

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT[®]

The Mission Begins

Daily Discipleship Guide

WINTER 2020-21 | VOL. 10 | ESV



God's Word to You



A Summary of the Bible

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and to restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.

Suggested for
the week of

Unit 28: The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts; Epistles)

December 6	11	Session 1	Transformed by the Holy Spirit (<i>Acts 2</i>)
December 13	20	Session 2	Empowered by the Holy Spirit (<i>Acts 3</i>)
December 20	29	Christmas	The Word Became Flesh (<i>John 1</i>)
December 27	38	Session 3	Showing Christ in Times of Trials (<i>1 Peter 1–2</i>)
January 3	47	Session 4	Pursuing Godly Living (<i>2 Peter 1</i>)

Unit 29: Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts; Epistles)

January 10	57	Session 1	Living Generously (<i>Acts 4–5</i>)
January 17	66	Session 2	Trusting in Christ in Life and Death (<i>Acts 6–7</i>)
January 24	75	Session 3	Trusting in the Gospel of Jesus (<i>Romans 1–11</i>)
January 31	84	Session 4	Living Out the Gospel of Jesus (<i>James 2</i>)

Unit 30: New Life in Christ (Acts; Epistles)

February 7	94	Session 1	Proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus (<i>Acts 8</i>)
February 14	103	Session 2	Confronted by the Gospel of Jesus (<i>Acts 9</i>)
February 21	112	Session 3	Experiencing New Identity in the Gospel of Jesus (<i>Colossians 3</i>)
February 28	121	Session 4	Holding Fast to the Gospel of Jesus (<i>2 Corinthians 11</i>)

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Ed Stetzer
Founding Editor

Trevin Wax
General Editor

Brian Dembowczyk
Managing Editor

Daniel Davis
Content Editor

Josh Hayes
Content and Production Editor

Ken Braddy
Director of Sunday School

Brandon Hiltibidal
Director, Groups Ministry

Send questions/comments to:
Content Editor by email to
daniel.davis@lifeway.com or mail to
Content Editor, *The Gospel Project: Adult
Daily Discipleship Guide*, One LifeWay Plaza,
Nashville, TN 37234-0175; or make comments on
the Web at lifeway.com.

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Trevin Wax

General Editor—*The Gospel Project*
AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE BOOKS, INCLUDING
*This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in
Light of the Gospel*

If you've been using *The Gospel Project* for any length of time, you know that every session comes with a "missional application." This is our way of asking,

"How does this passage we are studying equip us to live on mission for God's kingdom?" Gospel-centeredness is tightly tied to mission because the gospel is the story of a God with a missionary heart, a God who loves this world He has created and desires all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). To be gospel-centered isn't just about getting the gospel right; it's about getting the gospel out. We are to show and share the love of God.

This volume of *The Gospel Project* focuses heavily on the mission efforts of the early Christians. They were filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go out into the world and make disciples. We see in these sessions a church on fire for God and His mission. We meet apostles who grow and learn how God's embrace reaches across cultural dividing lines. We see how the apostles were broken over the lostness they saw in the world around them but also how they engaged and confronted with boldness the world's idolatry by showing the power and beauty of Jesus. Our prayer is that this volume of *The Gospel Project* will increase your confidence and passion in sharing the gospel. We are sent by God to the world around us. Let's not miss one single moment to live on mission and bring glory to God our Savior!



Charlie Dates (unit 30, sessions 1-2) serves as Senior Pastor at Progressive Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois, and as an Affiliate Professor of Church History and Homiletics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he earned the PhD in Historical Theology. He contributed to *Say It!: Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American Tradition* and *Letters to a Birmingham Jail*. Charlie and his wife, Kirstie, have two children, Charlie and Claire.



Daniel Davis (unit 30, sessions 3-4) is the content editor for *The Gospel Project for Adults*. He received an MDiv from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Christy, have three children, Hannah, Benjamin, and Malachi, and they also provide care for foster children.



Charity Dera (unit 28, sessions 3-4) is a disciple of Christ, wife to Fenol, and mommy to Landon. She attends Living Faith Bible Fellowship in Tampa, Florida, where she serves as a small group leader. Charity is the author of *Good Girls Hidden Sins: Shining the Light on the Darkness*.



