

## “Universal Charger”

### Acts 2: 1-21 NLT

1 On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. 2 Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. 3 Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. 4 And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. 5 At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. 6 When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

7 They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, 8 and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! 9 Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, 10 Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” 12 They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other. 13 But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

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: (Joel 2: 28-32)

17 ‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. 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 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.’

Tesla. Chevy. Nissan. Porsche. Audi. VW. A dozen major car-makers are now building electric vehicles, and the market is expected to grow. But there’s a problem: The charging ports are all over the cars. There is no consistency. Each car has a unique place to plug in a charger.

When you go to a gas station to fill up your gas-powered car, you can be pretty sure that you will pump gas into the tank from the side of the car, near the rear. Either on

the driver's side or passenger side. But where do you put the charger into your electric car? Could be the front, could be the back. Or one of the sides. It can be very confusing.

In Korea, the car-maker Hyundai recently embarked on a project of building public charging stations in Seoul, and they wanted to accommodate as many car brands as possible. According to *Fast Company* magazine, they tapped the consulting firm McKinsey to design a universal charger that would easily work with any electric car.

The result was the "Hyundai Hi-Charger," and you'll never guess what inspired its design. "Self-serve car washes," says a partner at McKinsey. "They have the sprayer hanging down from the top and it kind of rotates around."

Same with the Hyundai Hi-Charger. It has a beacon, featuring a glowing halo. The halo rotates and drops the charging cable in just the right spot, depending on the make and model of your electric car. It's a universal charger.

The book of Acts tells us that "there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem" (2:5). Yes, there were "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs" (vv. 9-11). Lots of brands. More variety than what you'll ever find today in electric cars.

The first followers of Jesus were just one brand of Jew: Galileans. They weren't the most highly educated residents of Jerusalem, and most people expected their language abilities to be limited. But God was at work on a surprising design.

The followers of Jesus were "all together in one place," says the book of Acts (v. 1). The King James Version says that they were "with one accord," but this has nothing to do with the car made by Honda (the Accord). They had come together to celebrate the Feast of Weeks, which was focused on God's gift of the law to the Israelites. **[NOTE 1]**

Suddenly from heaven "there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability" (vv. 2-4).

God was determined to fill them with power. The Holy Spirit came with the rush of a violent wind, like the wind from God that "swept over the face of the waters" on the first day of creation (Genesis 1:2). The Spirit danced with divided tongues, as of fire, like the burning bush that revealed God to Moses — a bush that "was blazing, yet it was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2). The Galilean disciples began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability, making it possible for them to communicate with devout Jews from every tribe and nation.

**[NOTE 2]** The Holy Spirit was a Universal Charger. This same Spirit is available to us today, and it is charging us in the same way that it charged the first followers of Jesus. Our challenge is to receive what the Spirit wants to offer us, and then to share that divine energy with others. We are being given a Holy Spirit Hi-Charger, not a Hyundai Hi-Charger, but in both cases, their power is put into just the right spot.

In the United States there currently are not enough fast charging stations for the electric cars and hybrids that are already on the road. The push to stop manufacturing of and the consumer buying of gas-powered cars is almost ridiculous when you consider the fact that our current infrastructure can't handle the current electricity consumption the way it is. In total, there are 150,000 gas stations in the U.S., compared with only 10,000 public EV charging stations, according to a company called Canaccord Genuity. (To me that number of gas stations seems low) but that's what the article in Semiconductor Engineering says). This presents a problem for consumers, with some psychological implications, as well. "Right now, there is an anxiety among electric car owners called an 'anxiety mileage range.' There is a paranoia that the battery is going to run out," before they find another charging station —Mark LaPedus, "Electric cars gain traction, but challenges remain," *Semiconductor Engineering*, April 22, 2019, <https://semiengineering.com>. Personally, am a long way from trusting an electric vehicle. But think about this: perhaps the church faces a spiritual "anxiety range." We don't trust the Holy Spirit to fill us fully. Or we think there is a limit on how often we can pray to be filled. According to the Bible, neither of these things is true. We need to learn to trust God and believe His promises. He promised to never leave us or forsake us and to provide for us a Comforter, the Holy Spirit, that would lead us into all truth.

