

biblestudy: june 2022

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Based on the scripture lessons of Cokesbury's Adult Bible Study Series

June 5, 2022 Text: Acts 2:1-4, 17-21, 33. 38-39 "The Holy Spirit Confers Its Fruit"

There are about 8,423,178 places in these verses where one might begin exploring the work of the Holy Spirit! Seriously, I have read these over and over again and hardly know where to begin. There is wind, flames, languages, youth, old people, men, women, blood, smoky mist, sun, moon, Jesus, repentance, baptism, sins, Holy Spirit. And that just touches a few spots.

So, let's begin at the beginning of this Pentecost story.

In the midst of all the excitement and newness and fervor two things run as a theme throughout. (1) The work of the Holy Spirit comes in the midst of community and (2) The work of the Holy Spirit falls to individuals.

Look at Acts 2:1. "They will all together." Look at Acts 2:3. "...a tongue (of fire) rested on each of them. Community is the context in which the Spirit comes to each individual. Look at Acts 2:2. "(The wind) filled the entire house." Look at Acts 2:4. They spoke as "the Spirit gave them ability." The Holy Spirit was given to all, but the gifts varied as the Spirit touched each one.

Look at Acts 2:16. We are reminded that God's community exists in more than just this moment. The prophet Joel—from "way back then"—spoke words that were part of the Pentecost community's life.

June 12, 2022 Text: 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 "Wisdom as a Gift of the Spirit"

A friend of mine from England tried to explain to me how cricket is played. He said something about wickets, pitch, and stumps. He was speaking in English, but it might as well have been Swahili. I only got vague—and probably erroneous—ideas.

Sometimes, God seems to be speaking a foreign language. God's wisdom is often foreign to the world's wisdom and as the world listens, it just doesn't make sense. Forgiveness? (Why should I forgive? Do you know what he did to me?) Social justice? (If "those people" want to have food, let them have a good job like I do.) Love? (I love folks who are lovable, but some people are just not lovable.) Peace? (You have to yell and beat some people over the head in order to get them to understand.) Inclusive? (I find that life goes more smoothly if I stick to my own kind.) Patient? (OK. I'll be patient for about fifteen minutes.) Giving? (If I give it away, I won't have any for myself.) Truth? (Sometimes you had to fudge just a little bit in order to get things done.) Church? (I do better if I don't have to put up with pious people.) Healing? (There are a few people who need some first-class suffering.) Grace? (Isn't it better to earn what you get?)

The Church in Corinth was having trouble (1 Corinthians 1:10-11). The apostle Paul has to write them about some pretty basic stuff. In this focal text, he admits that some will see God's wisdom simply as foolishness (1 Corinthians 2:14).

June 19, 2022 Text: Galatians 5:13b-21 "Life Apart from the Spirit"

In these verses (Galatians 5:19-21), Paul lists fifteen practices that are "works of the flesh." Perhaps I have given myself too much credit, but I figure that I am guilty of only ten of these. In baseball, a batting average of .333 would be truly remarkable. For a Christian believer, it is also remarkable, but not for a good reason!

"Flesh" is not bad. In fact, John describes our Lord in this way: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us..." (John 1:14) When flesh is governed by the Spirit, it becomes an instrument for love. In fact, Paul reminds us that "the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Galatians 5:14).

But, when flesh (human beings) makes its decisions without the leadership of the Spirit, it becomes fruit of the flesh and not fruit of the Spirit. (Next week we shall encounter Paul's list of the fruits of the Spirit.)

We who share in today's family of faith are built upon the foundation of the ones who came before us. Community is not defined by calendar.

Look at Acts 2:21. In quoting the prophet Joel, Luke (the author of Acts), uses singular descriptor: "everyone," each one individually. Look at Acts 2:17-18. The gift of the Spirit is for young, old, men, women, slave, free. The Spirit is certainly generous and inclusive.

Notice how the Holy Spirit comes on the Spirit's schedule. not ours. "Suddenly" (Acts 2:2). "Nine o'clock in the morning" (Acts 2:15). The Spirit has a way of showing up in unexpected times and places.

Expect the unexpected. Live out your faith journey within community. Put into practice the gifts the Holy Spirit gives to you.

What Someone Else Has Said:

CBill Leonard (*Baptist Questions, Baptist Answers*, Westminster John Knox) wrote: "The Holy Spirit also is at work in the world. It is the stealth presence of God..."

Prayer:

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Come, Holy Spirit..."

To make the point, Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13, reminding his readers that we are not the ones to instruct God. God teaches us and in Christ Jesus we have the mind of God.

The New Testament has two words that get translated "wisdom." One of them means "intelligence." The other one means "practical application or ability." Which one do you think Paul is using in 1 Corinthians 2? Godly wisdom is more than head knowledge; it is the putting into practice the divine values.

Just before this focal text is Paul's mention of "wisdom of this age" (1 Corinthians 2:6). Wisdom of this age is just passing by. The next generation will have a different view on what is wise. God's wisdom, on the other hand, is eternal. To have such wisdom is a gift from God's Holy Spirit.

What Someone Else Has Said:

In *From Whom No Secrets Are Hid* (Westminster John Knox), Walter Bruggemann has written: "Wisdom teaching assumes the governance of a reliable creator God who has ordered the world in a reliable way. This teaching, inescapably, is 'belief-ful learning.'"

Prayer:

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Teach me, O Lord..."