Derwin Gray (unit 29, sessions 3-4) is the founding and lead Pastor of Transformation Church in Indian Land, South Carolina. Derwin is husband to Vicki and papa to Presley and Jeremiah. He is a graduate of Brigham Young University, Southern Evangelical Seminary, and Northern Seminary (DMin in New Testament in Context). He is the author of numerous books, most recently, *The Good Life*.



Brandon D. Smith (unit 28, sessions 1-2; unit 29, sessions 1-2) is Assistant Professor of Theology & New Testament at Cedarville University, Editorial Director for the Center for Baptist Renewal, and host of the Church Grammar podcast.



Afshin Ziafat (Christmas session) is the lead pastor of Providence Church in Frisco, Texas. Before taking his current role in October 2010, Afshin spent over a decade traveling nationally and internationally proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. He and his wife, Meredith, currently reside in Frisco, Texas, along with their three children, Elyse, Ansley, and Isaac.

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

A Journey Through the Storyline of Scripture

Fall 2018

In the Beginning

Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job)
God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis)
God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)



Winter 2018-19

Out of Egypt

God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus)
God Provides for His People (Exodus)
God Receives Worship from His People (Ex.; Lev.)



Spring 2019

Into the Promised Land

God Guides His People (Num.; Deut.)
God Gives His People a Home (Joshua)
God Delivers His People (Judges; Ruth)



Summer 2019

A Kingdom Provided

God Provides a King (1 Samuel)
God Provides a Godly King (1-2 Sam.; Psalms)
God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings; Eccl.)



Fall 2019

A Nation Divided

God Speaks to His People (1-2 Kings)
God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)
God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chron.; Prophets)



Winter 2019-20

A People Restored

God Sustains His People (Daniel)
God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)
God Prepares His People (Neh.; Esth.; Mal.)



Spring 2020

Jesus the Messiah

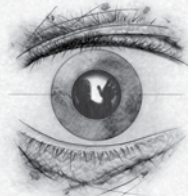
Jesus Comes into the World (Luke)
Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels)
Jesus Among the People (Gospels)



Summer 2020

Jesus the Servant

Jesus the Healer (Gospels)
Jesus the Teacher (Gospels)
Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)



Fall 2020

Jesus the Savior

Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels)
Jesus the Savior (Gospels)
Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)



Winter 2020-21

The Mission Begins

The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts; Epistles)
Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts; Epistles)
New Life in Christ (Acts; Epistles)



Spring 2021

The Church United

Living Like Jesus (Acts; Hebrews)
The Sent Church (Acts; Epistles)
Don't Forget (Acts; Epistles)

Summer 2021

All Things New

Paul in Prison (Acts; Epistles)
Facing Adversity (Acts; Epistles)
Jesus Will Come Again (Revelation)

Unit 28, Session 2
2

Empowered by the Holy Spirit

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Peter and John offered a man who was lame something better than money—healing and salvation in Jesus.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Acts 3:1–4:31

A man was hired to work the overnight shift for a parcel company. In the early morning hours, he unloaded 18 wheelers full of packages. The location where he trained was outlined with electric belts like the wheel and the packages one of the reader and up to the next belt to be used. Little did he realize how helpful that electric belt was. After training, he was transferred to his permanent location that was not outlined with electric belts. Instead, he and his fellow workers had to haul the boxes out of the reader by hand before passing them off to be sorted. Many days he longed to be back at the ease-of-the-rot training location, where electric belts made the work so much easier.

1. What was a time you didn't realize how helpful something was until it was gone?

Now get yourself in the shoes of Peter and John and be encouraged by the power of Jesus working through His disciples. We probably should not expect to walk around seeing healing people, but we have other Spirit-empowered ways to minister to the world. And just like Peter and John, we are all called to minister to the world in the name of Jesus, watching Him do amazing things through us as we share His gospel with the world.

2. Why should we consider the gospel of Jesus a better gift than silver and gold, or even a healing?

Voices from Church History

"The Spirit filled [him] not as a general, universal gift of Christianity. It is not an inheritance of the kind that can be passed on." —A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)

20 Date of My Bible Study: _____
Unit 28, Session 2 21

1 Gather with your group for Bible study and fellowship. Use the **Group Time** in your *Daily Discipleship Guide* to follow along and participate in the session. Mark up the Scripture passages, answer the questions, fill in the blanks, do the activities, write out questions and thoughts—Make this guide yours!

