

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 6

Acts 2-6

This week's reflector is

Kate Gregory.

She is the minister at the Belwood-Metz Pastoral Charge and as well as her ministry, enjoys watercolour painting and Tai Chi exercises.

General Questions for Reflection

After chapter 1 led us through the initial introductions, sending off of Jesus and arranging to have a full team of 12 found, chapters 2-6 show us how the early church began to organize itself with the forming of communities of faith, the sharing of property, worshipping together, and the separation of tasks. These chapters also show us just how devoted believers were to the cause of Jesus, and what amazing things can happen when one is filled with the Spirit's power.

Monday

Acts 2

Let's get things underway with Jesus' promise of a helper (sometimes called the Paraclete) being fulfilled (see John 16:7.)

The Holy Spirit comes to everyone assembled in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, 50 days after Passover. This is the celebration that some now call the birthday of the church for it was on that day that Peter came into his own, becoming the leader that Jesus saw in him from the start.

Peter is the first of many to be filled with the Holy Spirit and given Spiritual power—in his case the gift of oration and exhortation—could he ever talk! Note how the nascent community of faith begins to share all that they have.

Question for reflection: *Have you ever felt that you were being filled with the Holy Spirit? What made you think so?*

An excellent book to check out on the power of the Holy Spirit is Nine O' Clock in the Morning by Dennis J. Bennett.

Tuesday

Acts 3

In this chapter we begin to read of the miracles Peter and John were able to do in the name of Jesus. They would never say that they had done the healing themselves, but it was done through the power of Jesus' name.

In his preaching Peter begins to tie together the prophecies of the Hebrew Scripture – with which most of his audience would be familiar – and the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus — in which most of their audience was personally involved. At the same time they are sorting out all the lessons that Jesus gave them which they did not understand at the time.

Extra Reading: You would do well to read again the Hebrew Scripture references that (hopefully) appear as footnotes in your Bible. You, too, will begin to tie all this together and see it as one continuing story of faith and promise!

Wednesday

Acts 4

Trouble begins for Peter and John and the movement called The Way. Their teaching angers the Jewish authorities and Peter and John are jailed for the first time.

As they are brought to trial the Holy Spirit takes the opportunity to tell of the legitimacy of the claim that Jesus is the expected Messiah. The point is made that Peter and John are “ordinary men and not well educated.” It is obvious that their wisdom and understanding are coming directly from the Holy Spirit who has filled them.

Peter and John are ordered to stop preaching about Jesus. They respond that they have to obey God; they cannot keep quiet.

Consider this: *Who would you obey in such a situation? Would you have the courage to continue to preach about Jesus? The apostles prayed for courage. In your daily life, do you have the courage to share your faith with others?*

Thursday

Acts 5

Here we see that not everything went smoothly in the new church. Ananias and Sapphira plot to cheat the community. When they are found out they die out of sheer fear of the apostles’ judgment; such was the esteem in which those men were held by the believers. Peter, however, does not condemn these two to death; he might well have offered them forgiveness had they not died first. While some translations will say (v.11) that all were afraid, others say they “were in awe.”

The apostles are brought to trial again but they go away happy to be punished because God had considered them worthy of suffering for the sake of Jesus.

Consider this: *If, to be a part of the Christian Church, you had to give up all you owned and share with others equally, would you be able to?*

Friday

Acts 6

More honesty in reporting! Here again trouble is cropping up in the church. We read of the rivalry between the speakers of Greek (the Hellenists—usually converts) and Aramaic (the Jews, for the most part. Jesus spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew.) The apostles seek to get help from the congregation. These elders are to hand out food or possibly money (the use of the Greek word for ‘table’ could also mean ‘bank’.)

If we follow these criteria, the councils and boards of our churches should be people who are “respected and wise and filled with God’s Spirit” (v 3)

At the end of this chapter we see Stephen arrested and a terrible plot worked up against him.

Consider this: *Is there rivalry among the members of your church about how the budget is shared, or about how much time and attention each church in your pastoral charge gets from the minister?*