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Acts 1:1-5

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Amen. Open your Bibles to the book of Acts. It’s exciting. Did y’all get your Scripture journals on the way in? We’re out? Oh, wow. We’ll get more. How many of you didn’t get one? We’ll get more.

So, open your Bibles and we’re going to jump right in. I’m going to read the first eleven verses. We probably won’t get that far. Tonight is a little unique. We are starting a new book and we are also celebrating. The number keeps growing. When we had our meeting there were four people getting baptized and we are now up to five. We will see how the sermon goes and see what happens. At the end of the service we will end the sermon, and we will sing a couple more songs, and then Zach will come up and give the benediction and some announcements. We will go from there. We will scoop up our kids and go down to the creek. If you don’t know where the creek is just follow all the humans walking that way and we will have a baptism. It’s going to be awesome.

So, Acts 1:1,

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

6So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Pray with me, again.

Lord Jesus, I pray that right now your Spirit would meet with us, Holy Spirit, that you would come and meet with us and that you would empower us to receive the truth of your Word. For some in this room, that you would empower them by your kindness and that you would lead them to repentance and faith and tonight that their eyes would be opened to the truth of the Gospel and you would quicken them to be able to repent, and to believe, and to trust in you, and to follow you. God, I pray for us as your church, that your truth would empower us to truly listen with humble, meek hearts so we would be able to receive the Word and that it would implant deep into our souls and that it would change us as individuals and change us as a church; that you would grow us, and sanctify us, and make us more like you. God, I pray that you would use me for your glory. In Christ’s name, Amen.

So, I like a good sequel. There is nothing worse than a bad sequel, right? You see a movie and it’s great; there’s a good cliffhanger and then the sequel finally comes out. There’s been all this anticipation and then you show up and it’s just off. Right? The acting is not the same, the feel of it’s not the same, and it just doesn’t land. It’s disappointing. There’s all that anticipation and it’s just for naught. But a good sequel—that’s fun, right? For me, in high school one of my favorite movies to watch through was the *Back to the Future[[1]](#footnote-1)* series. My favorite way to watch it was edited on TBS[[2]](#footnote-2). And one of my favorite things about those movies was the transition between movies. The first one ends where he saved the day, his dad went from being a nerd to being super cool and making money, and now he has a sweet truck and he’s out in the driveway appreciating it, and everything is good—but then Doc Brown comes skidding into the driveway with bad news and there’s a new adventure that has to take place. Then, some years pass between those movies but they picked up right where they left off. If you’ve seen the movies, part two picks up right then. In fact, at the beginning of part two they reenact that final scene. They had to reenact it, primarily because they changed Marty’s girlfriend. It was a different human being playing her. They were like, “They’re dumb, but we can’t get this one past them.” But it was good because it connected the two movies together.

That’s exactly what Luke does for us here in Acts. He ends the Gospel of Luke with one of the greatest moments in the history of history. It’s Jesus ascending from Earth, having completed all that He came to do. He ascends into Heaven with the promise that He will come back. So, Luke picks up the sequel in what’s titled *The Acts of the Apostles* and he picks up right there. He’s going to replay that scene but he’s going to give us a little bit more detail, a little different angle on what was happening at the ascension of Jesus.

So, Luke introduces this thought to the same recipient and he says,

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.