Unit 28, Session 4
4

My Mission

Point 3: God's people pursue godly living to confirm their calling (2 Pet. 1:8-11).

"For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being unstable or ungrounded in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The person who lacks these things is blind and short-sighted and has forgotten the cleansing from his sins." Therefore, brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and decision, because if you do these things you will never stumble. For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.

When the qualities of God are not reflected in the way someone lives, that person is walking through life in a self-righteous fog of denial. Seeking blind or short-sighted leads to wrong decisions and even shipwreck. Such is the state of the professing Christian who has forgotten his or her past forgiveness of sins and now chooses to live back into their instead of striving to look like Jesus in every facet of his or her life.

Sanctification: After we are justified by faith, declared to be in right standing with God through the righteousness of Christ, we undergo a _____ of sanctification when we are continually made more like _____ through the work of the _____ Sanctification affects the whole of a person, transforming one's heart, mind, and _____ to reflect that of Jesus.

God is generous to allow faithfulness in our lives to confirm the work that He has already done in our hearts. Though we may not witness immediate progress (since growth can be slow), when we let His grace in God's Spirit on our lives, we can obtain assurance about our salvation through our desire and efforts toward godliness, yet we cannot deny that this is made possible by our past forgiveness of sin in Christ. It is important that we still examine ourselves under the light of God's Word, making sure our lives match our profession of faith and guarding ourselves from self-deception.

2. What is the relationship between our salvation and our works?

Because Christ's righteousness has been credited to us, we strive to live in heartfelt obedience to God in order to demonstrate to others around us the reality of our changed lives in Christ.

- What steps will you take to pursue a godly life through faith in Jesus Christ?
- What are some ways your group can seek to hold each other in loving accountability as you strive to look more like Jesus together?
- How will you extend the call of Christ to righteousness in your life, so they can know and believe in Jesus for salvation from sin?

Voices from the Church

"Christ is the author of our salvation, and faith is the only channel for receiving it. We must not be deceived by works. It is not the acquisition of works that secures our salvation. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, who is the author of our salvation, who is the author of our faith, who is the author of our love, who is the author of our hope, who is the author of our joy, who is the author of our peace, who is the author of our life, who is the author of our salvation." —David Platt

50 Date of Discipleship Guide _____
Unit 28, Session 4 51

2 At the conclusion of the session, use **My Mission** to respond to the truths from God's Word. Choose at least one of the questions on the page to drive your response in faith, in community, and in mission for Jesus Christ, the center of God's Word and our purpose in life.

Daily Study

Day 1: Read 2 Peter 1:1-4

When a man and woman mutually agree to date for the purpose of getting to know each other for a season, it could appear that the two are incompatible. Their days are probably filled with text messages, phone calls, and many dates in between—some planned, others spontaneous. Whether the like or not, the two of them occupy one another's thoughts for the majority of the day.

Our desire to know more about Jesus should be similar to this. The greater Christ is infinitely glorious—the more radiant, for more grace, and the more grand than anything anyone we could ever imagine. Thus, we should desire to search the Scriptures and to pray and commune with God so as to discover more about Him. After all, how can we possibly get beyond with the One who is more captivating than anything or anyone we could ever lay our eyes upon? It is by God's grace that we have this knowledge that enables a life of godliness. God's people should value this knowledge and seek to gain more and more of it, not just on an intellectual level, which is certainly important, but on a heart level as well.

1 What are some habits or routines you can establish that will help you seek to know God more when your faith may not decide Him?

Voices from Church History

1 "Obtain your dignity, O Christian. Do not have the same noble appearance of the dove nature, do not return to your former simplicity by the uncertainty of that dignity. Remember, which benefit is a more certain sign of merit, you constitute a member?"
—Leo the Great (d. 441)

Day 2: Read 2 Peter 1:5-7

It's very easy to look past the four small words in verse 5 of this passage—"For this very reason." For what reason should the Christian make every effort to supplement their faith? It is precisely because God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. Therefore, we should pursue goodness, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love.

