

"BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE
POWER WHEN THE HOLY
SPIRIT HAS COME UPON
YOU; AND YOU SHALL BE
MY WITNESSES BOTH IN
JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL
JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND
EVEN TO THE REMOTEST
PART OF THE EARTH."

A C T S 1 : 8

THE POWER

OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

DATE
October 3 & 4

WEEK
1 of 5

OVERVIEW
Acts 1

KEY VERSE
Acts 1:8

SETTING THE STAGE

Over the last seven weeks, we have studied Christ in His own words, looking at His *I AM* statements in the book of John. Though the words of Jesus are primarily captured in the gospels, the book of Acts contains the last words spoken by Jesus on this earth to His disciples. Jesus ministered on earth for approximately three and a half years, which is chronicled in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Throughout the miles traveled, time shared, miracles performed, and words spoken, Jesus was preparing these men for ministry. During those years, He invested in the lives of twelve disciples, one of whom denied knowing Him and another who betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver and eventually hung himself. Jesus knew that after His resurrection, He would be ascending into Heaven in a mere 40 days, and there would be a significant transition for the eleven remaining disciples.

Naturally, the disciples would be curious and concerned, not knowing what would happen next. There would be anticipation perhaps mixed with anxiety of the unknown. However, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus promised to send a Helper.

JOHN 14:16-17, 25-26 says, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you ...²⁵ All this I have spoken while still with you.²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” Continued on page 8 >

LESSON OUTLINE

1. Who the Holy Spirit Is
2. The Holy Spirit's Power In Us
3. The Holy Spirit's Purpose Through Us

THINGS TO KNOW

- The arc of Scripture can be communicated in three words: “God with us.”
- According to Jesus, it is to our advantage if He leaves, and the Holy Spirit comes.
- The Holy Spirit's work is to glorify Jesus Christ.

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Setting the Stage, continued >

The disciples knew how different their lives were with Jesus, but they had no idea how their lives and ministry would change when the promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled. In today's lesson, we will study not only the **power** of the Holy Spirit but the **person** of the Holy Spirit, the promised Helper.

Introduction

In a culture of comfort and contentment, the word “transition” is not usually received as good news. Transitions are especially hard when they just happen to you—with or without your permission, readiness, or preparedness—and you are left scrambling. When you think of transition, perhaps what comes to mind is that all-too-familiar, underlying ache of unsettledness; or the daunting memory of moving away from all your friends and family. Or maybe it is suddenly getting laid off from a job you enjoy, or someone whom you love leaves without any notice. In the hurt and confusion, you are left thinking, “Now what?”

As Acts begins, the disciples find themselves in a state of transition they did not ask for, and at a time they least expected. The disciples are fellowshiping with their resurrected Lord, finally feeling like life was right. They were likely thinking, “We are going to usher in Jesus' Kingdom, side-by-side with Jesus, and we will change the world!” Except, in the moment of their greatest excitement, Jesus leaves, unannounced, largely unexpected, and ascends into Heaven. And as the disciples look up into the sky, bewildered, deflated, and confused, they ask themselves that same question: “Now what?”

The resurrected Jesus does not abandon His disciples; rather, He “passes the baton” to Another who will empower them and set the church into motion: The Holy Spirit.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus would leave? Why could Jesus not have stayed with us? He is Immanuel, God with us, after all, right? Would it not be better for the world today and the church today if Jesus had never left and stayed instead? This tension is precisely where the book of Acts begins and unfolds. As we will see, the resurrected Jesus does not abandon His disciples; rather, He “passes the baton” to Another who will empower them and set the church into motion: The Holy Spirit.

Luke, who wrote this book, tells us this is a continued story that He began with the Gospel of Luke. The book of Acts is the story of power, beginning with the Holy Spirit. We will look at who the Holy Spirit is, His power in us, and His purpose through us.

ACTS 1:1-8 *The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when He was taken up to Heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. ³ To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. ⁴ Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*



⁶ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

1. WHO THE HOLY SPIRIT IS

According to Jesus, He ascends into Heaven because it is advantageous for the disciples. Jesus aimed to prepare the disciples for this transition well before the time He ascended. In John 16:7, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.” Jesus is telling us that it is better for the Spirit to be with us than for Him to be beside us.¹ Think about that. Do we live like that is true? Are we taking Jesus at His Word?

