

BECOMING EFFECTIVE WITNESSES

3

POWER AND PRAYER: HOW TO TURN ON THE POWER SO YOU CAN SHINE YOUR LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Acts 4:1–22
Acts 4:23–31

Part One

By Don Smith

“Before Christ sent the church into the world he sent the Spirit into the church. The same order must be observed today.”

John Stott

“Any command of God carries with it the power to fulfill that command. Indeed, every Christian is given the Holy Spirit precisely to empower him to be a witness for Christ. ‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me. . . .’ (Acts 1:8). Every Christian can witness, every Christian should witness, every Christian must witness in order to be obedient to Christ”.

James Merritt

AIM OF STUDY

- To learn to depend on the Holy Spirit's power for witnessing since it is a supernatural activity and because we will need His help when we will face opposition.

KEY VERSES

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
Acts 1:8

“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

PREPARATION

Read over the notes on “**how to teach the Bible in small group**” and “**some practical suggestions for leading a small group discussion**” in Vineyard Church of Columbus' *Small Group Leadership Training Manual*. Before you read over the Scripture, pray that God would give you direction for leading your group and teach you something relevant. Then read through the passage and the Bible study below. **You will need to go over the questions and choose which ones you want to emphasize and which you could eliminate if your time is limited.** Note that the application questions are marked with an asterisk (*). Rather than leaving these to the end of the study, ask one or two as you work through the passage so people are being confronted by Scripture's truths and applying them to their own lives. If you find you are falling behind schedule and need to move ahead, you could summarize some of the passage and then go to the final questions.

These studies contain more background material and information on the passages than any group will cover in a meeting. The authors are providing this for the leaders' benefit—to help reduce your study and preparation time; to help resource you for possible questions group members may raise; and to clarify some gray areas of doctrine that may be in your mind as you prepare. Obviously we cannot exhaust any one subject in a document like this, so you may want to do further reading and discuss doctrine with your pastor. We highly recommend *The New Bible Dictionary* or *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* as excellent resources for study.

OPENERS

Does the faith you celebrate at church or in small group sometimes feel disconnected from the “real world” you face during the rest of the week?

Obtain a response from a few members.

In the book of Acts we see how God took a newly formed group of believers and closed that gap by practicing a rhythm of two kinds of experiences which we still participate in today. These patterns flow throughout Acts as the narrative moves back and forth between (1) **internal** meetings of the church and (2) **external** encounters with the surrounding culture. Acts includes more than twenty growth (of faith) narratives and more than fifty engagement (with outsiders) narratives. We clearly see a connection between the development of faith and the witness of the church.

Let's consider **Pattern #1: Gathering for worship and growth.**

The gathering process includes worship services, praise gatherings, prayer meetings, fellowship over meals, teaching for growth, and opportunity to minister to one another.

How does our small group fit this pattern of gathering believers?

The purpose of our small group is to be one of the major ways the saints come together to be built up for ministry—to people in the church, in our households and routine spheres of life, and in the world. Small groups are a means to prepare us to be in the world but not of the world; to learn how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil by the power of the blood and our testimony. As we learn to love God and be loved by God, we will grow in our love for each other and those who are not yet Christians.

Let's consider **Pattern #2: Scattering into the world.**

How has God sent or scattered you in the world?

We live in the world as we pursue our work and responsibilities and as we relate to family, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, business people, etc. In our daily lives, we experience pressures, conflicts, and opportunities to engage unbelievers whether they are inspecting, considering, or opposing our faith. As we abide in Jesus and live out the truth of His Word, through the gracious help of His Holy Spirit, we can offer outsiders a glimpse of a life lived in a faith relationship with God.

Rather than being disconnected, these two arenas need to be vitally connected. The maturing of our faith, as we gather for worship and growth, supplies much-needed strength as we engage the world. And the realities of life outside the fellowship can alert us to areas where we need to grow in faith.

Pray together that as you study God's Word, His Spirit will show you how He wants to grow, empower and send your group to accomplish your will.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Tradition has assigned the name, "The Acts of the Apostles" to the book we are studying. But the book of Acts actually shows the "acts" of the Holy Spirit and the "acts" of a whole lot of ordinary people like us. In the beginning of the book, these Christians appear confused and fearful just as we are at times. But throughout the

book we see them progressively reaching out to the whole world in power and love to proclaim salvation in Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. W.A. Criswell points out that something happened early in the life of the church to cause this dramatic change. Acts 1:8 provides the answer: “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.”

