

The Holy Spirit

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120 disciples of Jesus gathered and waited for the Holy Spirit's arrival, how about you?

⁴On 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. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1-NIV)

I got a rough start in life. I spent the first year of my life in a women's shelter in Portland, Oregon. My dad came and went and was only home long enough to get my mom pregnant. I never saw my dad sitting at a dinner table. We moved from Portland to Chicago to Oklahoma City, by the time I was three. A family tragedy split up 5 Squires kids. A broken home. Divorced Parents left the oldest-me in an emotionally and spiritually painful world. I could have died and disappeared, and nobody would have particularly cared.

Then my grandparents, Clarence, and Julia Case, reunited the 5 Squires siblings and moved us to Everett, Washington. As a boy I lived in the projects of North Everett and spent my growing up days playing sports at the Everett Boys Club. I flunked first grade, and I still have my original report card that says, "Kenny is a nervous little boy." So, I was invited back for a second run at first grade. Now, what do you flunk in first grade? Nap time?

In the difficulty and darkness of those early years, God used a small Baptist church a few blocks from my home to offer salvation.

Sanctuary. And suppers called potlucks provided unlimited fried chicken. God used Delta Community Baptist Church to develop my initial faith in Jesus Christ. To provide Christmas baskets for the Squires family. I am in the ministry today because of Joe Reed, Leo Belles, the Bonner family, and so many others!

At Delta I attended classes designed to introduce me to faith in Jesus Christ and at the age of 12 I was water baptized with several of my friends who ran together. Played sports together. Got into trouble together. I was off to the races spiritually.

I read my bible daily.

Memorized God's word.

Went to church camp.

I was doing my best to love God and love others as the scriptures taught.

Daily, I put on my backpack of Christian living and began to summit the mountains of morality, good deeds and daily devotion to God.

Read your bible daily. Go to church every Sunday. Pray before every meal. Give in the offering. And tell others about Jesus.

As I hit my adolescent years, the trails grew steeper. Peer pressure. Sexual drive on overdrive. Guilt filled living, instead of grace filled living. I lived the good-boy life, went to church on Sunday, but lived for the world and the devil during the week.

Is it possible for a 17-year-old to love God and win over temptation at the same time? Maybe, you know the challenge.

Then I got a boost in my spiritual life.

The newly built Seattle Kingdom, which housed the Seattle Seahawks and Seattle Mariners would be officially inaugurated for usage at the Billy Graham Crusade. On a sunny-Seattle-Sunday, one May afternoon I gathered with over 50,000 crusade goers as I listened carefully to the message of Jesus Christ atoning death. I stood up, got out of my seat and before I knew it, I was standing in front of the stage as Billy Graham was leading us in a prayer to allow Jesus Christ to forgive our sins. I become born again.

From that day forward I started out once again to summit spiritual mountains:

Read your bible daily. Go to church every Sunday. Pray before every meal. Give in the offering. And tell others about Jesus.

Then it happened, I faded fast. Within one month I was back in the Kingdom, not for Billy the evangelist but for Paul McCartney the iconic former Beattle. That night I rocked out with crazed rock-n-roll fans to the concert tour, Wings Over American.

Something was missing from my life, and for the life of me I could not put my finger on it. Perhaps, you find yourself like me starting and stumbling. Learning and then leaving.

If this is you, can we talk? Can we walk together through the pages of the book of Acts and meet the Holy Spirit?

God loves you. Jesus Christ died for you. But I do not recall ever being taught about a source of strength and power to live the Christian life. That source is a **Someone**. That Source has a name; He is the **Holy Spirit**.

I don't ever remember hearing a sermon growing up introducing me to the Holy Spirit. I can remember, sitting in my back yard in high school reading my bible. Looking up to the heavens and telling God I want to live for you. And so, I tried. I tried. I tanked.

It would not be long afterwards, I felt powerless to pull it off. Now, my Bible included the teachings of Jesus who introduced the Holy Spirit to the disciples and me in John 14. How had I missed those verses? I read about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, I missed the part where Jesus told the disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Promise my Father has told you about.

⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49-NIV)

How did I miss that? Jesus was ready to give me power to live the Christian life. I had never heard there was a source of strength to give me strength. If you had asked me to explain who the Holy Spirit was, while I was in high school, I might have said, **Holy what? Holy who?**

Let's hit pause and leave me at Shorecrest High in Seattle Washington. Soon I will go off to Western Washington University and experience an encounter with the Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that will rock my world. More about that later. So, let's move to our bible study about the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts.