“Began to do and to teach.” I said a moment ago that the historic title for this book is *The Acts of the Apostles*, and rightfully so. We see the apostles, primarily the guys who were the disciples of Jesus, minus Judas, and we see them carrying on the mission of Jesus. But some have argued and said that title is really not appropriate because really the focus throughout Acts is the Holy Spirit, and we’re going to see that. We’re going to see that because, depending on your translation, the Holy Spirit is mentioned or referenced something like fifty-four times, give or take a few. And if you combine all four Gospel accounts together, they account for something like thirty-four mentions of the Holy Spirit. We see that this huge transition is happening where the Holy Spirit really begins to be a focus of the Church. But some people have said that might be the best way to do it because, really, the Holy Spirit, as He is seen, as He takes on this role, what we see Him consistently doing is drawing our attention to Jesus. So, the way some people would title Acts, and maybe more appropriately, would be *The Acts of Jesus that He Continued to do by the Holy Spirit through His Apostles*. That’s just harder to fit on a page. But I think that’s really the focus. This is a continuation of what Jesus began to do in the Gospels. Jesus is ascended into Heaven but He’s not done. Now the Atonement is done, right? We know and love that Jesus said from the cross, “It is finished!” Jesus alone on the cross paid for all of our sin; for the sin of all throughout the centuries who would call on His name for salvation, He made perfect and complete atonement. That means that God’s wrath that was toward us and was eternal, Jesus satisfied it so that there is now no more condemnation, no judgment, no punishment, and there is no Hell for those who put their faith and trust in Jesus. The Atonement is complete and He sealed that by rising again, defeating death, and laying death dead in its grave. But Jesus ascends and He had told His disciples that it is better that He goes. He said, “It’s better that I go to Heaven. I am going to go and prepare a place for you that one day you are going to be able to be where I am.” But it’s also better because He’s going to send His Spirit, and through His Spirit indwelling and filling His believers and followers we are now empowered to do the things that Jesus was doing. That’s what we see play out as the Church is born, as the Church grows, and as the Church spreads in a way that is nothing short of a miracle. It’s supernatural.

Turn to Luke 4 real quick. I’ll remind you of this as to what Jesus was doing. Jesus proclaimed it at the beginning of His ministry, right? Jesus goes and is baptized by John and we remember what happens at His baptism—the Father speaks, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” What else happens? We see the Spirit descend bodily in the form of a dove onto Jesus. This is a picture of Jesus, himself, being empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out His ministry. Then, Jesus reads this passage of Scripture to tell us, to inform us, of what His ministry would look like. I’m going to pick up at Luke 4:18. Jesus read,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

 because he has anointed me

 to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives

 and recovering of sight to the blind,

 to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

This is what Jesus was doing. Remember, from our study through Luke, that one of the main focal points of Luke, Jesus summed up when He was talking about His saving of Zacchaeus. He said, “The Son of Man came—the reason why I am here—to seek and to save the lost.” Jesus makes it clear that this proclamation of the Gospel that would go out to sinners—this is why He came. This is what He began to do in the Gospels and this is what we are going to see the Church continue to do as they are empowered by His Spirit.

So, back to Acts.

2until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

These men whom He had chosen that would be witnesses; that’s another word we are going to see a lot throughout the epistle, the letter, of Acts. It’s this idea of witnesses—we are witnessing of the Gospel. So, these men that He had chosen—it’s specific that Jesus our Lord, himself, chose these Apostles. He chose these men who were His disciples and now they are His Apostles, who are sent out with the message. Jesus has hand-selected them.

As we launch into Acts we need to know that there’s a uniqueness to this time period. Some of what is difficult to navigate through with the book of Acts when you just read through it is like, what should I believe and expect to still be happening in my life? Was that only for the Apostles? Was it only for this time period? We are going to navigate that as we walk through these amazing stories. But one of the things we need to know is that, yes, this was a unique time and these were men uniquely chosen by Jesus for a specific task. Therefore, there was a unique empowering by the Holy Spirit that we see on these men’s lives. This was a transitional time.

Often, when I’m having conversations with people who are maybe reading through Acts for the first time as a believer, and they are wondering why they haven’t healed anybody yet, I think about the Exodus generation. Remember those guys who came out of Egypt and they had seen God do all this awesome stuff? They had seen the Red Sea part. They walked through on dry ground. Now, does that mean that because God did that for them that every time a good Hebrew came up to a body of water that was impeding his journey that he should expect a strong east wind to part it? No, he shouldn’t. Every time a good Jew was thirsty, and he was on a hike, he shouldn’t have expected to be able to just tap a rock and get a water fountain. Those were miracles that happened in their history for a purpose; to show that God was not doing something normal, He was doing something supernatural with a theological point. It was something He was doing in the history of redemption. I think that a lot of times with the book of Acts that we need to be able to see it through that lens, that this was a transitional time, a unique time, and what these men were gifted to do was to proclaim the Gospel in what God was doing by the power of the Holy Spirit, and through His Spirit, which was testifying that the words that they were saying were true, and that they were truly His words. This message of the Gospel was truly the message of God.