If someone were to hand you a million dollars, you wouldn't just keep it in the dining table without paying your bills. You would use that money gladly in order to fulfill the rightful purpose money was designed for. How much more should we pursue true godly virtues by honoring God with our entire lives? Our godly lives are not just for ourselves but we share a joy with God that God will let off the rest of us in Christ.

2 What godly characteristic do you need to be pursuing, and how will you do so?

Day 3: Read 2 Peter 1:8-11

Two runners assume their positions for a track race. Both athletes run initially with all of their might in order to win the race. But one runner gets distracted by the audience and loses momentum in her stride. Losing focus and momentum, she soon slips over a shoulder. Because of this series of events, the other runner wins without experiencing any doubt in her mind.

Peter speaks about a similar scenario in verse 10. As we run the race of the Christian life, it can become easy to get distracted with various demons of our lives. As a result of succumbing to distraction, we lose confidence in our race. A lack of assurance about our standing with God can cause us to retreat from living godly lives. Thankfully, we can have confidence in our victory if we keep our eyes on Jesus and the salvation He provided.

3 How can you strive to live in a godly manner in order to fight doubt and pursue the assurance the Holy Spirit gives?

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Daily Discipleship Guide

Unit 20, Session 4

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During the week following the session, use the five **Daily Study** devotions to build on the foundation laid during the "Group Time." These devotions will help you get into God's Word for yourself and take initiative in your own discipleship. Read the Scriptures, respond to the questions, and grow in the faith.

Day 4: Read 2 Peter 1:12-15

Children often need quite a few reminders: "Don't forget to clean your room!" "Please remember to say please and thank you!"

Repetition is invaluable to parents because children easily forget. They become distracted. They slide so much that they may lose track of what you said to them even moments prior.

God's children also need reminders because we easily forget. Similar to Deo, we often hear what God said but are prone to forget His Word (especially Gen. 3:1-3)—sometimes due to ignorance, other times due to rebellion. Peter made a point in his letter to remind his readers of the things he mentioned previously, so they can remain in the Christian's vitality. Therefore, we also should recognize our own propensity to forget and readily respond accordingly by seeking up God's Word over and over for the rest of our days.

1 How can you be intentional about reminding yourself of God's truth on a daily basis?

Day 5: Read 2 Peter 1:16-21

Peter recalled by his very own experience that the prophecies about the Messiah written all throughout Scripture were fulfilled in Jesus' life, proving the legitimacy of the gospel. Peter here reminds in this passage that he, James, and John literally saw the majesty of Christ firsthand in hearing God the Father affirm the identity of His Son (Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36). Jesus was the Messiah to come who had now come!

Jesus is Lord, the incarnate Son of God. None of these facts are directly contained in Scripture. As God the Father bestowed the disciples to Jesus as His Son in the flesh, we too should listen to the testimony of His Son promised through the divine revelation we have in Scripture.

2 Why is the eyewitness testimony of the apostles and the early disciples useful for fighting the doubts we might have about the truthfulness of the gospel?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the results from Scripture in this session:

- God's people pursue godly living through what Jesus has done? (2 Pet. 1:3-4).
- God's people pursue godly living with effort? (2 Pet. 1:5-7).
- God's people pursue godly living to confirm their calling? (2 Pet. 1:8-11).

- 1 How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?
- 2 What is the role of the church in helping believers obtain assurance of their salvation?
- 3 Why should we see the local church as the normal and primary context for learning what it means to lead a godly life?

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Daily Discipleship Guide

Unit 20, Session 4

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Finally, **Encourage One Another** provides a brief guide for small groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. Meet up with a group once a week for fellowship, encouragement in the faith, and mutual accountability.

Unit 28

The Holy Spirit Comes

Acts; Epistles

Memory Verse

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,”

—2 PETER 1:3

Transformed by the Holy Spirit

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Jesus had promised to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples, and when He arrived, the Spirit filled them and empowered them to be Jesus' witnesses.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Acts 2

Imagine a family member who is never grateful for his or her gifts. Perhaps at Christmas each year this person lets you know it. Sometimes it's just a shrug—"Hmm. Thanks." Other times it's a direct comment—"You should've gotten me such-and-such instead." Then, in an effort to finally win this person's approval, you offer a sentimental gift based on a shared experience, and the person's first response is "I don't understand this." Needless to say, such a person's ungrateful attitude would make Christmas, birthdays, and similar occasions difficult.