God is one God, and as God, He is 3 distinct persons. As God He is Yahweh, Jehovah, and Elohim who is God, and reveals himself in three persons. One God in three persons. Let's ask the question that any beginners in faith ask.

Who is God the Father? Who is Jesus Christ? Who is the Holy Spirit?

Who is God the Father? Well, he is the creator of the heavens and the earth. He is the Old Testament God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God of King David who slew Goliath. And you could go on and on.

Can you describe Jesus Christ the Son? That is even easier. Jesus was born in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph. He was baptized by his cousin John in the Jordan River. Jesus did all kinds of miracles and then was crucified by his own people.

Finally, who is the Holy Spirit? Here is where it gets fuzzy. Is he a person? Is he a force? So many scratch their heads. Who is the Holy Spirit? That is a real head scratcher. I am glad you asked that question.

Let's go on a journey together, whether you have an active and intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit or are a beginner like so many, why not join me as we learn together who the 3rd member of the trinity is.

As a newly minted follower of Jesus Christ, you may not yet, know about the Holy Spirit, or you may come from a stuffy or struggling faith community that hid the Holy Spirit from you. Ok, they didn't hide the Holy Spirit, they just didn't give him much opportunity for involvement.

I am not here to throw your spiritual upbringing under the bus, but like me your spiritual journey may have neglected to teach you about the Holy Spirit. All you know is, he might be a holy hunch. A holy something. A holy ghost.

Are you interested in meeting the **Someone** who can give you power? John tells us the Holy Spirit will be our advocate to help you. He will be your Helper. A counselor.

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. (John 14-NIV)

The Holy Spirit is my advocate. He is my personal friend. He will lead me into all truth.

*He comforts me when I am discouraged.

*He corrects me when I drift.

*He will transfuse me with his power when I am lagging.

*He gives me power when I cannot take another step.

And the best part of the relationship, he will one day introduce me to my Savior Jesus Christ, as he delivers me to my heavenly home.

The Holy Spirit is the member of the trinity that is at work in our world today, executing God's will on the earth.

And as Acts 1:8 announces, he will give you his **dunamis** power. The Greek word *dunamis* is where we get our English word for dynamite. Anybody want a fresh spiritual explosion in your life?

Certainly, the church could use another Acts 2, spiritual explosion. Disruption. Or even a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that says, "I will pour out the Holy Spirit in the last days on all people."

Your Bible makes hundreds of references to the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught more about the Holy Spirit than he did about fasting, finances and final days on the earth. Why so much teaching about the Holy Spirit?

How impressive is a witness for Christ when you are anxious riddled? Sin filled? Worn out, done in and down and out? And that is the best witness you have to offer Jesus Christ. Again remember, Acts 1:8, reminds us we are going to receive power, to be his witnesses.

⁸ 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 1:8-NIV)

Perhaps, like me, you have noticed the topic of the Holy Spirit can bring out all kinds of extremes in a local church. Maybe you have been run over by one of those extremes or have been in a faith community that practices these extremes. I call them the Holy Spirit **showoffs** and the Holy Spirit **watchdogs**.

The Holy Spirit often gets hijacked by one of two extremes: Holy Spirit showoffs and Holy Spirit watchdogs.

Let's meet the Holy Spirit showoffs. I have loved Christ and lived in this camp for now about four decades. I will tell you more about this in future chapters. Who has not fallen into a trap of Holy Spirit- spiritual elitism? These sweet followers of Christ are sincere, but at times sincerely superior. Best friends with the Holy Spirit.

They talk about him often, and even at the neglect of talking about Jesus. They always seem to have a backstage pass to the latest move of the Holy Spirit. They chase the latest Holy Spirit fad. Buy the latest Bible that emphasizes the Holy Spirit related language. They show off, while they run off anyone who does not believe what they believe about the Holy Spirit.

Let's meet the Holy Spirit watchdogs. In my earliest years of faith, this was my faith community. This was my seminary and theological training. Armed with their bibles, they are ready to debate why the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased being in operation today. As the Holy Spirit police, they send emails to pastors who are getting a little carried away with Holy Spirit activity. As Max Lucado says, "they are self-deputized hall monitors of the supernatural." (Help Is Here, page 8).

