

We must Minister in the Holy Spirit's power

Acts of a Healthy Growing Church

Acts 1:4

January 8, 2017

Welcome again to worship today.

How are you doing on your New Year's Resolutions? Now, before you get discouraged, let's take a look at how Resolutions tend to work out. Here are some examples:

In:

2014: I will read at least 10 books this year.

2015: I will try to finish the book I started last year.

2016: I will read most of my email this year.

2017: I will sometimes read the comic section of the Sunday paper.

Or for those of us who are constantly worrying about weight. In:

2015: I will work out 5 days a week and eat 500 calories a day until I lose 20 pounds.

2016: I will work out 3 days a week and try to lose the 5 pounds I gained last year.

2017: I will walk my dog and throw out that box of Twinkies next week.

Or for those of you with money issues. In:

2014: By next year I will be completely out of debt.

2015: By next year I will pay the interest on my credit card.

2016: By next year I will transfer my debt to a new credit card.

2017: By next year I will be out of the country.

Well, it is a new year. New year; new you. That's what we would like this year, isn't. New year, new you.

- More money, less debt.
- More muscle, less fat.
- More health, less aches.
- More security, less fear.
- More influence, less helplessness.
- More wisdom, less stupid.
- More love for God, for others.
- More faith, more prayer, more witness, more power.

I don't know about you, but I want those same things for our church.

- More money, less debt.
- More muscle, less fat.
- More health, less aches.
- More security, less fear.
- More influence, less helplessness.
- More love for God, for others.
- More faith, more prayer, more witness, more power.

So, at the beginning of this new year, I think it is appropriate for us as a body of Christ to consider what it would take to be a new us this year. One with faith, one with prayer, one with witness, one with power. We want to be a healthy and growing congregation.

That's what our series is today and for the next 8 weeks: Acts of a Healthy Growing Church. We are going to look at the Early Church through the book of Acts and see how they were healthy and growing. We've given you a page to record some notes, so turn to page 6 in your bulletin.

Now, why would we look in the book of Acts for keys to health and growth? I mean, come on, there have been centuries of church history we could study. Well, here's why.

B. H. Carroll, a famous Bible scholar, in his commentary, estimates that there were probably a 100,000 members in the Jerusalem church within 25 years of Jesus' death and resurrection. Many others have agreed. In any Bible dictionary, it will tell you that in New Testament times, the city of Jerusalem had approximately 200,000 people. What we have here is a church with 100,000 members in a city of 200,000 people. Half the city had come to Christ. No wonder the religious leaders of the day felt threaten by the disciples. They said, "You've filled Jerusalem."¹

When you look at the book of Acts, you find at least 8 characteristics of the early church that positioned them for this kind of blessing from God. If we echo the actions of the early church, we can expect God's blessing on our church as much as those ancient leaders saw a blessing on the church in Jerusalem.

Here is today's key point: We must minister in the Holy Spirit's power.

Let's look at Acts 1:1-8. The passage is in your bulletin.

READ ACTS 1:1-8.

The key is Jesus' command in Verse 4:

*"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about."*²

He is speaking of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 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."*³

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would come after Him, and on the Day of Pentecost, He did, and the church was born with 3,000 conversions.⁴ 3,000 people joined the church in one day.

Now, if you're a Christian, if you have given your life to Christ, then you already have the Holy Spirit living inside you. That's right. God's Holy Spirit within you right now. Each and every Christian is at their own level of infilling based upon their submission to God, but He is within you.

But the point I want to emphasize today, an important key for our church for us to be healthy and grow in 2017, is that we must rely on His power on a moment by moment basis. The power of God is given for witnessing, for ministry, for mission.

There are three things we need if we are going to minister in the Holy Spirit's power.

First, we need the Holy Spirit to understand and live the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus said in His Upper Room Discourse:

¹ See Acts 5:28

² Acts 1:4b (NIV)

³ Acts 1:8 (NIV)

⁴ See Acts 2

*But the Counselor, 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.*⁵

The Holy Spirit will remind us of what Jesus has said. This means two things. In matters of belief, the Holy Spirit is constantly bringing back to us the things Jesus said. We have an obligation to think, but all our conclusions must be tested against the words of Jesus. It is not so much the truth that we have to discover; He told us the truth. What we have to discover is the meaning of that truth. The Holy Spirit saves us from arrogance and error of thought. The Holy Spirit will also keep us right in matters of conduct. Nearly all of us have had this sort of experience in life. We are tempted to do something wrong and are on the very brink of doing it, when back into our mind comes a saying of Jesus, the verse of a psalm, the picture of Jesus, words of someone we love and admire, teaching we received when very young. In the moment of danger, these things flash unbidden into our minds. That is the work of the Holy Spirit.⁶

Oswald Chambers wrote, "The only possible way to have full understanding of the teachings of Jesus is through the light of the Spirit of God shining inside us."⁷

As individual believers and as the body of Christ together, we need the Holy Spirit to understand and live the teachings of Jesus.

Second, we need the Holy Spirit to point out the truth in all of us.

Again in the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus said:

*He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.*⁸

In that Upper Room discourse, Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit:

- will never leave us (John 14:16);
- that the world at large cannot receive Him (John 14:17);
- He lives with us and in us (John 14:17);
- He teaches us (John 14:26);
- He reminds us of Jesus' words (John 14:26; 15:26);
- He convinces us of sin, shows us God's righteousness, and announces God's judgment on evil (John 16:8);
- He guides us into truth and gives insight into future events (John 16:13);
- He brings glory to Christ (John 16:14).

The Holy Spirit has been active among people from the beginning of time, but after Pentecost, He came to live in all believers. Many people are unaware of the Holy Spirit's activities, but to those who hear Christ's words and understand the Spirit's power, the Spirit gives a whole new way to look at life.⁹

If we are going to minister in the Holy Spirit's power, we need the Holy Spirit to point out the truth in all of us.

Finally, we need the Holy Spirit to do the things of God.

⁵ John 14:26 (NIV)

⁶ Barclay's Daily Study Bible, John 14:25-31

⁷ My Utmost For His Highest

⁸ John 14:17, NLT

⁹ Life Application Study Bible, John 14:17ff

One of my pastor friends recently posted this on his Facebook feed: “When we depend upon our own power, our own resources & our own abilities, we end up on our own. When we depend upon God, we end up with Him.”

How many of you have had a major operation, and immediately following it, needed someone to help you get up and walk?

AFTER GALL BLADDER SURGERY.

Did I know how to walk? Absolutely. I’d been walking nearly all of my 55 years. But at that moment, I needed help walking. Within a day or two, I could walk on my own again. This is the natural recuperative process.

But in the spiritual realm, it should be the opposite. The more we walk with the Lord, the more we should need Him to take those steps.

But often in the church, we live out the natural process instead of the spiritual process. Left to ourselves, the more we are in ministry, the more we do things within our own strength and power, and the less we rely on the Holy Spirit’s power.

I want you to think about the ministries you are involved in. Are you really trusting in the Holy Spirit’s power to do that ministry? Really trusting?

That’s the problem, isn’t it? We start to rely on our own power to do the ministry of God, when the only way we can do the ministry of God is not through our power, but through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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To minister in the Holy Spirit’s power means to have Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled members. One of the characteristics of people who try to minister in a church without God’s Spirit is simple – tiredness, fatigue. You end up running on your own steam rather than running on the power of God’s Spirit. So the starting point is to minister with the Holy Spirit’s power. He said, “Don’t leave Jerusalem. Wait until you’ve got My power.”

Then we will be able to be His “witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Acts 1:8 (NIV)