Have you ever given a gift that was not appreciated? How did it make you feel?

Group Time

Point 1: The Holy Spirit indwells and fills God's people (Acts 2:1-4).

¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

When we read Acts 2:1-4, our minds should be drawn immediately to the glorious truth that God Himself has come to live inside of us in God the Holy Spirit. The coming of the Spirit is a foretaste of the age to come, what theologians often call the “already/not yet” expression of God’s kingdom. The Spirit’s dwelling inside believers marks them as God’s temple, a preview to the world of what new creation life will be like. Thus, we celebrate the Holy Spirit because He is God living in us, leading us toward a new eternal city where there is no death, pain, tears, or division (Rev. 21–22).



What are some reasons we might overlook the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

Personality of the Holy Spirit: The Bible not only affirms the full _____ of the Holy Spirit but also His _____.

Many people have mistakenly believed that the Spirit is a force or power, not a person. However, Scripture affirms His personhood by acknowledging that He is treated as a person, acts like a person, has _____ of a person, and acts in personal ways. In addition to these, the Bible also affirms that Christians _____ to Him personally.

So, the Holy Spirit is a gift, but is He optional? Why should we obey the Holy Spirit?

- *First*, we obey the Holy Spirit because He is God.
- *Second*, we obey the Holy Spirit because He reminds us of the gospel.
- *Third*, we obey the Holy Spirit because He has sealed our salvation.

Point 2: The Holy Spirit empowers and emboldens God's people (Acts 2:22-24,36-40).

²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

.....
³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the power for our Christian living and our proclamation of the gospel. Just a few weeks prior to this event, the disciples had abandoned Jesus, and Peter had denied he ever knew Him (Matt. 26:56,69-74). Now, with the Holy Spirit, they were boldly proclaiming Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Messiah and Lord.



Why does proclaiming the gospel require boldness from the Holy Spirit?

We know we ought to listen to the Holy Spirit for direction and encouragement, but how? Many spiritual disciplines could be discussed here, but the primary way the Holy Spirit speaks to us is through **the Scriptures**, through which He reminds us of the gospel. Bible reading is not a “fix-all” for sin and doubt, but the Bible is God’s primary means of communication through the Holy Spirit so we resist sin and conquer doubt.

Inspiration of Scripture: The inspiration of Scripture was achieved most often through the supernatural influence of the _____ through the personalities of the authors so that their writings can be considered the very words of _____.

Point 3: The Holy Spirit works through God's people to grow the church (Acts 2:41-47).

⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

This new community of faith participated in the epic story of Jesus in seemingly mundane ways—a bunch of normal folks, like you and me, praying, eating, and worshiping together. The implications of being one body united in Christ weren't merely ethereal and otherworldly for the early Christians—they were visible and tangible in the Spirit-filled church community. And the result was the **growth of the church**.



How does numerical growth in the church relate to growth in spiritual health and vitality?

We live in a different context than did the newly forming church in Jerusalem. But the **key ingredients** to church growth haven't changed; our calling is the same. Like the early church, *we are to love one another* (John 13:35), sharing our lives together, and *we are to go make disciples of all nations* (Matt. 28:18-20), inviting others to join us in the faith and in our calling to live by and keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25).



Voices from the Church

"The Christian's life in all its aspects—intellectual and ethical, devotional and relational, upsurging in worship and outgoing in witness—is supernatural; only the Spirit can initiate and sustain it. So apart from him, not only will there be no lively believers and no lively congregations, there will be no believers and no congregations at all."¹

—J. I. Packer

My Mission

Because the Holy Spirit is changing us to be more like Christ each day, we rely on the Holy Spirit as we share the gospel, call people to repentance and faith, and live in community.