The writer of Hebrews talks about it this way in Hebrews 2. He’s talking about the message of Jesus and he says,

Therefore we must pay much closer attention…

Because Jesus is so much better…

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. 2 For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable…

He’s talking about the Old Testament.

2 For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord…

Jesus declared this great salvation.

It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,…

Those who heard were the Apostles. So, the writer of Hebrews is putting himself in a category with this second generation of believers, and he’s saying that the Lord came and preached it first and then it was attested to us by His Apostles—those who heard Him.

While…

At the same time…

While God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

That’s huge. So we are going to see these guys doing amazing things. We are going to see this outpouring of the Holy Spirit in miraculous ways. What the Scriptures will tell us is that yes, this was not normal, this was a miracle. God is getting the world’s attention. So does that mean that we have to join a camp that hard and fast says that these things that we are going to see in the book of Acts do not, will not, and cannot happen today? No, I’m not joining that camp. Don’t join that camp. We don’t have to. We also don’t have to join the camp that says if you don’t do these things how can you call yourself a believer? How can you believe you have the Holy Spirit if you are not evidencing that by miracles? We don’t have to go to that camp either. What we can do is believe and stand on the authority of Scripture, and recognize what God has done in history, and be wide open to what God would do in us individually, and as a church, and as a community in our town and across the globe, according to His will. Because the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, we are going to see, is sovereign God. The Holy Spirit is Almighty God. He does not take marching orders from any human, right? There is no human being with the power to manipulate God to get from God what he wants. But absolutely, the Holy Spirit is sovereign and powerful and He can demonstrate that power as He chooses according to His will for His own purposes. That’s my camp.

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Luke, here, tells us in the only place in Scripture that it’s mentioned, that there was this forty day period where apparently Jesus was coming and going and hanging out with the disciples. He’s teaching them and discipling them but it’s setting up this ongoing proof, this evidence, that He’s really alive. Just as they knew that Jesus was dead, that He really had laid down His life, that Jesus died, He was physically dead—after forty days with them, in the disciples’ minds there was no question that Jesus was alive again. He had proved it to them for forty days.

Paul, talking about this in 1 Corinthians 15:1-7, says this,

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

 When Paul is writing this, he’s saying, “You can go talk to them. There were over 500 of us.” Jesus proved it to them by sitting with them. They saw the risen Jesus with their eyes. They heard Him teach with their ears. Some, if not all, hugged Him. They got to eat with Him. I would have stood in a line of 500 people to hug Jesus after the resurrection. I wouldn’t have even just done the bro hug; I’d be all in. Absolutely, I’d wait in that line. They touched Him. He was physically alive. Then, one of the proofs to us, one of the evidences that Jesus has raised from the dead, is that these moments for forty days drastically and dramatically changed these men forever. Because these men who ran, these men who hid, these men who denied—under pain of death, under pain of torture, and imprisonment—all of a sudden, after seeing the risen Jesus and being empowered by His Spirit, are now willing to suffer imprisonment, torture, isolation, oppression, and death—and death—for the testimony of nothing other than, “He was dead and I saw Him alive. I saw Him, I heard Him, I ate with Him, I hugged Him—I will not stop telling people about that.” It changed the world.