The Spirit is a creative force in our lives, just as the wind of God was a creative power in the making of the heavens and the earth. In Acts, the Spirit creates the Christian community, which is why Pentecost is sometimes called the "birthday" of the church. [NOTE 3]

Notice that God's Spirit is poured out on a collection of believers. "The Holy Spirit is not a 'personal' gift from God that each believer privatizes," says biblical professor Robert Wall. The fact that the Spirit appeared to a group is "the distinguishing mark of a *people* belonging to God."

We tend to have an individualistic view of faith in the United States, and many people talk about having a personal relationship with Jesus. There is nothing wrong with that, but what is created by the Spirit on Pentecost is a distinctive and powerful **community** of faith!

The challenge for us as the Christian community is to be simultaneously both one and many. This means that we are one in our worship of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But we are many in our expressions of the faith, because we are connected to the Trinity as Christians who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. [NOTE 4] One and many. That may seem like an impossible contradiction, but remember that the Triune God is also both one and many: One God in three persons. In God's own self is a single God who is also a community made up of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost to a diverse collection of believers, and this Spirit created something new and powerful: The Christian community.

Next, the Spirit shows us that God is right in front of us, just as the fire of the burning bush told Moses that God was present in his life. On Pentecost, "divided

tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them” (Acts 2:3). This fire was impossible to ignore, and it brilliantly showed that the power of God was with them. **[NOTE 5]**

Such fire is nothing new in Holy Scripture. When God liberated his people from captivity in Egypt, the Lord went in front of them “in a pillar of fire” (Exodus 13:21). Then, “the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel” (Exodus 24:17). When the prophets Elijah and Elisha were walking along, “a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11).

The Lord “will come in fire,” promises the prophet Isaiah, “and his chariots like the whirlwind” (Isaiah 66:15). And in a vision in the book of Revelation, John says that the eyes of Christ will be “like a flame of fire” (Revelation 1:14). Pillar of fire. Devouring fire. A chariot of fire. A flame of fire. What unites these blazing sights? All are signs of the presence and power of God.

Again and again, God comes into the middle of human life and appears to us. Sometimes these appearances are brilliant, like tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost. Sometimes they are more subtle, like the squeeze of a hand, an encouraging word, an expression of forgiveness, a statement of love. But whether God comes in blazing fire or in warm words, God is present and powerful.

The promise of Pentecost is that God is with us, always with us, and this is true for all Christians, not just those labeled Pentecostal or charismatic. It echoes the promise made when Jesus was given the name Emmanuel, which means “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). God is our Universal Charger, giving us the healing and help we need, in every time and place and situation.

Finally, the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to communicate with people of every race and culture, just as it enabled the first followers of Jesus to connect with the diverse Jews of Jerusalem. The apostle Peter quickly discovered that the gift of the Spirit was not a private gift to him. It was given to him so that he could share God’s deeds of power with others. **[NOTE 6]**

Taking a bold stand, Peter announced to the people of Jerusalem, “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (Acts 2:17). Yes, the Spirit was coming to fill not just Peter and the other followers of Jesus, but a diverse group of sons and daughters, young men and old men, and even men and women who were slaves. All of the cultural barriers that had previously existed were breaking down, and now, said Peter, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (v. 21).

The Holy Spirit wants us to break down barriers and share God’s energy with others. This may involve learning a new language, or teaching English as a Second Language. It may require hosting an immigrant fellowship within an established church building. It may challenge us to take a church service out into the parking lot, or on to the lawn, to reach people who do not feel comfortable entering a church building. It may require robust support for campus ministry to reach college students who are wrestling with faith questions at a pivotal time in their lives. It is important to ask the question.