I have lived, laughed, and learned about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit from both camps. I have friends in both theological movements. More Jesus in the first, and less Holy Spirit in the second.

Is it possible that Jesus final instructions to go into the world and tell the story of his atoning death, could only be made possible by fulfilling Jesus final directives-

⁴ 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. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1-NIV)

Is this verse hinting the first person to preach about the Holy Spirit was a Baptist?

Now, what I want to do with the rest of our time is start our journey through the book of Acts. I think, just my opinion, the best way to meet the Holy Spirit is to trace his activity in the book of Acts.

So that is what we are going to do. Walk together through pages of about 30 years of church history from Jesus' ascension to the arrival of Jesus message into Rome. If you opened your bible to the last page of the book of John and then immediately moved to the book of Romans, you might ask, how did Jesus' message get from Jerusalem to Rome? The answer? The book of Acts.

The best way to produce a great movie is to start with an earthquake, tell an amazing story, show some beautiful landscape, and then end with a death. This is the book of Acts. We start with a violent wind like an earthquake and then you are introduced to the story of some powerfully changed lives because of the Holy Spirit, travel around the Mediterranean and then end with Paul's death in Rome.

Starting in Acts the action really picks up, but we are going to start with a little background that starts in Acts 1. Acts tell us how Christianity got its start. Rome ruled with an iron fist as it invaded Europe, North Africa, the middle east, and the homeland of the Jews.

The author of Acts is a Greek physician named Luke. We meet him Colossians 4:14, "Our dear friend Luke, the doctor." Luke is a traveling companion to the apostle Paul, and he shows up in Acts 16. Here he is in verse 10, "After Paul had seen a vision, **we** got ready at once to leave for Macedonia."

Here Luke changes the pronouns from "they" in Acts 16:7-10, to "we" in Acts 16:10." Pronouns do matter.

In fact, the one's that matter the most are in the Bible, and you cannot hijack the Holy Spirit's pronouns. Luke is the only Gentile writer in the Bible. In fact, when I disciple new converts in Christ, we start with the book of Luke.

Acts is a sequel to Luke's first book, called the book of Luke. Luke is one of the four gospels that tells the story of the life of Jesus Christ.

Both Luke and Acts are dedicated to a Greek named Theophilus, who is a mystery to ancient biblical historians. While his name means, "*one who loves God*," it is providential that God used this person in ways the Bible is silent. Theophilus-one who loves God.

Some parents who named Theophilus didn't think this through very well. What? When it comes to naming kids, kids are rough. Kids can be brutal when it comes to name calling. My last name is Squires, and I earned the hard way the nick names-squizzers, squeers, sqidley-didly and host of others I just as soon forget. Back to Theophilus.

That is the most *theo-phil-us* child's name, I have ever seen.

In the prologue to Luke, Theophilus is the "most excellent Theophilus," in Luke 1:3. That makes him likely a wealthy government official or high-ranking soldier. As a wealthy individual, it

would not be unusual for him to commission personal family histories, usually for self-serving purposes. But, in this case, as a new follower of Christ, Theophilus commissions Luke tell the story of Jesus.

With one history down, God uses Luke and perhaps Theophilus wealth to send Luke as an eyewitness historian to record what the Holy Spirit was doing in the spread of the gospel in the book of Acts.

It is no accident that the book of Acts has no formal ending. Regardless of Luke's literary plans, the Holy Spirit intended for Luke's writing career to end with the two-volume book of Luke-Acts. Look closely at Acts 28, and you will see how abruptly it ends. Most books end by giving some literary love to Jesus. Listen to Romans conclusion:

To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Romans 16:27-NIV)

As we will see, the book of Acts has many reasons for its existence. Since it is a record of the birth of the church, one might say there is no good place to conclude the history of the church.

For thousands of years, each generation of Christ disciples have faced opposition, responded by receiving fresh power of the Holy Spirit and continued in telling the story of Jesus atoning death to cover our pile of sins. The book of Acts is the continuation of all that Jesus did and taught.

Jesus is very much alive in the book of Acts. He is alive in and with his followers. He appears to Paul on a Damascus Road. He appears to Peter in a vision. He is the eternal son of God, alive in you!

