

Icebreaker:

In Acts 2, Peter stands and addresses a large crowd. Do you enjoy public speaking? Do you have a best or worst experience with public speaking?

Read and discuss:

1. Peter uses Old Testament scripture to tell the story of Jesus. Have you ever tried to tell the gospel story to someone? How did it go?
2. For much of last year we encouraged group members to tell their own faith stories. How does this practice help us become more available and willing to share the gospel?
3. Jewish pilgrims from all different lands hear this Pentecost message. Some were cut to the heart and ask, "What should we do?" (Acts 2:37). Have you ever felt "cut to the heart" and asked "what should I do?"
4. Referring to repentance, Barbara Brown Taylor says, "We can't quit our sins if we aren't allowed to even talk about them. It's no help to stop talking about sin." How do you respond to that?
5. Peter talks about the forgiveness of sins. Do you ever struggle with feeling forgiven?
6. John Calvin said, "Judgment always begins with the house and people of God." Why is it important that judgment begins with ourselves?
7. Last week we asked you to pray with expectancy for the Holy Spirit's help. Did you do that? If yes, have you noticed anything different?

Prayer:

Similar to last week, Peter and the early disciples are encouraged to speak because they have the Holy Spirit. In your group, ask this week for the Holy Spirit to nudge you, encourage you or empower you to live for Jesus in some specific way. Also, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

- > Prayers of healing for Mary.
- > Pray for final preparations and for the guests and team for the Men's Great Banquet happening next weekend at ZPC.

Info for your group:

> **Cultural Awareness Training is being held at ZPC on Tuesday, Sept 26 at 7 pm. Join us if you would like to know more about serving in urban ministries.**

Leader's Notes:

Repent and be baptized. While this response from Peter in Acts 2 sounds churchy, it's still important to us today. Peter gives a great "sermon" using the Old Testament and his own witness to Jesus' rising from the dead. When asked, "What shall we do?" Peter replies "Repent and be baptized." Repentance is turning away from sin, the things that pull us away from God. Being baptized is for all Christians. Peter says when these hearers do this, they are forgiven and receive God's Spirit. May we turn our own hearts to Jesus in repentance, asking for forgiveness, and getting a fresh start with God and with his Spirit!

[Question 1] When sharing with someone, we can respectfully tell what Jesus has meant to us. Or we can use our own experiences with church, a retreat, or mission trip to tell our story. Then we can make a simple invitation to join us at church or another opportunity, or ask them about their own experience to keep conversation going.

[Question 2] You can encourage people to tell what Jesus means to them in their own words. You can share your stories in your group where it is safe, giving you practice and some comfort when needed to share your story outside of group.

[Question 3] You might follow up by saying someone could be cut to the heart by an emotional or tragic experience, or at a spiritual high at a retreat. When we feel a need for God or feel close to God, we are called to make a response to God which is asking "What shall we do?"

[Question 4] Most people will probably say they don't talk about sin. Most churches, including ZPC, don't do confession. For people to talk about sin, or acknowledge they have problems, is often freeing for the person and for the people around them; who then might share their struggle and ask for help?

[Question 5] If we don't talk about sin, forgiveness, or pray it about to God; then it would make sense that we might not feel forgiven. Forgiveness is a free gift of grace from God – where God cleanses us from sin – and is not based on feeling – but the action of God. However, we may not feel forgiven, even though we are forgiven. If you don't feel forgiven, you might talk to a trusted friend and confess sins to God with them in prayer – and ask for and receive God's forgiveness.

[Question 6] Peter is the preacher in this passage and often had to ask for God's forgiveness. In fact, Jesus restores his relationship with Peter after his resurrection after Peter had denied knowing Jesus. This only happened within the last 2 months before Pentecost. Peter judged himself for turning away from Jesus, but was forgiven by Jesus – and could speak about it with passion from first-hand experience. That is why judgment should begin with ourselves.

[Question 7] You receive God's Holy Spirit one time when you are saved by Jesus or ask Jesus into your heart or life. However, you can always ask for the Holy Spirit to come to you every day with more of what you need – power, courage, knowledge, wisdom, or comfort to help you in your time of need. In your group, pray for the Holy Spirit to come and bless the members of your group in the ways that they need. May God's Spirit show himself to your group this week!