- **What is the Holy Spirit leading you to believe, confess, or do?**
- **How can your group/church embody the Spirit-directed characteristics of the early church?**
- **Where and with whom is the Spirit leading you to share the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ?**



Voices from Church History

“For we are not ... made righteous by the doing of righteous deeds, unless we deceive ourselves; but rather—if I may say so—in becoming and being righteous people we do righteous deeds.”²

—Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Notes

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Acts 2:1-13

As mentioned in the session, sometimes Christians argue over the role of the Holy Spirit, particularly in elements of Christian worship such as speaking in tongues. Interestingly, this “debate” was going on immediately after the Holy Spirit was poured out on the first Christians. Some onlookers even accused them of being drunk!

While we cannot examine the various views of spiritual gifts here, it is worth reflecting generally on our attitude toward those with whom we disagree, including our brothers and sisters in Christ. Because none of us are perfect or infallible, we may disagree about certain interpretations of Scripture. However, we should all agree that when the gift of the Holy Spirit is poured out on people, we should rejoice at God’s work in the world.

Instead of scoffing at others, like those in the crowd in this passage, we can rejoice any time when someone is rejoicing in God for His work in his or her life. We are all prone toward skepticism and doubt at times, but unlike the scoffers, we should stand ready to rejoice when the Holy Spirit works in us and in the world.



In what circumstances do you tend toward skepticism when people praise God for something?



Voices from Church History

“Light cannot be separated from what it makes visible, and it is impossible for you to recognize Christ, the Image of the invisible God, unless the Spirit enlightens you.”³

—Basil of Caesarea
(c. 330-379)

Day 2: Read Acts 2:14-21

In this passage, Peter somewhat hilariously rebuked the crowd for accusing the new believers of being drunk—“It’s only 9 a.m.,” he reminded them. However, Peter’s larger point is clear: This was not some sort of lunacy—this was the work of God.

Quoting Joel 2, Peter told the Jewish onlookers that what they were witnessing was actually a promise that their God had made long before. If they had ears to hear, they would know that these languages being spoken served as a sign of God’s promises.

The Jews should’ve been the people most ready to receive this news. After all, this was a direct prophecy from their Scriptures. But instead, some of them doubted the work of God in the lives of these early Christians. Peter reminded them that God is always at work, among every nation, tribe, and tongue, and this is evident if they will only remember God’s promise through the prophet Joel.



In what ways do you see God at work around you, and how can you join in His mission?

Day 3: Read Acts 2:22-28

Peter told the crowd here that Jesus was crucified as part of the plan of God, of course, but that His crucifixion happened at the hands of those who rejected Him. In Scripture, there is an apparent tension between the sovereignty of God—the fact that He is all-powerful and in full control over history—and humanity’s responsibility for sin—the fact that human beings genuinely choose to sin. Ultimately, God is never blamed for sin and humankind is always responsible for the sin committed.

Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11 as a way of wisdom: rejoice in Christ and put your hope in Him. Jesus’ resurrection is the ultimate proof that God kept His promises to save His people. This was directed at the Jewish scoffers, but it is applicable to all of us. We should never join those who turn their backs on Christ by “crucifying once again the Son of God . . . and holding him up to contempt” (Heb. 6:6). Rather, we should place our hope in His promises, receiving the Holy Spirit and listening to His voice.



Christ can’t literally be crucified twice, of course, but how do our sin and doubt figuratively “re-crucify” Him?

Day 4: Read Acts 2:29-40

This sermon by Peter was the first proclamation of the gospel after Christ's ascension into heaven. Peter broke it down for the crowd: Unlike David or any other biblical hero, Christ died, was buried, resurrected, and ascended to the Father's right hand. Whatever or whomever you see as a hero or exalted figure, only Christ is Lord. Therefore, allegiance to Him, submission to His authority, and the acts of repentance and baptism are the logical conclusions.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is God's promise to seal us for salvation and empower us to live out the gospel. From these first-century Jewish scoffers to your next-door neighbor, all are called to respond to this proclamation. Indeed, even Christians with the Holy Spirit's help are called to remember and live in light of the gospel (John 14:26).



How will you introduce the gospel to someone in your life?

Day 5: Read Acts 2:41-47

After all we've read in this session, the culmination of the story is God's people believing, embodying, and sharing the gospel. While God did a miraculous work at Pentecost, He still saves multitudes of people every day all over the globe. We often pray for "revival," and rightly so, but sometimes this prayer can downplay the everyday, seemingly mundane aspects of gospel living.