The history of the church and Jesus' appearances is continuing to be experienced today. Right here in Wichita, Kansas. Right here in Bethel Life Center. And we see this clearly in Acts 1:1-3-NIV.

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. (Acts 1-NIV)

Do you see the phrase, "that Jesus began to do and teach?" The idea is that Acts contains what Jesus began to do in Luke's gospel and then continues in Acts. In other words, Jesus' life continues in the same redemptive power and in the same supernatural abilities but now done by the Holy Spirit in the life of his disciples. And this continues today. And through you. And through me.

Are you feeling a little blue? Are you wondering does God have a purpose for your life. Are you tired of sitting on the sidelines? Crack out of the box, Luke tells his audience, first to

Theophilus, then to some ancient readers, and then to readers for all antiquity and then to you and me-go to Jerusalem and get some power from the Holy Spirit.

Then get to work fulfilling the work of a Holy Spirit empowered disciple who is operating in all of Jesus supernatural life.

Since the ascension of Jesus in Acts 1:10, nothing could stop the church, the supernatural work done in the lives of Jesus disciples and the churches expansion continues today unhindered!

As Luke's second volume opens, the book of Acts, the church does not exist, the Holy Spirit has not yet come to indwell Christ followers, those early followers have no power, no courage, no authority, and most of all still miss the plot.

Like disciples sometimes we miss the plot all together.

After telling the disciples were to get the power, to move out, then someone asks, *Lord, are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel? (Acts 1:6-NIV)*

How many times did the disciples get off course? They argued over who would be the greatest.

Peter asked would John suffer to the degree that Jesus described Peters future suffering. And on the Mount of Transfiguration Peter thought the best response to a supernatural visitation to Elijah, Moses and Jesus meeting was to build 3 condominiums.

³ 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.⁴ 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. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

What an amazing description of the final moments of Jesus life with the disciples. And all of this happened as the risen Lord, back from the dead, having conquered death, hell, and the grave, shows up with a new body. But a body that everyone recognized and one that carried some of the markings of his time on earth. Again, Jesus offers familiar teachings about the Kingdom of God. He had a body that enjoyed food. A body that walked through walls.

Convincing proof that he was alive.

The disciples were cringing behind locked doors, filled with fear and anxiety. Wondering, would the religious crowd come for them? They did not even have enough courage to attend Jesus' burial. It was left to some women.

Then statements of Jesus resurrection started popping up, “He is not here, He is risen.” No angels in the sky announcing his return from the dead or any kings arriving with gifts.

Jesus showed up in the most ordinary places: private dinner gatherings, two men walking on the road to Emmaus, women weeping in a garden, at the beach for breakfast as Jesus asked, how is the fishing?

He appeared over a 40-day span of time.

Life continues on earth for Jesus for another 40 days. Jesus is there and then gone. These appearances are flesh and blood encounters. Jesus proved his identity with the scars of crucifixion, even Thomas believed. For Thomas it was a personal invitation to finger the scars. For Peter, even betrayal was turned into a recovery group meeting where Peter could make amends.

As far as scripture indicates, not a single unbeliever saw Jesus after his death. In about a dozen appearances Jesus arrived at small groups and on one occasion to over 500. He visited remote places and behind closed doors.

Jesus made his identity so obvious that no disciple could ever deny him again. Jesus mere appearance overwhelmed people so they could do nothing but believe.

Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised!

⁸ 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 1:8-NIV)

With Jesus 40 days of appearances and the arrival of the Holy Spirit and his impartation of power, Jesus disciples would start a chain reaction of fire and wind. This chain reaction would light up the world, and blow with gale force intensity that would carry-on to every generation.

Jesus succeeded in empowering, powerless, and unreliable followers into courageous witnesses that would carry his message from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the uttermost parts of the world.

The 11 disciples who deserted him while on death row, are now buried in martyrs' graves scattered around the plant. The few disciples set loose a power in the Holy Spirit that would overcome even the most violent of oppositions first in Jerusalem and then in Rome.

As we walk through the pages of the book of Acts, we will see such a supernatural transformation that all who look closely at accounts of Philip in Acts 8, the violent Saul in Acts 9,

and Cornelius in Acts 10-11, can't help but be invited by the Helper to their own Holy Spirit filled life.