While the Holy Spirit is mentioned numerous times throughout Scripture, the book of Acts features the Holy Spirit and His role, perhaps more than any other book in the Bible, as an active, present part of the church and the Christian life. The Holy Spirit is mentioned 59 different times, more than twice a chapter.² In fact, if you have an older Bible, the book of Acts might be entitled, “The Acts of the Apostles.” Some scholars have pushed back against this title because they think the book would be more appropriately called the “Acts of the Holy Spirit” instead. All through the book, the Holy Spirit guides, indwells and empowers the apostles. The apostles could hardly keep up with all the Holy Spirit was accomplishing.

Whether we have grown up in church or are relatively new believers, we might think that the Holy Spirit seems like the most misunderstood member of the Trinity. Perhaps it is because we do not have a defined mental category for the Holy Spirit like we do for God the “Father” or God the “Son.” The question is, how are we to view God the “Holy Spirit?”

When Jesus said it would be to our **advantage** for Him to leave and for the Holy Spirit to come, He did not mean that He would be giving less of Himself to us necessarily, but perhaps more, **just in a different way**. The Holy Spirit is described in the Old Testament as the Hebrew word, “*Ruakh*,” which refers to God’s personal presence; the Spirit is a person and not merely a force.³ In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is described with Greek Words, “*Hagios Pneuma*.” *Hagios* means “holy, separated.” *Pneuma* means “spirit, wind, breath.”⁴ In Scripture, the Holy Spirit is always bringing life, light, and order where there is death, darkness, and disorder.

In Genesis 1, for example, He brings light and order where there existed darkness and disorder. Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit comes to empower people to bring forth life, light, and order into the dark and broken areas of the world. Furthermore, at Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit came upon Him and empowered Him to accomplish His ministry. And now the Holy Spirit applies Jesus’ work of salvation and reconciliation to us, indwelling us to bring light and order into the darkness of our world.

When Jesus said it would be to our **advantage** for Him to leave and for the Holy Spirit to come, He did not mean that He would be giving less of Himself to us necessarily, but perhaps more, **just in a different way**.

¹ JD Greear, *Jesus Continued...: Why The Spirit Inside You Is Better Than Jesus Beside You*. (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2014).

² Ibid p. 12.

³ The Bible Project. “Holy Spirit.” <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/holy-spirit/>

⁴ biblestudytools.com/lexicon

The purpose and power of the Holy Spirit ironically are not about bringing attention to Himself. Essentially, the Holy Spirit comes to bear witness about **Jesus**. This is an important distinction as we observe who the Holy Spirit is and how He works. The Holy Spirit does not come on the scene and exalt Himself; rather, His express purpose is to glorify the Son. Jesus communicated this on the night before His crucifixion as seen in these verses (*emphasis added*):

- **JOHN 15:26:** “When the Advocate comes ... He will testify about **ME**” (NIV)
- **JOHN 16:14:** “He will glorify **ME** because it is from **ME** that He will receive what He will make known to you.” (NIV)
- **JOHN 14:26:** “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in **MY** name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything **I** have said to you.” (NIV)

The purpose and power of the Holy Spirit ironically are not about bringing attention to Himself. Essentially, the Holy Spirit comes to bear witness about Jesus.

I have heard theologians call the Holy Spirit the ‘shy member’ of the Trinity.⁵ This does not mean timid or embarrassed. Rather, He is not seeking attention; in fact, He is trying to give it away. Theologian J.I. Packer calls the work of the Spirit the ‘floodlight ministry’ where He is always shining the light on Jesus, not upon Himself.⁶

Let me give a quick, practical analogy: At our church, we have big floodlights that cast light upon our beautiful buildings and trees. So, whenever people drive by our church, what do they say? Do they say, “Wow... those are amazing floodlights! Think about how powerful they are...”? Of course, not. Naturally, they would say, “Wow, what a beautiful campus,” which can be seen easily and clearly because of the floodlights.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit’s nature and actions as a member of the Trinity is to glorify and testify unto Jesus Christ. He is always pushing us to look to Jesus; to think about Jesus; to live for Jesus, and to make us ‘WOW’ at the true gospel and worship. Throughout the book of Acts, we will see the power of the Holy Spirit, but always the attention is drawn to the saving and life-changing power of Jesus.

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is a part of the Trinity whose ‘umbrella’ role is to glorify Jesus in a variety of ways in our lives, all the while helping us see and know God better through Jesus Christ.

Now, the Holy Spirit works in many ways: He convicts us of sin (John 16:8); He leads us and guides us (John 16:13); He teaches us (John 14:26); He equips us with spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4); He helps us pray (Romans 8:26-27). These are specific things, but they all fall under the umbrella of the Holy Spirit’s ultimate purpose, which is to direct our attention to who Jesus is and what He has done for us. And so, the Holy Spirit helps us in our own lives, increasingly make Jesus LORD in all those various ways, in our money, time, talents, relationships, etc. in our own lives and showing that to other people. This is what being a witness means.

