

## LESSON 4

SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

UNIT I. GOD'S PEOPLE OFFER PRAISE

CELEBRATING IN UNITY

**DEVOTIONAL READING:** Psalm 134

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** Acts 2:32-33, 37-47

**PRINT PASSAGE:** Acts 2:32-33, 37-47

### KEY VERSE

**They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.** (Acts 2:42, KJV)

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**They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.** (Acts 2:42, NIV)

### LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Understand Jesus' forgiveness of sins and the role of the Holy Spirit in your lives and in the life of the church.
- Discern how the love of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit inspire believers of different backgrounds to share a life of worship, care, and witness.
- Plan opportunities for persons to encounter the Holy Spirit and begin a relationship with Jesus Christ through the ministries of your church.

### KEY TERMS

**Forgiveness (verse 38)**—Greek: *aphesis* (af'-es-is): dismissal; release; pardon; "remission" (KJV).

**Praising (verse 47)**—Greek: *aineó* (ah-ee-neh'-o): to praise, extol.

**Raised up (verse 32)**—Greek: *anistémi* (an-is'-tay-mee): raised (from the dead); "raised . . . to life" (NIV).

**Repent (verse 38)**—Greek: *metanoéō* (met-an-o-eh'-o): to change one's mind or purpose.

**Witnesses (verse 32)**—Greek: *martus* (mar'-toos): eyewitnesses or ear-witnesses.

**Wonders (verse 43)**—Greek: *teras* (ter'-as): portents; marvels; miraculous events.

### INTRODUCTION

Many friendship circles, social clubs, and civic organizations speak highly of fellowship and unity. Their members often gather to tell stories and reminisce on old times. The mood of their gatherings may be festive and energetic, full of life. Most often, people have strong, enduring loyalties to the groups to which they belong, such that no matter the story, the argument, the crisis, or the outcome, they remain unified in support of their common cause, to take a common stand. No matter how high or low life takes you, at some point, you will acknowledge the human need for friendship and fellowship. There is an unspeakable beauty in gathering together without worries of judgment or cares for the world, to share burdens and to celebrate life, blessings, struggles, and triumphs. Instead of lamenting what is not, we can be agents of peace, unity, truth, and love. American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson noted that each of us has the capacity to impact

our surroundings with such beauty. He said, “Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not.”

## **BIBLICAL CONTEXT**

Because Passover and Pentecost were only about seven weeks apart, many Jewish pilgrims would remain in Jerusalem to celebrate both sacred festivals. The communal arrangements described in Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-35 are spoken of nowhere else in the New Testament, leading some religious scholars to believe that sharing all things in common in the Jerusalem church was a way to provide for displaced pilgrims as well as others with limited means who chose to stay in the region past the Passover festivities into the period of the Pentecost activities. This lingering crowd represented a diverse mix of people from throughout the region. Jews who lived outside Jerusalem or farther across the land would make the pilgrimage for the annual feast days. This presented the apostles and leaders of the early church with a unique opportunity to share the message of salvation through Jesus with a broader audience, sowing seeds that ultimately led to the spread of the Gospel in new regions. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter (having been filled with the Spirit) seized the moment as he stood before a crowd of thousands to boldly declare the Gospel. By the power of the Holy Spirit, people opened their hearts, received the truth, and asked how they could respond to the good news Peter delivered (see Acts 2:37).

## **ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT** **THE PRICKING (ACTS 2:32-33, 37-38)**

### **KJV**

**32 This Jesus hath God *raised up*, whereof we all are *witnesses*.**

**33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.**

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**37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the**

**rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?**

**38 Then Peter said unto them, *Repent*, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the *remission* of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

### **NIV**

**32 God has *raised* this Jesus to *life*, and we are all *witnesses* of it.**

**33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.**

.....

**37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”**

**38 Peter replied, “*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.”**

In Acts 2:25-28, the apostle Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11. He addressed the crowd further, requesting to speak freely (see Acts 2:29). As he elaborated, Peter connected Jesus to the psalm of David, telling the crowd about the miraculous resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah, to which he and

those with him were witnesses (**verse 32**). Peter elaborated on the Resurrection and subsequent events by explaining that Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God as the Promised Messiah. Peter announced the arrival of the promised Holy Spirit, whose presence and power were being demonstrated before their very eyes and ears (**verse 33**). Peter's sermon connected Jesus to ancient prophecies and divine promises, noting that Jesus was sent to God's chosen people who crucified Him—the one who is both “Lord and Christ” (verse 36 [not in today's lesson]). As Peter spoke with such power and authority, the people's hearts were pricked, and they wanted to know what they must do (**verse 37**) to resolve this grave sin they committed against God. Peter instructed them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus (**verse 38**). Peter called the crowd to acknowledgment and confession of sin and a dependence on Jesus as Lord. Water baptism is a public acknowledgment of allegiance to Christ. All who received Jesus and were baptized would “receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (**verse 38**). In a single day, thousands committed themselves to trusting Jesus as Lord and God continued to add to the church. Adding souls to the kingdom is one of the greatest priorities of ministry. The Lord's church must never lose sight of her mission.

