



SERMON NOTES

ACTS OF THE SPIRIT

Like Us, Near Us, Far From Us

"In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen." (Acts 1:1-2)

"After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 1:3-5)

"Then they gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1:6)

"He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'" (Acts 1:7-8)

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Description for Series

Acts is a bridge for the writings in the New Testament as it joins the ministry of Jesus to the work of the early church. The phrase “began to do and teach” is the key phrase that links the teaching and ministry of Jesus in the gospels to the apostles’ teaching and ministry in the book of Acts. The theme of the book is best summarized in Acts 1:8 and becomes an outline of the rest of the book as the gospel goes forth into the world. The foundation of the ministry is the power and presence of the Holy Spirit who works through the apostles and the new converts to Christianity who proclaim the gospel throughout the world.

Before you begin this study, take time to think about your relationship with Jesus. We are embarking on a journey through the book of Acts where we will see how the power and presence of the Holy Spirit directed and guided the lives of the early disciples. Have you started on a journey of faith by receiving Jesus’ redemptive work for yourself? The Holy Spirit indwells those who have accepted the gift of salvation and then empowers them to experience change and transformation. If you don’t know what it means to receive Jesus and live by the power of the Spirit, reach out to Deb Hinkel at dhinkel@hersheyfree.com.

Prayer Focus

Pray these prayers for the month of September and give the Spirit freedom to work in you and others as you posture yourself before the throne with anticipation and expectation that God will hear and answer you.

Pray for your neighbors, coworkers, teachers, and friends.

Dear Lord, my heart is burdened for my family and friends who don’t know the hope of the gospel. I know how hard life can be, and for many, there seems to be no way out. I pray that you will soften their hearts and give me opportunities to share the good news of Jesus. I pray that you give me wisdom and courage as I seek to make a difference and bring hope in the darkness.

Pray for the churches in our area.

Dear Lord, I pray specifically for Hershey Free Church as we seek to share the gospel with those in our communities who don’t yet know the truth. Help us to faithfully preach the gospel and be a people who love others. Show us how we can care for others. I pray this same prayer for all the local churches. Protect those who lead these churches and give them wisdom and strength.

Pray for the schools in our area, especially the ones in your district!

Heavenly Father, thanks for the hard work of the teachers and administration in educating children. Please let the children, the teachers, and the staff of our school come to understand their need for your grace. May the school be a safe and life-giving place that helps these young people to thrive and reflect your character.

Pray for the local government authorities to have wisdom and courage as they lead.

Gracious God, thank you for establishing authorities to keep peace and order. May our leaders have wisdom and courage as they lead through difficult times. Let there be peace even in the midst of difficult political times.

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 11

The devotional guide will continue the same rhythm that we used for the last devotional guides where we practiced the 3 x 20 pattern. Spend at least 20 minutes, 3 times a week, in God's word. Each of the three days you will be asked to implement the **Read. Reflect. Respond.** pattern to help get more deeply into God's word.

As Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure, he challenges them and encourages them. First, he challenges their assumptions about what God is doing and how he operates. Then, he encourages them with the promise of God's Spirit—the Spirit who would move them into mission to those like us, near us, and far from us.

DAY ONE

This chapter in Acts is a crucial passage in the life of the church. It is in these verses that we read about how the promised Holy Spirit will come. The disciples, including the original 12 apostles, will receive the baptism of the Spirit with fire. Our study this week will focus on the commands given to the first disciples and how these individuals, through the power of the Spirit, would impact the world.

Read Acts 1:1-11. Focus on verses 1-4 for today's study.

- Luke is the author of the book of Acts. (See Luke 1:3 for the connection between the two books.) What was the purpose of writing the book of Luke?
- Who were the recipients of the initial ministry and teachings of Jesus?
- How long did Jesus appear to the disciples after his resurrection?

Reflect on verse 4. Imagine that you are one of the apostles hearing the words Jesus spoke. How do you think you would have responded knowing that he was asking you to wait for the Holy Spirit? How do you respond today when you feel like you're waiting for God to work?

Respond by writing ways that you know Jesus is alive. Verse 3 says that Jesus showed convincing proofs that he was alive. In the same way, what evidence do you see in your life that Jesus is alive?

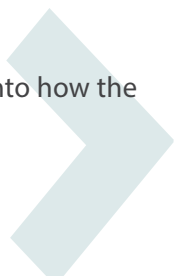
DAY TWO

Read Acts 1:1-11 again. Focus on verses 5-8 for today's study.

- What promise does Jesus make to the disciples? What gift will they receive?
- What do the disciples ask Jesus in verse 6? Why do you think they were asking that question? What does verse 7 tell us about how we should approach the future?
- What is the result of the coming of the Spirit? What does the Spirit give us? How should we respond?

Reflect on what the baptism of the Holy Spirit means to you. Baptism and filling are synonymous terms in scripture when referring to the Holy Spirit. How have you seen evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in your life?

Respond by watching this 4 minute [Bible Project presentation](#) on the Holy Spirit to gain insights into how the Spirit works. Pray for a surrendered heart that leads to a deeper awareness of the Spirit in your life.



DAY THREE

Read Acts 1:1-11 again focusing on verses 9-11.

- What message do the two men sent from heaven share with the disciples?
- What do the disciples do while they are waiting for the Holy Spirit? (verses 12-25)
- Who is chosen to replace Judas as the twelfth apostle?
- What message does Peter share with the waiting disciples? How many were there?

Reflect on how you look at the future. Do you take comfort and encouragement in knowing Jesus is returning?

Respond by having and revealing an attitude of hope because you know that Jesus is coming back and that you will live forever with him and those who believe in him. Choose to interact with others in a way that shows that you believe Jesus is coming again and that there is more to life than our current circumstances. Pray for wisdom and insight for ways to share the gospel through the way you live your life.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What excites you or intimidates you about engaging in this series, Acts of the Spirit?
2. Why were we given the Holy Spirit? What was the purpose?
3. How have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in your life? What does it mean to you to know that the Spirit of God lives in you?
4. What misconceptions do we have about the Kingdom of God? How do those misconceptions, fears, or faulty expectations prevent us from sharing Jesus with others?
5. Why did the angel chide the disciples for standing and looking up at the sky? How do we do the same thing?
6. Pause and reflect for 3-5 minutes on the truth that we have been given the gift of the Spirit.
 - Ask the Spirit to show you the faulty expectations you have about his kingdom.
 - Pray for a surrendered heart to share the gospel through the power of the Spirit.
 - Pray with anticipation that the Spirit will guide you to show love and have conversations with people who need to know Jesus.
7. Pray for one another as you close your time together.