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is a part of the Trinity whose ‘umbrella’ role is to glorify Jesus in a variety of ways **in our lives**, all the while helping us see and know God better through Jesus Christ.

- As our **Comforter**: He wants to reassure us of God’s love for us in Jesus through any circumstance we are walking.
- As our **Counselor**: He wants to remind us of the teachings and lessons of God’s Word.
- As our **Conscience**: He wants to convict us and show us why following Jesus is better than the sin we so often choose. He wants to change our spiritual appetites from within.

⁵ F. Dale Bruner and William Hordern, *The Holy Spirit: Shy Member of the Trinity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983).

⁶ J.I. Packer, *Keeping in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in our Walk with God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), p. 57.

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER IN US

ACTS 1:4-5 *Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

The disciples were trying to figure out when these things would happen with the Holy Spirit. Jesus had mentioned John's baptism with water and then the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They had already experienced the joy of the resurrection of Jesus, and they could not imagine what else might happen as it pertained to the Holy Spirit.

There is much confusion today about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Many Christians think it is experienced after their salvation. The Bible teaches we are baptized by the Holy Spirit when we believe in Christ. If someone asks you if you have received the baptism, and you are a Christian, then the answer is yes. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a universal work of God, a non-repeating work of God, and a unifying work of God. (Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13).⁷

The word translated baptism means to immerse, dip, and submerge.⁸ They would be baptized with the Holy Spirit from within. They were not as concerned about the baptism in the Holy Spirit as they were about the timing of it all. Jesus said it would happen *not many days from now*.

They immediately thought this would be the time of the establishment of the new Kingdom with the resurrected Lord. This was not the case. In response to their misunderstanding, Jesus simply said it was not for them to know the time of such an event. Instead, He wanted them to know something more pertinent to their daily lives.

ACTS 1:7-8 *He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸ but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

Jesus uses a conjunction that shifts the attention from knowing a time frame to being empowered from within. Verse 8 is a crucial verse not only in the context of the book of Acts but for all believers throughout history. To begin with, it explains that the power of the church comes from the Holy Spirit and not from man.⁹ These words of Jesus are His last to the disciples before He ascended to Heaven.

The last words of Jesus were words of promise. There was no doubt in the words, heart, or mind of Jesus when He told them with boldness and confidence, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."* Jesus wanted them to understand that they would not be alone nor without power.

Often when we see the word power, we immediately think 'strength.' In fact, the Greek word used is *"dunamis"* which is where we get the root word for dynamite. However, the full meaning of the word is "strength, power, ability."¹⁰ This is not a picture of rocket fuel that just explodes without warning or purpose. Jesus is very clear that this power has a specific purpose. Jesus is also clear that this is something they will receive. It is a gift for all who believe.

⁷ *The Jeremiah Study Bible*, Worthy Publishing; 2013, p. 1490.

⁸ www.biblestudytools.com/lexicon

⁹ Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe Bible Commentary*, David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO, 2007, p. 323.

¹⁰ www.biblestudytools.com/lexicon

We like to think we can handle anything ourselves. We tend to take pride in being able to accomplish something on our own. There is nothing wrong on a practical level with being able to do a job or perform a task based on your skillset or knowledge. However, Jesus did not want us to live this life alone limited by our skills, knowledge, and ability. Jesus loves us so much He wants us to have the unlimited resources of Heaven even after He left this earth. The power of the Holy Spirit within us gives us not just the strength and power which we all want to embrace, but also the ability to accomplish what Jesus has called us to do and be. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity.¹¹

The Holy Spirit wants to make the gospel of God's love for us more transparent and more prominent in our lives. However, He does not want us to experience the gospel personally as an end unto itself. There is a purpose for this beyond ourselves; namely, He works **in** us to accomplish something **through** us.

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S PURPOSE THROUGH US

ACTS 1:8 *“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*

If you look at the end of verse 8, you will see the purpose of the Holy Spirit's work of indwelling and stirring. This power in us is to flow through us, compelling us to a lifestyle of mission in both word and deed. After all, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus to complete His ministry and bring salvation on earth; to be a vessel of redemption. Likewise, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples to be vessels of redemption on earth. That is what “Christian” means – “little Christ.”¹²

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to empower us to be witnesses of Jesus. For over three years, these disciples had been following Jesus, learning from Jesus, depending on Jesus mile after mile, city after city, day after day. Jesus was about to ascend to Heaven and wanted them to know without a doubt they would have power and purpose through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus wanted them to be His witnesses, to testify to all Jesus had done in their lives, and all Jesus could do in the lives of others. Ultimately the gift of the Holy Spirit is to draw people's attention to Christ. We do that by telling our story of how Jesus has changed our lives.

