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**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

1 Topic: "Waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit," with commentary

Acts 1: 1 – 11. "Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven."

The purpose of the Book of Acts is to record the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Vision and Ministry of Peter and Paul. A review of the Acts Chart provides a visual treatment of this summary. The "Testimony of Peter" involves "The Activity of the Holy Spirit (1:1 – 8:40), and "Peter's Vision and Work moving out into the Greek/Gentile World" (9:1 – 12: 25). "The Testimony of Paul" involves the story of his conversion in 9:1 – 31. This is followed by "Paul's 1st Missionary Journey to Asia Minor" (13:1 – 15:35), "Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey to the Greek Lands" (15: 36 – 18: 21), "Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey to Macedonia" (18:22 – 21: 16), "Paul's Ministry while in Jerusalem" (21: 17 – 26: 32), and "The Final Journey" (27:1 – 18: 31. **Today's study is the first of 20 lessons.**

A contextual statement is necessary to set our study of the Book of Acts in Gut Trip Analysis. **First, it helps to understand that this book is a historical and geographical statement.**

WS: The IHOP Bible Study began the Book of Acts study by asking the question of how this book represents a historical and geographical statement. A summary of our brief discussion is that Acts is respected in most circles for these qualities, most of which can be substantiated by secular resources.

It is by far the more literal of the entire New Testament. In order to cull the significance of its message, it is important to view the book through the experience of the Holy Spirit. This is the book of the Holy Spirit. To treat Acts only as a historical and geographical material is to miss its power and significance.

However, "Houston, we have a problem." The word "Holy Spirit," like all of our old Christian code words, has been made an object of study and robbed of its power. In this kind of study we reach out to grasp it and hope to wring from it its significance. Now, when we turn to this word as a relational experience, suddenly we are grasped by it, and it seeks to wring from us the significance of what it means to be fully human, living the abundant life.

Interestingly, *The Interpreter's Bible* makes the following observation. In the book of Acts, "The Lord is not returned, but in the meantime the word of God is being carried on by the church. The Gentile mission is itself the eschatological action of God." (*The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1971. p. 730.)

This I want to affirm as our perspective. **We will study this book from the perspective of the in-breaking of the Holy Spirit.** This puts us out on the cusp of a deep and foreboding spiritual hole that is eternally deep. The Holy Spirit is that intuited presence within us that urges us to "Jump." "Jump!" To take this leap of faith means to surrender ourselves to the eternal deeps. The discovery, to which I can personally testify, is that this deep, dark, mysterious hole is the place where God lives within us. As we lose control of everything— our-selves, our relationships to neighbor and to God—

then we can discover that God really does sustain us. But the experience is like falling, and it is not entirely comfortable. It is not comfortable at all. But it works.

So, I ask as we begin this study of the Book of Acts, to pull up your courage, and let's jump in together.

(By the way, get the video "Joe vs. the Volcano" with Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. View this light-hearted and poignant video through this same context. You'll enjoy it, and you'll find yourself resonating with it. Also, you get a picture of what I'm struggling to convey to you.)

Now, to work.

Read the assigned scripture.

I. Do some research on the Book of Acts: Date, authorship, to whom addresses, etc.

WS: Written by Luke, the same author of Luke's Gospel. One person observed that in the past these two books were known as 1st Luke and 2nd Luke. The date is before Paul's trial in 62 C.E. (Common Era. This term now replaces A.D.) The traditional purposes of the book is to document the growth of the early church, the opening of the ministry to the Gentiles, and to proclaim the work of the Holy Spirit.

II. Write down your own definitions of the following terms. Ask yourself, "How do I experience this term?" This will help to ground it in your own human experience, and it will be filled with new meaning for you.

1. vs. 2b: Holy Spirit

WS: An extended conversation was held concerning the question, is the Holy Spirit something objective and supernatural, or is it secular, dynamic, relational and experiential.

If it is objective, then it has a life of its own that is separate and a part from humanity. Under these conditions it is something that can be withheld from us unless we meet certain qualifications or readiness. **If it is supernatural**, then it is set apart from the common reality and is supported by a dual universe: a universe of this world, and a universe of the spirit. This world view is contrary to our human experience, and meets the definition of Head Trip Analysis.

