

Pastor David shared a story of the celebration of his father-in-law's final moments of life. Do you have a similar story to share of the celebration of hope surrounding the end of a believer's life?

Acts 2:37-41 NIV - 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. 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.

Those of us who see through God's lens can declare this hope to those around us. But if our vision is clouded by other lenses the world will not see the hope they need. The crowd who heard Peter asked, "What should we do?" and Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized". It was not Peter's clever arguments but the Holy Spirit that changed their hearts and the trajectory of their lives.

We may need to ask ourselves, "What is it we need to leave behind in order to be a part of what God is doing in this world? What lens are you relying on that keeps you from seeing clearly from God's perspective?"

WRAP-UP

When Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit he saw clearly through God's lens. He declared boldly to the crowd on Pentecost that the sin of us all sent Jesus to the cross, but His victory over death made a way and gives us the hope of eternal life. We just need to put on God's lens to see it.

Memory Verse

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

- Acts 2:21 NIV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- If you aren't sure if there is a lens creating blind spots in you, ask a trusted friend if they see a lens that you need to remove.

"Seeing Through God's Lens"

Book of Acts – Week #3

INTRODUCTION

A lens is what filters our view of the world and brings things into focus. For many of us with less than perfect vision, the world would be nothing but a blur without our bifocals. In the same way our view of the world is filtered and focused through whatever "lens" we put in front of our eyes. At Pentecost, some accepted the work of God and were amazed as they peered through God's lens, others had a skeptical lens attributing the events of the day to drunkenness, and still others may have applied their own logical lens and found Pentecost just didn't make sense. We choose each day what lens to view the world through. But if we don't see through God's lens, we are missing the perspective that brings hope to the world.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

If you have you ever tried looking through someone else's lenses, did you find their prescription helped you to see, or distorted your vision?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Peter Preaches

Acts 2:14-21 NLT - 14 Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. 15 These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. 16 No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: 17 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. 18 In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants--men and women alike--and they will prophesy. 19 And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below--blood and fire and clouds of smoke. 20 The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives. 21 But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.'

After the Holy Spirit filled the disciples, Peter preached boldly to the crowds on Pentecost. If he had been viewing the events from a human perspective previously, he certainly had taken on God's lens now. One of the things Peter now clearly saw were the "markers" God had in place through the Old Testament that indicated the path they were on. He pointed them to the Prophecy of Joel starting in verse 17.

Which of the signs of the last days had they witnessed? What signs can we expect to precede "the great and glorious day of the Lord's return"? How does it affect you as you anticipate the return of the Lord?

The pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost also ushered in a new and fresh movement of God.

Who was the Spirit now available to according to Joel's prophesy? Why would this be viewed as a new movement of God to observant Jews hearing this message?

2. You Crucified Jesus

Acts 2:22-23 NLT - 22 "People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. 23 But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him.

Peter lets the listeners know that God "authenticated" Jesus. His origin, authority and identity were verified by the miracles, signs and wonders he performed. Jesus of Nazareth was sent by God. He was fully God and fully man. It is only through Him that man and a holy God could be reconciled, because He was both. And even though He was mankind's only hope, we crucified Him.

Most of us would be repulsed by the thought of participating in a crucifixion. Yet we did participate by virtue of our sinfulness. Human nature is corrupt; all have sinned. Jesus was crucified for all sin; yours and mine.

How do you think most people respond when told they are responsible for Jesus' death? How is denying our responsibility an attitude of arrogance?

3. But God.....

Psalm 14:3 NIV - 3 All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Romans 3:23 NIV - 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The Old and New Testaments agree. From the most pious pastor to the sweetest little old lady, every one of us is responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. God has revealed the ugly truth of sin. Thankfully He also extends to us a better way.

Acts 2:24 NIV - 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

When Israel was fleeing Egypt, when their army marched around Jericho, when Goliath taunted God's people there was no way out. But God made a way when there was no other way. What has been a "But God" moment in your life when you saw no way forward, but God made a way for you?

Covid19, financial upheaval and racial unrest may seem insurmountable problems to us, "but God" is able to make a way. The problems are real, but God is greater than our problems.

4. Our Hope

Acts 2:25-28; 31-32 NIV - 25 David said about him: " I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, 27 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' ...31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.

The crowd had witnessed the crucifixion, but now they witnessed the resurrection; the power of victory over sin and death. God created a way out when there was no way out of our condemnation. Jesus' victory gives us victory as well.