** Again in our enthusiasm to follow Christ we can be led down the wrong path by following a charismatic leader rather than listening to the trusted voice of integrity and faithfulness.
7. Luke 9: 21-27
 7. **The Cost of Discipleship.** To follow Christ and be a disciple has consequences. The consequences are often costly. To deny self, take up the cross, and follow is a daily task. Next week we will concentrate on the challenge of discipleship.

Discipleship day by day (26 June)

In week four the writer looks at the cost of discipleship and how the Wind of the Spirit assures us of the gracious provision of God, enabling us to live out the life of discipleship.

- 1. 1 Kings 19:15-16,19-21 & Luke 9:51-62**
 - 1. The Cost of Discipleship.** Elijah seems more sympathetic to the one who pays the cost of following than Jesus does? Does Jesus call for higher standards than Elijah — or is the translation in the NIV highlighting responses that were simply excuses. Elisha in following Elijah you might say burnt his oxen, the source of his income.
- 2. 1 John 1: 7-11**
 - 2. The Test of Discipleship.** The test of discipleship is to live in unity with each other. To walk in the light and seek to live lives of purity.
- 3. Ephesians 5: 6-20**
 - 3. The Life of Discipleship.** The life of discipleship is one lived in fellowship with Christian brothers and sisters, making the most of every opportunity to live in the will of God. Notice the place of music and being filled with the Spirit.
- 4. Matthew 10: 16-25**
 - 4. The Nature of Discipleship.** Discipleship means that you will not always be popular. It calls for the Christian to be shrewd but also careful to live out of love.
- 5. 2 Kings 4: 8-17**
 - 5. The Provision for Discipleship.** God goes before his servants and often prepares the way and provides for our needs long before we ask.
- 6. 2 Corinthians 8: 1-7**
 - 6. The Generous Disciple.** The Christian community is tasked to be generous in their giving to enable the work of the Kingdom to flourish.
- 7. Luke 9: 1-6**
 - 7. The Power of Discipleship.** “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of” — Lord Tennyson.