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Is it possible to come to Jesus without repentance—that is, if one's heart is not pricked of sin?

### **THE PROMISE (ACTS 2:39-42)**

#### **KJV**

**39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call.**

**40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.**

**41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.**

**42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.**

#### **NIV**

**39 “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”**

**40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”**

**41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

**42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

Peter, having the people hooked with pricked hearts, further explained the promise of the Holy Spirit which they would receive (**verse 39**). This promise is not a material gift or talent, but a presence—that of the Holy Spirit Himself dwelling within. The promise is available to everyone who would receive it— young and old, male and female, and, as the apostles would soon discover, to both Jews and Gentiles. Peter noted that the Holy Spirit's power was now available to anyone, “even as many as the LORD our God shall call” (**verse 39**). The impartation of the Spirit is directed

by God Himself. No apostle or church leader has ever had the power or authority to select who will be saved. The door is open for anyone who calls on the name of the Lord by faith and is baptized. Peter warned and pleaded with his listeners to save themselves by accepting the Gospel message (**verse 40**). While there were certainly some, if not many, who turned away and refused to receive Peter's message, there still remained at least three thousand who were added to the church that day (**verse 41**). The promise of God was and is given upon the confession of one's faith through repentance and reliance on Jesus Christ for salvation. The process allows us to have unity with God through Christ sealed by the Holy Spirit. The promise of unity with God is extended and displayed through the unity of the people as displayed as they all continued in the receiving and study of God's Word along with fellowshiping, eating, and praying together (**verse 42**). The early church was committed to connecting and getting to know one another; the Greek word is *koinonia*, an intimate communal drawing together.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

As we seek to commune with the Holy Spirit, in what ways can we truly fellowship with one another?

### THE PRAISE (ACTS 2:43-47)

#### KJV

**43 And fear came upon every soul: and many *wonders* and signs were done by the apostles.**  
**44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;**  
**45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.**  
**46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,**  
**47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.**

#### NIV

**43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many *wonders* and signs performed by the apostles.**  
**44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.**  
**45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.**  
**46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,**  
**47 *praising* God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

The powerful worship celebration at Pentecost moved people deeply, leaving them in awe. As the Spirit moved, God delivered miraculous signs and wonders through the newly anointed apostles (**verse 43**). The demonstrations of the Spirit and the sincere love of the believers gave credibility to the movement, and Christians came together to share their possessions so that everyone's needs were met (**verses 44-45**). This level of unselfish sharing had likely not been witnessed by the Jewish community outside of family. Before receiving Christ, many Jews had given themselves to misguided religious application of Jewish Law (see, for example, Jesus' teaching regarding the Law of Corban in Mark 7:1-23). The original pattern of Christian worship involved believers' helping one another, worshipping daily, and regularly meeting in each other's homes to break bread together (**verse 46**). **Verse 47** indicates that the gatherings were more than just social events

or parties. While such gatherings are beneficial, the meetings of the early Christians also had a welcoming spiritual tone that prompted the participants to give praise to God. Their holistic approach to praising God was widely appealing. God opened the hearts to hear the Gospel and each day, He drew in more people to be saved (**verse 47**). It was the Lord who prompted the growth of the church, not the signs and wonders, nor the food and shared possessions. The Lord added to the church. In turn, the saints showed Christian love to those in community—and as their numbers grew dramatically, God received glory and the people were blessed.

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Are the Christian practices noted in today's lessons practical and useful today? Why or why not?

### **A CLOSING THOUGHT**

This unit focused on God's people's praising Him. This fourth lesson highlighted the power of praise and worship in creating unity and drawing others to Christ. Christian evangelism is effective when it is birthed from unified worship. When the people in our world see genuine Christian love practiced in individual hearts and throughout the community, they will be drawn to know Christ.

### **YOUR LIFE**

This week, consider your praise and worship experiences. Do your acts of Christian love reach beyond the church building? Think about it and consider starting a log or journal to capture your expressions of commitment to Christ beyond the sanctuary.

### **YOUR WORLD!**

This week, be intentional about living out your faith. Christianity is not just an inward contemplation of the heart. To touch the world, our faith must impact our words and actions. What will you do to demonstrate your faith this week?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Dear Lord, help us to become bolder in our open display of our love for You. We pray for the unity of the Spirit in our worship and our service for You. Help us to share and celebrate in love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)**

While reading the Background Scripture, consider this thought: "We are all called to praise God."

## **HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

### **MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE**

*(September 27–October 3, 2021)*

**MONDAY, September 27: “Praise the Rock of Our Salvation” (Psalm 95)**

**TUESDAY, September 28: “Stones Shout Out!” (Luke 19:28, 36-40)**

**WEDNESDAY, September 29: “Indescribable and Glorious Joy” (1 Peter 1:3-9)**

**THURSDAY, September 30: “Sing to God a New Song” (Psalm 98)**

**FRIDAY, October 1: “A Continuous Sacrifice of Praise” (Hebrews 13:12-16)**

**SATURDAY, October 2: “Rejoice in God’s Mighty Rule” (Psalm 66:1-7)**

**SUNDAY, October 3: “Enter God’s Courts with Praise” (Psalm 100)**