We are going to see throughout the book of Acts that their testimony and their witness changed the world. When it says that Jesus was commanding them and teaching them, this is what He commanded them. Look back at Luke 24:44,

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

They become His witnesses of these events and we see it. Here, He tells them that they are going to start in Jerusalem and they are going to end at the ends of the Earth, in the most remote places in the world, because this Gospel is going to be proclaimed to every people in all nations. In verse 8, this becomes the theme of the book of Acts, as we see how the Holy Spirit is empowering the Apostles in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. What happens is that they do this. They do it in thirty years. During the time period that the book of Acts is written, we see them. This is awesome—I had never seen this before in my readings through and the times I have taken a stab at studying Acts—this is what happens. Jesus had commanded them, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in all Samaria, to the ends of the Earth.” We see that start to happen. From chapters 1 through 7, we see them witness in Jerusalem. Then, as persecution arises, we see from chapter 8 to 11, the disciples are pushed out into Judea and Samaria, and do you know what they do? They witness of Jesus; and God, by the Holy Spirit, is saving souls. Then, through the rest of the book we see that the Gospel goes all the way to Rome. That’s where Acts concludes. It doesn’t really conclude, it’s open-ended, but it’s in Rome. In their minds, at their time, their understanding of the ‘end of the Earth’ is in Rome. Paul takes the Gospel to Rome and there are believers in Rome, because Jesus doesn’t fail. This is the continuation of all that Jesus did and said. Jesus doesn’t fail and the Gospel goes forth in power and in victory.

I love the way Acts ends. How many of you have ever heard of Acts 29 Ministries? How many of y’all knew that was because there were only twenty-eight chapters in Acts? I admit that I didn’t know it. I was listening to somebody preach about it the other day and they mentioned it and said that was because we are still carrying on the mission. My mind was blown—boom—what a great idea. I wish I’d had it.

It was ongoing. In their generation they were obedient. But for every generation of believers we have this same command. Take the Gospel to your people, to your town, to your county, to your nation, and to the ends of the Earth. Every generation of believers has this same command to be obedient to and every generation of believers has the empowering Holy Spirit within us.

Verse 3,

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is mentioned six times in the book of Acts. We will see it. But it also bookends Acts. It’s mentioned here and it’s mentioned again at the end, in chapter 28. Paul is under house arrest and it says this in verse 30, speaking of Paul,

He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

The message, the good news of the kingdom of God, becomes bookends for Acts. This is what we’re about. We’re about proclaiming the kingdom of God. That’s what Jesus was teaching them about. What’s the message of the kingdom of God? Jesus. That Jesus came to proclaim liberty to captives. That Jesus came to give sight to the blind. Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. God became one of us, clothed himself with humanity, so that He could die the death that we deserved to die, and give us His victory, His resurrection, His relationship with the Father, so that repentance could be preached in His name to all nations, so that forgiveness of sins could be given to us. It’s the kingdom of God and the kingdom of God started spreading in Jerusalem and, listen, it has not stopped. It has not stopped.

I said a minute ago that one of the proofs of the resurrection is the impact it had on those men and women who were willing to die for the Gospel. We have their stories in Scripture and in the history of the Church. But that’s not the only proof to us, is it? You can tell me what you want about history. That’s great. These evidences that we have of the resurrection are awesome and we should know them and stand on them. But that is not why I believe in Jesus. That is not, ultimately, why I believe that Jesus is not in a tomb somewhere. That’s not why I don’t believe that His body was stolen and buried somewhere else and that these stories are made up. Right? For me, the proof of the resurrection is that the Spirit of God opened my eyes to the Gospel, to the kingdom of God. For you, it may have been when you were four or when you were eighteen or sixty, but the Spirit of God—because Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven, and He now sends His Spirit—the Spirit of God opened my eyes. I saw all my sinfulness. I saw the holiness of God. In the same way that they saw Jesus? No, but I would argue it was just as real. I saw my need for salvation and I saw, and trusted, and believed in a risen Savior who had died in my place, and it radically, drastically, forever changed who I am. That’s our testimony. That’s our proof. This Gospel message that started in Jerusalem has spread here because it is empower by God, and it will continue to spread. It will continue to spread because the true Church will be obedient. We will be the witnesses that Jesus saved us to be.