These disciples were no different. They had fears and doubts as recorded in the gospels. They had more eagerness at times than discernment, as recorded in the gospels. Yet these were the ones Jesus had invested His life in and to whom He was leaving His ministry. In a few days, they would receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) as Jesus was promising in these words.

The empowering was to begin in Jerusalem. Ironically, it was the city of the crucifixion. This was the city where they put Jesus, the Son of God to death on a cross and buried Him in the tomb. Jesus wanted their story of testimony to begin right where they were present in their daily lives. But this was also the city of the resurrection.

Ultimately the gift of the Holy Spirit is to draw people's attention to Christ. We do that by telling our story of how Jesus has changed our lives.

¹¹ Warren Wiersbe, Wiersbe Bible Commentary, David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO, 2007, p. 323.

¹² Jesus.Net. *Do you know where the word 'Christian' comes from?*
<https://jesus.net/miracle/do-you-know-where-the-word-christian-comes-from/>

The power promised was not to enable the apostles to live godly lives, though the Holy Spirit does enable believers to do that. What is promised to the apostles is the power to fulfill their mission, that is, to speak, and bear oral testimony to others.¹³ This was to begin in Jerusalem and expand like concentric circles; each location had unique barriers, whether religious or culture. Regardless of the location, belief system, culture, or challenge, they would not be alone, nor are we. The Holy Spirit indwells and empowers us to be a witness.

We can do this in three broad categories: in our lifestyle, in our words, and in our gifts.

A. In Our Lifestyles

When the Holy Spirit indwells, empowers, and stirs us to see and to value Jesus as Lord, we stop trying to be the Lord over certain domains in our life. Instead, His lordship begins to extend to every domain, every category, every area in our hearts and lives.

The Great Commission is not something we do when we take a trip overseas with our church. It is a trajectory of life, of saying “Jesus is Lord” over every domain in our hearts. Before we seek the “unreached people groups” thousands of miles away, the Holy Spirit is seeking to reach the “unreached categories” in our hearts that have not experienced the lordship of Jesus.

B. With Our Mouth

The Holy Spirit’s power also works with purpose through our words. As Scripture says, “*for out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks*” (Luke 6:45, ESV). As such, out of the overflow of the Holy Spirit’s work in our hearts, our mouths will speak about Jesus’ good, saving lordship. Throughout the book of Acts, we see the apostles speaking time and time again the truth of the gospel regardless of the risk/reward factor. They were empowered to fulfill this purpose.

C. In Our Gifts

Lastly, the Holy Spirit indwells, empowers, and stirs us to leverage our gifts and resources for the service of the Kingdom of God—the extensive dominion of Jesus’ lordship on earth, the church. Not only does God entrust us with “earthly” gifts such as resources and abilities, the Holy Spirit also equips us with “spiritual” gifts so that we can each serve the mission and Kingdom of God. Whether your gift is leadership, service, giving, mercy, encouragement, teaching, or wisdom—we all have a place in the Kingdom. As the Apostle Paul writes later to the church of Corinth, “*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.*” (1 Corinthians 12:4, ESV).

Not only does God entrust us with “earthly” gifts such as resources and abilities, the Holy Spirit also equips us with “spiritual” gifts so that we can each serve the mission and Kingdom of God.

Jesus wanted His disciples then and now to be witnesses. That is our challenge even today in the world in which we live. We begin with our Jerusalem as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to share our story with our sphere of influence.

¹³ www.soniclight.com/acts

HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

The overarching theme of Scripture ultimately tells a story of God with us. From the beginning of the Bible in Genesis to the end in Revelation, God relentlessly pursues His people. Each step of the way, God wanted His people to know Him personally and live a life that reflected the life-changing relationship.

God so desperately wanted to be with us that He came to earth in the form of flesh and blood. Jesus was fully human and fully divine, born as a baby in Bethlehem, then ascending to Heaven at the age of 33. It was at this juncture of history recorded in Acts 1 that God, through Jesus, told humanity that He would be with us continually through the Holy Spirit.

The power of the Holy Spirit is in the presence of the Holy Spirit, both in our individual lives and collectively in the church. Power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary; that power also involves courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability, and authority.¹⁴ The disciples would need all these gifts to fulfill their mission, as will we.

God's plan has always been to be with us wherever we are in whatever time span. The Holy Spirit fulfills God's plan as He unveils our purpose to be His witnesses beginning right where we are.

¹⁴ Life Application Bible Commentary: Acts; Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, IL; 1999, p. 9.