Translators have struggled to capture what Paul is attacking in Galatians 5:19. The New Revised Standard Version says "works of the flesh." In the Common English Bible it reads "The actions that are produced by selfish motives." The Twentieth Century New Testament has "The sins of our earthly nature." "...kind of behavior that belongs to our lower nature" is how the New English Bible puts it. Clarence Jordan (The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles) paraphrases it: "the results of being guided by the body." The Living Bible calls it "natural evil desires." Which of these is closest to your experience?

However it is said, these verses from Galatians depict a life in which decisions are made without attention to the guidance of the Spirit. Spirit-led decisions are marked by love. To be truthful, we may disagree on what love would be in a particular situation, but actions that erupt without regard to the Spirit's values are sub-Christian. Paul gets rather specific about what these "works of the flesh" might be (Galatians 5:19-21). There are not many places to hide from that truth!

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Paul told the Galatians that he was surprised at how quickly they had deserted the values of Jesus (Galatians 1:6). I wonder what he would say in a letter he wrote me.



June 26, 2022 Text: Galatians 5:22-26 “Life in the Spirit”

Do you like to garden? I remember my first childhood effort at growing a crop. Someone told me that a radish would be the fastest plant to grow, so I went to the store and bought a package of radish seeds. After digging a few holes in the Chatham County red clay, I dropped the seeds into place. Then, I took a large can and doused my “farm” with lots of water. And then I waited. Each day I rushed to see my radish plant. Each day I saw dirt. What had I done wrong? Why wasn’t my radish emerging? And then, one day I saw the faintest touch of green poking its head out of the ground. I grabbed it and pulled, ready to show off my prize plant. What I had in my hand was not the bright red of the ripe vegetable; instead, I had the withering paleness of a stalk pulled too soon. Finally, I heeded the parental advice about waiting until finally I was able to enjoy the finest homegrown radish ever planted.

All this came to mind when I read this week’s focal text about the fruit of the Spirit. If God’s Spirit seeks to plant love and generosity in my heart, how quickly do they grow? If God’s Spirit wants gentleness and self-control to come alive in me, how soon will they appear? Is there any evidence that the seed is taking root?

How do I express love? How do I show joy? How do I live out peace? How do I exhibit patience? How do I offer kindness? How do I overflow with generosity? How do I stay with faithfulness? How do I

What Someone Else Has Said:

In *A Higher Loyalty* (Flatiron Books), James Comey commented: “Evil has an ordinary face. It laughs, it cries, it deflects, it rationalizes, it makes great pasta.”

Prayer:

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Search my heart, O God, and tell me what You find...”

manifest gentleness? How do I manage self-control?

Now, go over that preceding paragraph and change the word “How” to the word “When.” When do I express love? When do I show joy? When do I live out peace? When do I exhibit patience? When do I offer kindness? When do I overflow with generosity? When do I stay with faithfulness? When do I manifest gentleness? When do I manage self-control?

Getting specific like that makes me realize that I have blocked some of the Spirit’s gifts. I can vaguely be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, generous, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. It is when I begin to name examples that I find myself falling short. These verses on the gifts of the Spirit are almost an invitation to confession.

What Someone Else Has Said:

Walter Brueggemann (*Peace*, Chalice Press): “We are called to be sons and daughters, expected to grow and mature, summoned to adulthood...We are invited, expected, and urged to become persons we are not. “

Prayer:

As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Spirit of God, I open myself to Your leading, even if it is to something I have not been...”

Biblical References - May June July 2022

MAY

- May 1, 2022 Text: Leviticus 25:1-13 “A Sabbath for All Creation”
- May 8, 2022 Text: Deuteronomy 14:22-29 “Tithing as Stewardship of God’s Resources”
- May 15, 2022 Text: Job 38:4-11 “The Incomprehensible Magnitude of Creation”
- May 22, 2022 Text: Joel 2:18-26, Romans 8:19-22 “A New Creation”
- May 29, 2022 Text: 2 Corinthians 9 “Keeping Up with God’s Generosity”

JUNE

- June 5, 2022 Text: Acts 2:1-4, 17-21, 33. 38-39 “The Holy Spirit Confers Its Fruit”
- June 12, 2022 Text: 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 “Wisdom as a Gift of the Spirit”
- June 19, 2022 Text: Galatians 5:13b-21 “Life Apart from the Spirit”
- June 26, 2022 Text: Galatians 5:22-26 “Life in the Spirit”

JULY

- July 3, 2022 Text: Acts 2:37-47 “A New Community of Believers”
- July 10, 2022 Text: Acts 8:26-39 “Philip, the Ethiopian, and Scripture’s Guidance”
- July 17, 2022 Text: Acts 11:1-18 “Crossing Cultural Barriers with the Spirit’s Help”
- July 24, 2022 Text: Acts 15:1-21 “The Jerusalem Council and Adjusting to New Ways”
- July 31, 2022 Text: Acts 16 “Mission in Strange and Dangerous Places”

Annual Conference 2022
Greenville Convention Center
June 15-18

The Annual Conference Planning Committee has chosen to move forward with an in-person Annual Conference to be held at the Greenville Convention Center, June 15-18, understanding we may have to make changes depending on health conditions later this spring.

Please know we plan to take appropriate health and safety precautions. Masks are strongly recommended and vaccinations encouraged.

Visit the Hotels page to see current rates and options. We are exploring ECU housing and will be adding other hotels soon.

If you plan to organize a Special Meal for a group or organization, complete the form online by May 9.

If you would like to have a display table, please fill out the request form by May 15. Currently, we have space for 40 displays to create distance between the tables. Displays are for United Methodist-related organizations only.

More information and updates will be posted on the AC 2022 website: <https://nccumc.org/ac2022>

A father is someone you look up
to no matter how tall you grow.
Happy Father’s Day!
Love, your children