What might God be calling us to do to share the Holy Spirit and its power with others. I don't know, maybe take part in the Pine Lake Garage Sale, provide bathrooms, food, music and sale items.

When I think of the Holy Spirit I think of something most of us learned years ago in science class. In order for an electrical charge to flow from a wall circuit into a light bulb, and make the bulb glow, there has to be a complete circuit. The common, two-pronged electrical plug is an example of that. In order for a lamp to work, power has to flow into it from one of the prongs and return again through the other. Cause a break anywhere in the circuit — a frayed wire, a broken filament or a bulb insufficiently screwed in — and you have no light. Complete the circuit and you have light.

The miracle of Pentecost is kind of like that. God prepares spiritual power to flow into creation, but no inspiration will take place if the circuit is not completed. We need to position ourselves in such a way that the connection is made. Had the Jesus-followers not been “all together in one place,” ready for something miraculous to happen, there would have been no miracle — at least not in that place and time. The first and essential action of the spiritual life is showing up and plugging in. We need to complete the circuit. Pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit so you can receive power to be witnesses, telling people about Jesus everywhere-- in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” These are the words of Jesus in chapter 1 verse 8. For you and me, that could look like being witnesses in Doster, throughout Plainwell and Delton, and to the ends of the earth.

People who work in customer support for appliance companies can relate an endless number of anecdotes about bewildered callers whose appliances don't work as expected. The support people have learned to ask some very basic questions first, about matters that have nothing to do with any defect in the device. That's right, they find that it is necessary to ask questions like: “Is it plugged in?” “Is the circuit-breaker tripped?” “Have you put in fresh batteries?” A great many service calls begin with an irate consumer and end with that same person sheepishly saying, “Sorry, I should have checked that first.” It doesn't matter how well an appliance is designed or constructed. If it's not connected to a power source, it's just a doorstep. So, too, with our spiritual lives. If you are not connected to the power source of the Holy Spirit your faith is worthless, it's just a doorstep. [NOTE 7]

So often, we are content to hold worship services for ourselves and pitch our Bible studies and discussion groups to people who are already in the church. But the book of Acts challenges us to be a Universal Charger, connecting us with people who are unlike ourselves.

The Holy Spirit remains a creative force in the world, one that is continuing to form the Christian community. The flame of God's presence is always with us, working powerfully in our lives. And the Spirit pushes us to reach outward to every race and nationality, sharing divine energy with others.

That's a Hi-Charge Holy Spirit, one that fills us — and others — with the power of God.

—Henry Brinton and Carl Wilton contributed to this material. Wall, Robert W. "The Book of Acts." *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2002), 57. Wilson, Mark. "Why Hyundai created a universal charger for cars." *Fast Company*, September 30, 2020, www.fastcompany.com.

**Sermon Notes for "Universal Charger" based on Acts 2: 1-21**  
**Given in Doster on Pentecost May 28, 2023**

- I. All of the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability making it possible for them to communicate with devout Jews from every tongue and nation.
- II. This same Spirit is available to us today. Our challenge is to receive what the Spirit wants to offer us and then to share that Divine energy with others.
- III. The Holy spirit is not a "personal" gift from God that each of us privatizes. The Spirit appeared to a group, and is the distinguishing mark of a "**people**" belonging to God. On Pentecost a "community" of faith is created.
- IV. Just like in the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one yet many, so it is with the Holy Spirit as the Holy Spirit fills us individually so we can create **community**.
- V. Just as the burning bush told Moses that God was present, so the tongues of fire appearing above the heads of the disciples told everyone that God was present. The promise of Pentecost is that God is with us always.
- VI. The apostle Peter quickly discovered that the give of the Spirit was given so that he could share God's deeds of power with others. The Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh. "Everyone who calls on the Lord shall be saved" (verse 21)
- VII. The book of Acts challenges us to be a Universal Charger that connects with people and shares the charge. "You will be my witnesses." So, what are you going to do about it? Write down three names that God brings to your mind to start praying for, blessing, and sharing with.
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. \_\_\_\_\_