

Religions in America: Pentecostals

Who are the Pentecostals?

Where most of them live: Pentecostals live all over the U.S., in all 50 states. They are strongest in the Midwest, South, and West coast.

How many people are Pentecostal in the U.S.? Around 7,000,000 or more.

How long has the Pentecostal church been here? Pentecostal churches began forming in the U.S. around 1900. Before that, very few churches were Pentecostal.

Pentecostals are well known for: speaking in tongues (different languages), talking a lot about gifts of the Holy Spirit, revivals, mission work, and being “Bible thumpers.”

Names of Pentecostal groups: Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ, Full Gospel churches, Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.), Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

Where is their teaching from?

Pentecostals very strongly believe in the Bible. They say the Bible is God’s true word and has no errors. But Pentecostal churches also believe the Holy Spirit can speak to people. Sometimes members will think God is telling them new things. Officially, the churches will say their teachings are from the Bible. But members will sometimes depend on the Bible and their thoughts or experiences.

We have looked up these verses many times now (2 Peter 1:19-20, 2 Timothy 3:15-17). We know God’s word shows us the only truth about salvation. Read Proverbs 30:5-6. What does the Bible say about other ideas? Can we learn new things and add them to the Bible?

What Do We Need?

Pentecostals say we need 3 things.

1. We must repent. Pentecostals believe we have free will. They think we can choose God or the devil. Read Ephesians 2:4-7. Without Jesus, where are we, how good are we? Who did ALL the work to bring us to God?

2. We must become holy. That means we stop sinning. Pentecostals say this is a necessary part of Christian life. You must be holy and perfect. The apostle Paul in the Bible was a very strong Christian and wrote many books in the Bible. Did he live a holy and perfect life? Read what he said in Romans 7:19-20.

3. We need baptism with the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal churches talk about two different baptisms. They say water baptism is only a symbol that shows you repent of your sins and want to follow Jesus. They say after you are baptized in water, then the Holy Spirit can baptize you. Some churches say it happens quickly, some say you have to work and pray for it. But all the Pentecostal churches say you should want both water and Spirit baptism. Read Acts 2:38. Peter connected the Holy Spirit coming with what?

The Four Square Gospel

Lutherans say the gospel (good news) is this: Jesus Christ died to forgive your sins so you can have a new living relationship with God. Pentecostals say the gospel is really 4 parts. Lutherans say most important is that Christ is our Savior from sin. Pentecostals say every believer should expect all 4 of these blessings.

1. Christ the Savior. This means that Jesus is our Savior who died to forgive our sins.
2. Christ the Sanctifier. To “sanctify” means to “make holy.” Pentecostals say Jesus makes us holy when He gives us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will help us live holy, perfect lives. How do we know when we have the Holy Spirit? Pentecostals say you will speak in tongues, different languages. That is the one certain way to know.
3. Christ the Healer. Jesus will heal you from all your sicknesses. They say that if you are sick, you must have enough faith that God will heal you. Then you will get better. (What does that mean about deafness?) Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Will God always heal our sicknesses? Why might God allow a sickness to continue?
4. Christ the Coming King. Most Pentecostals believe that Jesus will come and rule on earth for 1,000 years. During the 1,000 years, Christ and the Holy Spirit will rule clearly and with all power. Read John 18:36. Where did Jesus say His kingdom is?

Speaking in Tongues

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. Pentecostals say these verses describe the different gifts of the Holy Spirit.

How long do these gifts continue? Lutherans say God gave these gifts mainly for the early church. Read 1 Corinthians 13:8-10,13. Will speaking in tongues and prophesying continue forever? What three things will continue forever?

Paul says speaking in normal language can be better than speaking in another language. Why is normal language better? Read 1 Corinthians 14:19.

What Do Lutherans Say?

The Pentecostal churches are very eager to study their Bibles and learn God’s word. That is good. The simple message of the Bible is that Jesus died on the cross to forgive our sins. Jesus is our life. The Pentecostals make the message more complicated. They say you must receive a special gift of the Holy Spirit. Some Pentecostals say you must speak in tongues. They say you must stop sinning. Jesus did not say all those things. He simply said, “I am the resurrection and the life. A person who believes in Me will never die.” We need to help the Pentecostal churches go back to God’s pure and simple good news: Jesus died and rose again to save us.