On the other hand, **if it is secular, dynamic, relational and experiential**, then the Holy Spirit can be related to the worldview in which we live—a UNI-verse. In this world view, our one reality is experienced in two ways. Our one reality is associated with our natural (or human) experience. Our one reality is associated with a life in the spirit. Gut Trip Analysis supports this latter view and claims that until both the natural way and the secular way of experiencing life are used, then our human experience is inauthentic. Gut Trip Analysis is sometimes called a secular/religious theological argument.

It is the spiritual dimension of our secular human experience that John Wesley claimed we are blind to. He wrote of this as our human situation. The human predicament is that we can not awaken ourselves. This is the task of the

church to awaken our neighbors.

From a Gut Trip Analysis point of view, the Holy Spirit is defined as our Spiritual Alarm Clock.

2. vs. 3b: Kingdom of God

WS: Again, the Kingdom of God is not apart of another supernatural dimension. The Kingdom of God is the human experience of living the fully awakened life. Literally, when we get our act together and we feel whole, healthy, at peace, at-one, we are living the life of the Kingdom of God. We are fulfilling our intended purpose as human beings.

The question was raised if this is a uniquely Christian experience or is it a universal experience. In Gut Trip Analysis, this is a universal human experience, and thus secular. Christianity gives names to our human experience that are in synch with our western cultural worldview. This is why Christianity succeeds as well as it does. Our language brings meaning and purpose to our existence. If this is truly a universal experience, then other cultural worldviews either give different names to this experience, or some may not give any name at all. However, this does not diminish the human experience, nor does it cheapen Christianity's contribution to what it means to be a fully human being.

4. Find out the significance of the “forty days” mentioned in vs. 3b.

WS: The number “40” is highly symbolic in our Jewish/Christian tradition. Moses spent 40 years in the desert before entering the “Promised Land.” Jesus spends 40 days in the desert prior to beginning his ministry. During this time he confronts The Big Liar (the Demon) with the promise to defeat meaninglessness. Then, Jesus begins the Promised Land ministry. After the resurrection, Jesus wanders the land for 40 days before “descending” (*traditional: the ascension; read below vs 9 - 11*), and begins for us the Promised Land ministry.

After the “ascension,” the disciples were instructed to wait. This 10-day period, added to the previous 40 (of Eastertide) gives us the symbolic 50 days after the resurrection for the Pente-cost event. Pentecost also is a special event in Jewish religion.

5. vs. 8: What is the experience of being filled with “power,” and to be “baptized with the Holy Spirit?”

WS: To be filled with the “power” of the Holy Spirit is to be fully awakened to the spiritual resources than add meaning and significance to our human experience. To be “baptized with the Holy Spirit” is any event in which we are fully awakened. Usually, it is possible to sift through any personal religious testimony and to discover such an awakening. However, it is important to discover that in our everyday experience similar awakenings occur in many tiny ways; i.e., being moved deeply with music, art, sunsets, birth, deaths, and/or accountability.

6. Vss. 9 – 11: Be careful of the context here. Remember, that for the disciples looking “up into the sky” means the same thing we do by standing on the edge of a dark, brooding, mysterious hole.” The experience of Jesus rising up in the ascension can be translated as seeing Jesus take the leap of faith. The reason for the change of direction, is that for a pre-scientific people, the heavens were mysterious. Today, in a post-modern worldview, the heavens are no longer mysterious. Also, the image of finding the Kingdom of God *within us* is better appropriated as a hole within. From our Gut Trip perspective, read this passage again and brood on its lesson for you. Share you insights here.

WS: The following is my Gut Trip transliteration of these verses (beginning with verse 7):

Jesus looked at his disciples and said: “When you ask political questions means you are stuck in the human and natural way of thinking. The people of Israel will be restored when they are fully in tune with God who is Perfect Harmony. However, I can tell you that on the day of your full awakening will be like listening to a cosmic alarm clock. When this happens, then you tell others in all of the symbolic places (like Jerusalem), and even to the ends of the earth.

After saying this, Jesus left them by disappearing into what appeared as a mysterious opening. As they were examining this mysterious, and seemingly eternally deep hole, two mysterious men transparently dressed appeared at the edge of the hole. They asked us, “Why are you looking into the deeps so intently. Don’t you realize that Jesus Christ is the demonstrator of abundant living. When you choose to surrender your life in a similar fashion, by taking the leap of faith, you will experience that Jesus has returned to you.”

Now, you try writing your Gut Trip Analysis of these verses. Share them with us.

Alright, folks. Talk to me.