Some of you know we work at Snowbird. This past week I was standing out in front of this building. For those of you who don’t know, we are meeting on the campus of a summer camp. This is our busy time of year. There are middle schoolers and high schoolers all over the place during the week. Friday night, I was standing out in front of the building and I was talking to a youth pastor about how his week was going. It was so encouraging but he said that there were a couple of kids that they had just been praying for, for so long, and they want to see these kids repent and put their faith and trust in Jesus. Before that, earlier, I had wanted to talk to a Red Oak member who works full time at camp, Bridgette. I saw Bridgette talking to a girl and that’s how I ended up in this conversation with this youth pastor; because I didn’t want to disturb her. So, we got into this conversation and we were locked in, then all of a sudden this girl walks up with Bridgette. This girl was bawling and Bridgette said, “She’s got something to tell you,” to the youth pastor. Then, I don’t know where all these kids were a second ago, but instantly all his students gathered around us, and this girl could barely get it out, and she said, “I just gave my life to Christ.” She said, “I just gave my life to Christ” (cheers from the audience). She went from death to life. Why don’t we believe that? Why don’t we believe in the power of the Gospel to save people out of death, out of damnation, out of condemnation, out of their sin? We are going to see it happen over and over again in this book. We can step back and go, “Okay, it doesn’t mean I need to be laying on hands and healing people.” It doesn’t mean that all that is going to happen but what absolutely should be our expectation as we personally and as a church seek to be in step with the Holy Spirit, walk in the Spirit, be empowered by the Spirit; what we should see is our witness go forth with the power of God to save people, to rescue people out of sinful lifestyles, out of lies, out of the darkness, and become new creations. So that, for them, the proof that Jesus is not dead but alive, and ascended, and is sitting enthroned, and one day returning to love the living and the dead, is because for them their eyes were opened, for them their heart was quickened, for them they believe and trust.

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Jesus was referencing back to what John the Baptist had said about Jesus. When people were coming to John the Baptist and they said, “Hey, are you the Christ?” He said, “Oh, no. I’m baptizing you with water for repentance. The One who is coming after me, who is greater than me, I’m not worthy to untie His sandal; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” So, Jesus is referring back to that. What promise? What promise did Jesus make? The promise that they would be clothed from on high.

So, when did Jesus teach them about this? I believe it was primarily, referencing the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John. Let me read you this quote from F. F. Bruce’s commentary[[3]](#footnote-3),

In the course of these resurrection appearances, Jesus instructed the apostles not to leave Jerusalem until the Father fulfilled His promise to them and they were “clothed with power from on high” Luke 24:29. He had already told them, He reminded them, of this promised gift. If we ask when and where he had told them of it, the Fourth Evangelist (John) will give us an answer: it was on the night of His betrayal, in the upper room in Jerusalem, after they had celebrated the Last Supper together, before they left the house to cross the Kidron valley and spend the remaining hours on the slope of Olivet. Certainly we have no account of a previous reference by Jesus to the promised Spirit which fits the present allusion so well as the five well-known passages in John 14-16. And it is noteworthy “that the emphasis of these five passages is precisely that which underlies the conception of the Spirit in Acts 1-15.”

So, what he is saying is that on the night that Jesus was betrayed—you know it from John 14-17—Jesus teaches the disciples. He’s preparing them for His departure and the main theme He talks about is the coming of the Spirit. So, in John 14:16-17, this is worth reading through because this is the promise that the Father made. We’ve all heard strange things about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and being baptized in the Spirit, and what this is going to look like. This is primarily what the Lord teaches us it looks like. So, what are those things? John 14:16-17,

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

The Spirit of truth that will dwell with us and be in us.

John 14:26,

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

The Holy Spirit will teach us and He was going to bring to the disciples’ minds all that Jesus had said. This is why we will see Peter, who we will see coming up in chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit falls and Peter preaches his best sermon ever. No commentaries, no week to prepare, but the Holy Spirit falls and he is ready. Why? Because He brought all that Jesus had taught into Peter’s mind and he preached. That would be awesome.

