

# A Time of Prayer: Listen

May 2024 Edition

## LISTENING FOR DIVINE SPARKS: A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE FOR MAY 2024

To facilitate group meetings in person or on Zoom, this month’s Bible study is also offered as [PowerPoint slides](#) that can be downloaded and modified.

### OPENING PRAYER

Amazing God, you have fulfilled the word of your promise and have poured out upon your church the gift of the Holy Spirit: open our hearts and renew our will. We pray to receive the fullness of your grace and power; that our lives and that of our parishes would be strengthened for the service of your kingdom to which we are being called. Kindle in us the fire of your love that we may be transformed into the image of your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

#### Acts 2:1-21 “New Life”

<i>New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)</i>	<i>The Message (MSG)</i>
<p><b>Acts 2:1-21</b> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.</p> <p>5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and</p>	<p><b>2</b> <sup>1-4</sup> When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.</p> <p><b>5-11</b> There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were blown away. They couldn’t for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, “Aren’t these all Galileans?”</p>

astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ 13 But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.  
18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

How come we’re hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?

Parthians, Medes, and Elamites;  
Visitors from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia,

Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,

Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene;

Immigrants from Rome, both Jews and proselytes;

Even Cretans and Arabs!

“They’re speaking our languages, describing God’s mighty works!”

12 Their heads were spinning; they couldn’t make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: “What’s going on here?”

13 Others joked, “They’re drunk on cheap wine.”

14-21 That’s when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: “Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren’t drunk as some of you suspect. They haven’t had time to get drunk—it’s only nine o’clock in the morning. This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen:

19 And I will show portents in the heaven  
above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.  
20 The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord's  
great and glorious day.  
21 Then everyone who calls on the name  
of the Lord shall be saved."

"In the Last Days," God says,  
"I will pour out my Spirit  
on every kind of people:  
Your sons will prophesy,  
also your daughters;  
Your young men will see visions,  
your old men dream dreams.  
When the time comes,  
I'll pour out my Spirit  
On those who serve me, men and women  
both,  
and they'll prophesy.  
I'll set wonders in the sky above  
and signs on the earth below,  
Blood and fire and billowing smoke,  
the sun turning black and the moon  
blood-red,  
Before the Day of the Lord arrives,  
the Day tremendous and marvelous;  
And whoever calls out for help  
to me, God, will be saved."

## LECTIO DIVINA

Ask someone to read the NRSVA translation of the passage aloud.

Allow for several minutes of silence as each bible study participant contemplates the passage. As the passage is read a first time, notice which word(s), sentence(s), or image(s) catch their attention. The group can decide how long the period of silence should last, but in the *Lectio Divina* tradition, it is substantial (a minimum of 3-5 minutes is suggested, perhaps working up to a longer interlude).

Invite participants to briefly share with one another those word(s), sentence(s), or image(s) stirring them. Encourage participants to avoid interpreting or expanding on them at this time, but simply to state them out loud. Explain that time for reflection and discussion will follow later in the prayer time.

Have another person read the MSG translation of the passage aloud, followed by a second period of silence and invite participants to share again. This time, ask participants to notice which word(s), sentence(s), or image(s) catch your attention, but also consider what idea(s), feeling(s) or reflections may emerge.

Have a third person re-read the NRSVA version aloud again, followed by a final period of silence and invite participants to reflect on what they think is being drawn to their attention by the Holy Spirit. There are no right or wrong answers. Consider the following questions:

- *How are we amazed and astonished at God acting in our midst?*
- *How might we reach out to those who are different from us?*
- *What is God saying to our congregation and our diocesan church through this passage today?*

## CLOSING PRAYERS

O Holy God, you breathe your life-giving Spirit into this parish and diocese and call us to join together in mission for the spreading of the Gospel: show us the people to whom we should go and the path we should travel; help us to understand the deep longings of their hearts, and enable us to feed them through the living presence of Jesus Christ our Saviour, in whose power we set forth and in whose Name we pray. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

## CAPTURING THE DIVINE SPARKS KINDLED

- Consider whether there were sparks kindled during this prayer session. Ask a participant to write down any important ideas that emerged and ensure that there is group consensus around what is captured.
- Who do these sparks need to be shared with at this time? Find a way to share the insights gained with those who need to hear them.

## ADDITIONAL BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

- Cláudio Carvalhaes explores how Pentecost is a time when we are “being both uprooted and deeply grounded.” Read the brief commentary here: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/day-of-pentecost-2/commentary-on-john-1526-27-164b-15>

---

<sup>1</sup> Prayers from “Litany for the Mission of the Church” (Episcopal Church’s *The Book of Occasional Services*, 2018.)