



Collegiate Quarterly

## Teacher's Guide

# The Experience of Unity in the Early Church

## Surveying the Source

Acts 1:12–14; 2:5–13; 2:42–47; 5:1–11

## Plotting the Course

### The students will:

► Discuss the biblical definition of unity, building on concepts studied in previous lessons.

► Articulate the significance of the Holy Spirit in producing unity in God's church.

► Have a desire to unite with fellow believers in prayer for the Holy Spirit and the church, in God's Word, in fellowship, and in acts of generosity.

## Preparing to Lead

Unity in the early church was the result of human cooperation and divine power. After Jesus' ascension, the disciples gathered in an upper room, praying and waiting for the Holy Spirit. When Pentecost came, "The sword of the Spirit, newly edged with power and bathed in the lightnings of heaven, cut its way through un-

belief. Thousands were converted in a day" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 38).

Though united in prayer for the Holy Spirit, when the Holy Spirit came, He brought even greater unity and clarity of mission and purpose. Even as the Spirit gave them the gift of diverse tongues, He made them "of one accord" (Acts 2:26).

## Materials

Bibles, Reproducible Activity, whiteboard/chalkboard and marker/chalk, maps, paper, pens

## Getting Started

**A.** Print large maps of Europe after it had been conquered by Alexander the Great, under the rule of Napoleon, and as defined by various countries' membership in the European Union (EU).

*Say:* "Identify the historical periods represented by each map. These are examples class of human attempts at unity." Invite the students to brainstorm other historical moments in which different peoples, communities, cultures, or nations have come together in "unity." Write this list on the board. *Ask:* "How do you think that unity has been defined in each of these situations?" *Say:* "Unity comes as a result of shared conviction or agreement. The lesson this week is about unity in the Early Church."

**B.** Ask students to reflect upon and share moments when they have felt that they have experienced unity—good or bad—with friends, family, co-workers, or even strangers. Prompt them to share what they believe led to that unity. Then lead the class into a discussion about what those experiences may have had in common with each other.

Then introduce this week's topic about Pentecost and unity in the early church, asking students to think about what it would have been like to be a part of this historic and Spirit-filled experience as they study the lesson together.

## Delving Into the Word

**A. Read:** Acts 1:12–14; 2:5–13; 2:42–47. Ask the class to describe life in the Early Church. Students’ responses may include prayer, fellowship, evangelism, and acts of generosity.

Split into groups of three and have them use the Reproducible Activity to discuss how the experience of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost changed the life of the Early Church. Focus on comparing Acts 1 with Acts 2 and 5:1–11. **Ask:** “How did the Holy Spirit change the experience of these believers and their mission?” Encourage students toward an evidence-based discussion, having them support their comments with specific Bible verses. Share the discussion results as a class.

Now ask students to read Acts 5:1–16. **Ask:** “What additional functions does the Holy Spirit play in the church, according to this story? Why does the Holy Spirit care about personal integrity so much?”

**B.** Ask students to brainstorm what they think are the characteristics of a united church. **Read:** Acts 1:12–14; 2:5–13, 42–47; 5:1–11. Ask students to paraphrase each passage into their own words.

Split the class into groups of three, assigning each one passage. Distribute the Reproducible Activity and have each group make a list of the characteristics of the early church in their passage. Guide them to support each characteristic with a Bible verse, encouraging them toward an evidence-based discussion.

Give each group time to share their list with the others as you write their responses on the board. Ask students to reflect on how the church changed after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost. The church seemed unified in Acts 1; what changed in Acts 2 and beyond? Once again, encourage students to support their responses with Scripture.

## Discussing the Ideas

1. Who or what are we unified in as members of God’s church (Eph. 1:3–14)? How does your response to this question impact how we resolve conflict in the church?

2. What are some of the definitions of and reasons for unity that popular culture and society offer, in comparison to the biblical concept? How are they different?

3. When, in Adventist history, have God’s people have come together in uni-

ty? What do these times have in common with one another? What can we learn?

4. What is the difference between unity and uniformity? How do we retain our God-given individuality while coming together as one?

5. How can young adults extend generosity amongst church members?

6. What individual accountability do we have to unity in the church (cf. Acts 5)?

## Closing the Activity

**Say:** “Think about difficult situations you are currently facing that stem from disunity with others, or simply the lack of their own unity with God’s will. The Holy Spirit wants to offer us the experience of unity with each other and with Christ just as He did at Pentecost.” **Read:** “The Holy Spirit did for them that which they

could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime” (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 39, 40).

Divide the students into pairs and pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in their own lives, for their local church, conference, union, division, and world church. Close by offering a final prayer.

**Michel Lee, Loma Linda, California, USA**

Copyright 2018  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®

Write the group discussion question that your teacher shared below:

---

---

---

---

Write the passage that you should study to respond to this question: \_\_\_\_\_

Now write your responses to that question in the left column. Write the word, phrase, or verse number that supports your response in the right column:

<b>Response</b>	<b>Scriptural Evidence</b>