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# Bible Study – Make Me Holy

## Introduction

Pentecost is the time when we remember and celebrate the giving of the Holy Spirit. An important part of the way we think about the work of the Holy Spirit is holiness.

The Salvation Army is a holiness movement and is part of the wider historical holiness tradition. This is part of our inheritance from the Methodism and Revivalism which influenced the early leaders and founders of The Salvation Army.

Holiness is one of the words that often gets used in church, but we might not actually spend much time talking about. For some it might be something they have thought about and prayed about a lot, and for others it might be something they have only sung about.

This Bible study should help put together Pentecost and holiness so that maybe it might make a little bit more sense.

Every blessing on your journey!

## Bible Text

‘When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.’ (**Acts 2:1-4**)

## Questions

* Try and imagine what it must have been like for the disciples at that time. What do you think they might have been feeling?
* What do you think the sound of a blowing violent wind from heaven might represent?
* Why did the disciples have tongues of fire on their heads?

## Bible Text

‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 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, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.’ (**Acts 2:42-47**)

## Questions

* The Holy Spirit gave the disciples the gift to speak in other languages. Why might this have been useful?
* After the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples, this is how the early Church acted. Is this how your church acts?
* Can you find a connection between the Holy Spirit being given and the way the early Church acted together?
* Think about the fruits of the Spirit which the Holy Spirit grows in us (*Galatians 5: 22-23).* How might these fruits be important for the kind of life we see above to be able to work?
* If it was suggested that the verses above already start to explain holiness, how would you respond to that?

## Bible Text

‘Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’ (**Leviticus 19:2 NRSV**)

‘…for I the Lord, I who sanctify you, am holy.’ (**Leviticus 21:8 NRSV**)

‘Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”’ (**1 Peter 1:13-16 NRSV**)

## Questions

* Look over these verses. Why does God say we should be holy?
* If you had to describe or explain what holiness is at this stage, what would you say?
* If we are to be holy because God is holy, what does that suggest about what holiness might look like?
* If God tells us that we need to be holy, is it an option that we can choose, or is it a command from God?

## Bible Text

‘Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.’ (**1 Peter 1:22-23 NRSV**)

## Questions

* What does this passage tell us what holiness might look like in practice?
* Human holiness is God’s holiness which God lets us share in (‘He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption’   
  1 Corinthians 1: 30). We know what is holy because we know Jesus. Jesus shows us that God is love. Holiness is love in action. How do we know what love is?

## Bible Text

‘Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.’ (**1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NRSV**)

## Questions

* If holiness is love in action, what can these verses teach us about what holiness should look like?
* If holiness is about loving our neighbour, then can it be about separation? If yes, then what kind of separation – separation from what?
* Could you be holy?
* What does the Holy Spirit have to do with holiness?
* Is it possible to be holy by our own efforts – can we make ourselves holy if we work hard enough?
* If you want to be holy, then what would you need to do?

# Reflection

Holiness is at the heart of what it means to follow Jesus.

Holiness is not about being separated from the world, but is about turning our attention on to our neighbour, on to the world, and away from ourselves. Just as God does not exist for God’s self but always directs God’s love and attention towards what is not God, so are we called to learn how to live for the sake of others.

Holiness is about being freed from the selfishness and self-interest which leads to sin, so that we can love people as God loves them.

But love is not a feeling; love is a command and a commitment. The verses you have read show what love looks like. Love is an action, a way of treating people, a way of seeing people. It is the root of the Church and the foundation of our faith.

May this Pentecost be a chance to let the Holy Spirit fill you with God’s love so that you can share in God’s holiness.

# A Pentecost Prayer

Father God, help us to see the world as you see it. Turn our hearts towards our neighbour so that we can love them as you love us.

Lord Jesus Christ, you have saved us so that we might love and serve those around us. Grant us the love that you showed in your life, death and resurrection.

Holy Spirit, purge from us any traces of self-interest so that we might better love our neighbour. Fill us with your presence and power so that we might be holy as you are holy as we share in your holiness.

Almighty God, creator and preserver, saviour and sanctifier, reconcile us to yourself and send your Holy Spirit on us again so that we may live out what it means to be holy here in this place as a foretaste of your coming Kingdom.

Amen.