



DEVOTIONAL READING

Philip Yancey Devotional

Explosion

Acts 2:1-41

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. . . . All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:2, 4)

On the feast day of Pentecost, the disciples got what they had been waiting for. Perhaps half a million pilgrims were milling about in Jerusalem on that Jewish holiday. The believers, in accord with Jesus' instructions, had gathered in a small group indoors, where they patiently awaited what had been promised. Then, with a sound like a violent wind and a sight like tongues of fire, it happened. The Holy Spirit, the Presence of God himself, took up residence inside ordinary bodies—their bodies.

The disciples hit the streets with a bold new style that the world has never recovered from. Soon everyone in Jerusalem was talking about the Jesus-followers. Clearly, something was afoot. To their amazement, pilgrims from all over the world heard the Galileans' message in their own native languages.

There was Peter, coward apostle who had denied Christ three times to save his own neck, brazenly taking on both Jewish and Roman authorities. Quoting from King David and the prophet Joel, he proclaimed that they had just lived through the most important event of all history. "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of this fact," he said, and went on to declare Jesus as the very Messiah, the fulfillment of the Jews' long-awaited dream. Three thousand people responded to Peter's powerful message on that first day. And thus the Christian church was born.

Beginning with that boisterous scene in Jerusalem, Luke weaves a historical adventure tale. The group of new believers, at first a mere annoyance to the Jews and the Romans, would not stop growing. Just as Jesus had predicted, the message spread throughout Judea, and Samaria, and in less than one generation had penetrated into Rome, the center of civilization. In an era when new religions were a dime a dozen, the Christian faith became a worldwide phenomenon. It all began with this scene on the day of Pentecost.

Life Question: In this chapter, search for all the positive qualities that helped attract others to the new group of believers.