Do your prayers seem weak? The Holy Spirit will help. (Rom. 8:26)

Do you lack spiritual insight? The Holy Spirit is the teacher. (John 14:26)

Are you unsure of your salvation? The Holy Spirit is your seal of a heaven-sent ownership. (Eph. 1:13)

Could you use personal counseling? The Holy Spirit is a personal counselor. (John 14:26)

Everywhere you go is some place Jesus wants to be. And he wants to be present in the full power of the Holy Spirit. And the only way Jesus can get there is through you.

Only by the reproducing of his life in the power of the Holy Spirit can somebody be present at a place where the Supernatural is called for in Wichita. Valley Center. Mulvane. Andover.

Somebody on the job is going to confess to you their child has cancer. Will you pray for healing?

Somebody at your gym is going to open up about their stronghold of addictions. Will you boldly witness and direct them the delivering power of Jesus?

Somebody is going to grieve because a child took their life, and they cannot go on living. Somebody needs to walk with her. You may be the one that will be there.

And Jesus wants to be there in the FULL power of the Holy Spirit if his disciples will let him fill them with the Holy Spirit. So, you are not just there, you are there in the FULL power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the **baptizer with fire** who makes you holy, the **giver of gifts** who works through you, the **river of living water** who flows out of you to refresh.

With the fullness of Jesus person, presence, and power to do what Jesus would do in that moment.

*Sometimes to provide supernatural deliverance.

*Sometimes to offer supernatural healing.

*Sometimes to offer supernatural faith recommendations concerning God's promises.

*Sometimes to offer supernatural words of knowledge, wisdom.

This world needs Jesus' activity in the **Full** power of the Holy Spirit. This world does not need a tame Jesus, who is prohibited from working supernaturally in the lives of his disciples.

In fact, the only hope for a world gone mad, is a Christ follower full of the supernatural book of Acts-like power in the Holy Spirit.

Broken lives are everywhere. And Jesus wants to be there, just like we read in the book of Acts. Hey, if you are not ready for that kind of faith and activity in Jesus, that doesn't make you any less of a disciple. Don't be embarrassed. But would you be open? Open to the Holy Spirit's filling today?

The fullness of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit is given so Jesus' life can be replicated in each of us. We do not come to church for some type of emotional spiritual experience or high. We don't come for casual inspiration, and to listen to a good sermon. We do not come out of tradition.

We come for a refueling. A refilling. A rebaptizing. But a refilling once a week is not enough. You and I need to receive every day a fresh flow the rivers of living water. Rivers of power. Rivers of praise. Rivers of prayer.

I am so looking forward to going through the book of Acts with each of you. I do not take this privilege lightly, whether you join me on-line or in person. If you like me, feel limited in understanding who the Holy Spirit is, and you don't feel very holy as you learn about the Holy Spirit, you are in good company. I am there too. I am personally aware of my inadequacy to teach about such a holy person. The Holy Spirit.

To lean on and learn from the Holy Spirit is like attempting to comprehend the vastness of the galaxy.

Perhaps if we all acknowledge the same limitation about the Holy Spirit, maybe God will see our hearts and show up once again in the power and person of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise to receive power was an on-going invitation for every person of every generation. *And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...*

He did it in Acts and continues to do it today. He shows up when you are in a group and when you are by yourself. ³¹*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:31-NIV)*

There is an arrival of the Holy Spirit, which started in Genesis 1:2.

Now, the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. (Gen 1:2-NIV)

There is a mystery about the Holy Spirit that cannot be uncovered.

There is an invisibleness to the Holy Spirit that cannot be forced into prophecy, tongues, miracles, visions, or dreams.

There is a presence of the Holy Spirit that cannot be denied.

There is an invisibility of the Holy Spirit, that only the blind see, the deaf hear and the lame begin to walk.

As we end this study, can I invite you to join me in this prayer as we open up to the Holy Spirit's arrival?

Father,

I welcome the Holy Spirit's entry into my life. To be with me. To be in me. To overshadow me. For these reasons and so many others, I feel helpless. I feel inadequate.

I feel unworthy to ask for the Holy Spirit to breathe on me. You said I could ask, so Jesus' breath on me, the way you breathed on your disciples. *And with that he breathed on them and said, "receive the Holy Spirit."* (John 20:22-NIV)

Even though the Holy Spirit defies understanding and comprehension, I welcome the Holy Spirit into all areas of my life. To baptize me.

To overshadow me. To refill me. To empower me. To come upon me.

In Jesus, name. Amen.