



I'd like to start my message with asking: what is the dominant verse that propels your life?"  
The one that propels me is, I believe, one that many of you hold at the forefront of your hearts:  
When I die and stand before my Saviour, I want to hear His commendation,

"Well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with what you've been given ..."  
(Matthew 28:21,23)

The more I read about the lives of believers around the world and listen as they describe their experiences in God, the more I sense myself hoping I don't hear Jesus say, 'Oh Melinda, there was so much more that you could have walked in, but because you didn't step out in faith and expectation, you never learnt to walk in it.'

It is this longing which compels me to read all Scripture, whether it be the Gospels, the record of how the early church grew or the letters to the first believers, with a determination that says,

'I will not limit what I read in God's Word to my experience, rather I will raise my expectations until my experience matches what I read about in God's Word. For I want my life to reflect what the Bible describes as normal.'

With such a perspective we step back into Ascension Day when the disciples finally lost sight of Jesus in the clouds. As Bill reminded us, they were left with their mouths gaping open, having just been assigned a completely, impossible mission.

It was their task to: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them all [Jesus] had commanded." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Surely, they would have remembered what Jesus expected from them when He sent them out the last time. He released them to "proclaim the kingdom of heaven has come near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:7-8).

Also, I'm sure, Jesus' last words were still ringing in their ears. He'd told them His vision that those who believe in Him would do greater works than He had done, in order that the Father may be glorified through the Son (John 14:12-13). This mission was indeed impossible for them to accomplish – and they knew it!

That's why Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem until the gift the Father promised was given. (Acts 1:4) And what was that promised gift? "In a few days you will be baptised with the Holy

Spirit." And on that occasion, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you;" (Acts 1:5,8)

Today I'd like to look further at what Jesus meant when he spoke about being "baptised in the Holy Spirit." The word 'baptise' is a very practical word, which means to immerse or plunge and even to overwhelm. You baptise your clothes every week when you throw them into the soapy water in the washing machine!

Now let's remember, the disciples had already experienced the baptism in water, most likely under the ministry of John, as the Lord Jesus had. Paul called this a baptism of repentance (see Matthew 3:14-15 and Acts 1:5, 19:4). They also experienced the regeneration or new birth in the Spirit when Jesus breathed on them, and they received the Holy Spirit shortly after His resurrection (John 20:22).

But now they needed 'power from heaven'. They needed to be immersed in the Spirit of God, so they were equipped and empowered for the ministry Jesus had commissioned them to do. While John's baptism or immersion in water represented their repentance and turning to God (John 3:22), now, Jesus was promising to do something quite different: He was to immerse them in the Holy Spirit.

That is why all four of the Gospel accounts record Jesus as promising the baptism, or the immersion, of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16 and John 1:33).

There are a couple of things to notice here:

Firstly, the Holy Spirit came from above to give power.

Jesus said, "when the Holy Spirit comes on you," and Joel prophesied, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people." To receive the immersion of the Spirit is to be drenched in the Spirit of God from above.

Secondly, each one of them was individually filled with the Spirit. While it was a collective experience, each individual knew that they had experienced the Spirit's infilling.

Thirdly, there was an overflow, a supernatural outflow from the infilling. This is exactly what Jesus described would happen when His Spirit was given:

It will be like "rivers of living water shall flow from within them (John 7:37).

Now we understand why they spoke in "other tongues." It was just as Jesus taught, "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). Their hearts were so filled to overflowing with the power and goodness of God, that their tongues were having trouble keeping up with outflow! And what poured forth? Words of praise about the wonders of God in languages they had not learnt nor studied. (Acts 2:11)

Notice, however, that the Holy Spirit didn't do the speaking. It was the disciples who spoke, as the Spirit gave them the words to say. "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." (Acts 2:4)

And that infilling or immersion in the Spirit was obvious to those around. The same pattern is followed numerous times as the Gospel was preached throughout the region (Acts 4:28-31, Acts 8:15-17, Acts 9:17, Acts 10:44-45 and Acts 19:2-6).

Finally, while the strange tongues certainly got everyone's attention, it was the supernatural demonstration of the power of God that really fuelled the growth of the church (Acts 2:43, 5:12).

In fact, this was exactly what the expectation of the disciples was. After they were arrested by the religious leaders, for healing a man using the name of Jesus (Acts 3-4:31), they asked God "to enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." (Acts 4:29-30)

Throughout the book of Acts, the immersion in the Spirit was never regarded as a once only experience. Again and again we read "and the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:8, 4:31, 13:9, 13:52. *(For further on this: Paul told the believers at Ephesus, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."* (Ephesians 5:18) *As the*

*phrase 'be filled' is written in present tense it should be understood as "be continuously filled with the Spirit ...")*

Now there is really a lot more that I could say ... and this really is one of my favourite topics to speak on.

So, I'd like to make a resource available so that those who want to explore these things more may do so.

The Pentecost Devotional will continue for thirty days. So, while I am away, you can go on a journey of spiritual discovery into the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual gifts which we read about in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

I know some of you find this all a little bit scary. You're inwardly groaning, "why Oh why is she opening up this can of worms?"

But we just read, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). And we are told to "earnestly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

So, opening the windows to let the wind of the Spirit blow in is ALWAYS a good thing.

And, it is OK to have a little fear.

When the Holy Spirit blew in like a mighty rushing wind, I'm sure the disciples also trembled with holy fear.

If you do not tremble over what the Holy Spirit of God is able to do in and through us, then your God is way too small.

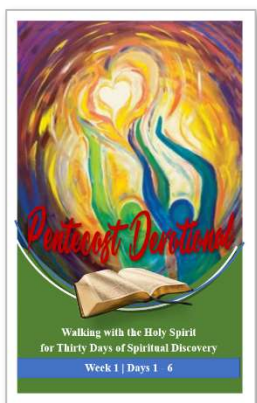
The Spirit-filled and Spirit-led journey with God is supposed to be an adventure into new things, new encounters, and new demonstrations of His glory and His power in our lives.

So, if you are ready to go on the journey of a lifetime, I warn you! Yes, it will be like stepping into a roller coaster. But it will be an exciting ride and one you can join at any age.

Those who step into the Spirit-led life will utter, "Come Holy Spirit Come! Blow through our lives your powerful flame and fill us to overflowing. We desperately need a greater sense of your power and your glory so that our community may be the shining beacon of the Kingdom of God in this entire region.

## **Further resources for those who want to know more:**

### *Pentecost Devotional - A thirty-day journey of spiritual discovery*



This resource explores the person of the Holy Spirit, and how He is the Spirit of Mission. Over the thirty-day period we'll explore the Spirit's involvement in every aspect of God's story and how He enables us to live and minister for Jesus Christ in our world.

Two other resources for those who want to go deeper:

*Baptised with the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts* by Reverend David Crawford Presented at the Anglican Synod of the Diocese of Sydney in 1971.

*The Holy Spirit and You* by Dennis and Rita Bennett: A book written by two Anglicans. This is a Study Guide to the Spirit-filled Life, printed in 1971.

Copies of these resources are available from the Church Office.