John 15:26-27,

But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will….

Do you want to know what someone who has been baptized by the Holy Spirit looks like? It doesn’t mean they run around barking and making a scene, being super emotional, and doing crazy stuff. This is what it looks like.

…who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

John 16:7-15,

Nevertheless, 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. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The Holy Spirit is going to bring the truth that Jesus preached to our minds. He will bear witness of Jesus. He will glorify Jesus. He will convict people of sin and righteousness. What does someone who is empowered by the Holy Spirit, baptized with the Holy Spirit—what does that look like? It looks like a faithful witness walking in obedience to clearly proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God and offer salvation to anyone and everyone. That’s what it looks like to walk in the power of the Spirit. We will see time and again that the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is not performing miracles but in being empowered to obey Jesus command….empowered to be witnesses. Being “filled with the Holy Spirit” or “full of the Holy Spirit” is connected to the reality of the presence of Jesus and to a clearly understood proclamation of the Gospel.

So, for application, as we begin this journey through the book of Acts, what is this going to look like for us? What do we need to do? We should pray for the empowering of the Spirit of God on Red Oak to be a faithful witness in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

We should pray that the Lord would bring a true revival….not a scheduled gathering of worshipers as if we could control the Spirit! A true revival, where we, as empowered witnesses, take the Gospel to the people around us and that God in His grace, God in His kindness, by His Spirit, would lead them to repentance and faith. We should pray for that. Wouldn’t that be awesome? Wouldn’t that be awesome?

We are having five baptisms tonight and I am so thankful. I’m glad Shawn is doing them all because I get emotional at baptisms. I always have. I know that’s strange for you to hear, but I think of the picture of what’s happening in that person’s life. We read these stories and we could get caught up in all the miracles and the arguments about what things mean, or we could be blown away and humbled. We could pursue the power of God through His Holy Spirit in our lives, not to do miracles that would draw attention to us but that we would clearly proclaim the Gospel of Jesus and that we would see people’s lives changed. Do we believe that could happen? Do we believe that a real revival could come to Cherokee County and that it could start with this church praying, and believing, and proclaiming? I believe it. I believe it.

Pray with me.

Lord Jesus, God, I love you. I pray that as we sing these last songs that you would now, by your Holy Spirit, draw people to repentance and faith and that you would take somebody from death to life and give them the courage to come talk to us. God, I pray that you would free us to worship you by your Spirit and for your glory and that Christ would be exalted. God, I pray that as we read through this book, as we meditate on this book, as we study it as individuals, as families, and as a church, that your intended purpose would be made clear to us and that your power would be availed to us to be faithful witnesses to clearly proclaim the Gospel. I pray, Lord Jesus, that you would send a real revival, and that we would see the hardest of sinners, those who seem so far gone, and those who name you and claim to be yours but the fruit of their life tells a different story—I pray that we would see their eyes opened to the Gospel. I pray that our church would grow spiritually as you conform us to your image and I pray that we would grow numerically as you add eternal souls to your kingdom and that you would give us the honor and privilege of their fellowship and discipleship. We love you, Lord. In Christ’s name, Amen.

1. The *Back to the Future* franchise is an American science fiction–adventure comedy film series written and directed by Robert Zemeckis, produced by Bob Gale and Neil Canton for Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, and distributed by Universal Pictures. The franchise follows the adventures of a high school student, Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox), and an eccentric scientist, Dr. Emmett L. Brown (Christopher Lloyd), as they use a DeLorean time machine to time travel to different periods in the history of Hill Valley, California. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Back\_to\_the\_Future\_(franchise)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Back_to_the_Future_%28franchise%29); July 21, 2018.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Turner Broadcasting System [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bruce, F.F. *The Book of the Acts (New International Commentary on the New Testament);* Eerdmans, rev. ed. 1988. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)