These people were living, breathing miracles—every one of them transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. They had received a gift and rejoiced in it daily. They worshiped together through believing and proclaiming right doctrine, hanging out and eating together, serving one another and their neighbors, and joyfully and humbly walking through the day-to-day grind of life. There was nothing special about these people other than they had been given the Holy Spirit and were willing to listen to Him. As each of us receives the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus, may we do the same.



What are 2-3 aspects of this description of the early church that you can grow in?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- The Holy Spirit indwells and fills God’s people (Acts 2:1-4).
- The Holy Spirit empowers and emboldens God’s people (Acts 2:22-24,36-40).
- The Holy Spirit works through God’s people to grow the church (Acts 2:41-47).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



When do you typically possess your greatest sense of belonging to a community?



What should it look like to live in the community of the church in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Notes

UNIT 28

SESSION 1

1. J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020) [eBook].
2. Martin Luther, quoted in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, eds. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingle, and Lubomír Batka (OUP Oxford, 2014) [eBook].
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SESSION 2

1. A. W. Tozer, *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit, in Life in the Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 24.
2. Andrew Murray, in *Andrew Murray On Prayer* (Whitaker House, 1998) [eBook].

CHRISTMAS SESSION

1. See Keiki Hendrix, "Christmas Classics: 'The Man and the Birds' by Paul Harvey," *Everyday Christian*, December 17, 2010, www.everydaychristian.com/blogs/post/christmas_classics_the_man_and_the_birds_by_paul_harvey]
2. Samuel Ngewa, "John," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1279.
3. C. S. Lewis, "The Incarnation," in *The Joyful Christian* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 52.

SESSION 3

1. R. C. Sproul, *Surprised by Suffering* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), 40.
2. Jen Wilkin, *None Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016) [eBook].
3. Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 4

1. Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 111.
2. David Platt, "Is Your Definition of Faith Biblical?" *Radical*, July 27, 2018, radical.net/is-your-definition-of-faith-biblical.
3. Leo the Great, Sermons 21.3, quoted in *James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. XI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

UNIT 29

SESSION 1

1. Randy Alcorn, *Managing God's Money* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2011), 4.
2. St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 79.
3. Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010), 91.

SESSION 2

1. Athanasius, *De Synodis*, in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, vol. IV in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1892), 453.
2. Eric Mason, *Unleashed* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015), 61.

SESSION 3

1. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 7, quoted in *Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 568.
3. John Newton, "Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound," in *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 104.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Christianity Today*, "John Newton: Reformed Slave Trader," May 12, 2020, www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/pastorsandpreachers/john-newton.html.

SESSION 4

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, 1955), 56.
2. "James 2," in Bible Lessons International, 2012, bible.org/book/export/html/21430.
3. Adrian Rogers, *Adrianisms: The Wit and Wisdom of Adrian Rogers* (Memphis, TN: Love Worth Finding Ministries, 2006), 57.
4. "Significant Statistics About Tithing and Church Generosity," CDF Capital, February 25, 2019, www.cdfcapital.org/tithing-generosity.

UNIT 30

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2. Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, in *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 350.
3. Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* 18, quoted in *Acts*, ed. Francis Martin, vol. V in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 2

1. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67, quoted in *The Early Christians in Their Own Words*, edited by Eberhard Arnold (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing, 2011), 83.
2. Rudolf Gwalther, Homily 65, Acts 9:10-16, quoted in *Acts*, eds. Esther Chung-Kim and Todd R. Hains, vol. 6 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014) [Wordsearch].
3. Billy Graham, in *Billy Graham in Quotes*, eds. Franklin Graham with Donna Lee Toney (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011) [eBook].

SESSION 3

1. Edward Mote, "The Solid Rock," in *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 511.
2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Complete* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 1981) [Wordsearch].
3. Heinrich Bullinger, *Commentary on Colossians* 1:23, quoted in *Philippians, Colossians*, ed. Graham Tomlin, vol. 11 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 4

1. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures 4.1, quoted in *1–2 Corinthians*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VII in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
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3. David S. Dockery, *The Doctrine of the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Seminary Extension of the Southern Baptist Seminaries, 1997), 36.