Jesus promised that when the Holy Spirit came, his followers would have a new ability to tell others the truth about Himself. Moreover, they wouldn't just “do evangelism,” they would live a lifestyle that spoke about the reality of Jesus' resurrection and the Holy Spirit would bring conviction of that truth to others. Luke, the physician who traveled with Paul wrote both the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Besides the role of the Holy Spirit, he portrays the spread of the gospel following the Acts 1:8 pattern from the Jews in Jerusalem to the Gentiles (non-Jews) and the establishment and growth of the early church.

STUDY THE PASSAGE: Acts 4:1-22

To understand why the events in Acts 4 are taking place, we need to understand what happened in Chapter 3. A man, lame from birth, was instantaneously healed when Peter and John prayed for him. The man began “walking and leaping, and praising God.” This attracted a great number of people who were interested in how it happened. Peter told them that Jesus had healed the man, and used the opportunity to preach the gospel. As Chapter 4 begins, the religious leaders become upset and arrest Peter and John. So, in the passages we'll be studying, we see that the new believers in Acts are under great pressure from the world. They encountered: the arrest of their leaders (Acts 4:1–3); rage and plots against them (4:25); and threats (4:21, 29). In response, they gathered and prayed, and were filled with the Holy Spirit again (4:31; see Acts 2:4 for the previous filling).

1. Let's read Acts 4:1–4. Why did the religious leaders arrest Peter and John?

They were the enemies of Christ as He walked here on earth. He challenged their superficial attention to rules that had replaced a whole-hearted devotion to God. Jesus welcomed sinners who chose to repent while the religious leaders refused to reach out with God's mercy and love. Even though a few of the Pharisees embraced Jesus (Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea), most were skeptical and hostile to the followers of Jesus. Their comments on the apostles' lack of formal religious education revealed a contempt or arrogance towards these upstarts (4:13). The Sadducees, who did not believe in any resurrection, became great enemies of the church because the apostles were preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

2. Optional: Do you know of any examples today where religious groups try to control other movements of God's Spirit?

Like most new moves of the Spirit, the Vineyard movement experienced a great deal of persecution from our brothers and sisters in older established denominations. Ironically, the same thing probably had happened when their

denominations first started. In countries closed or hostile to Christianity, threats, imprisonment, and persecution to the point of murder has been occurring even in the past year. Sometimes religious fanatics who act violently towards Christians feel their beliefs are threatened by the mere presence of Christ's followers. Other situations may result from opposition to efforts to evangelize.

3. What happened despite the leaders' crackdown?

The number of men who heard and believed the apostles grew to about 5000.

***Can you think of a time when you saw people accept Christ in spite of the evangelist being persecuted?**

Aim for personal experiences of the group members, not simply retelling events from church history. E.g., when I was a senior in college, I lived in a dorm with international students. After casually talking with a German girl, we agreed to meet in her room to discuss Christianity more fully. When I entered her room at the arranged time, three other students were with her. As you might guess, I had walked into what felt like an ambush. The group asked me to defend past actions of insensitive Christians through history, as well as give answers to tough questions about the claims of Christianity. I left feeling very foolish. A few years later, when attending church in another town, I met a young man from India who had attended college with me. He said that he still recalled some of the things I said during that dorm discussion, while all I remembered was how lousy a witness I had been. The Lord had implanted some of those truths in his mind/heart. Later, a Christian faculty couple befriended him, and through further work of the Holy Spirit, he eventually gave his life to Jesus Christ (Beth Crawford, Ed.).

4. Let's continue with Acts 4:5–12. What did Annas and Caiaphas, two of the men who condemned Jesus to die, ask the apostles?

“By what power or name did you do this?” (v. 7).

5. What kind of power or authority were they interested in?

Even though it is God who appoints people to positions of authority (Rom. 13:1), and these were supposed spiritual leaders of God's own people, they primarily operated out of human or worldly power. If they were men who had “a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5), then they may not have ever experienced God's Spirit touching and empowering them. Just as they had accused Jesus of working miracles by Satan's power (Matt. 12:24), they may have suspected the apostles of nothing less.

6. What happened before Peter began to speak (v. 8)?

The Holy Spirit filled Peter and enabled him to speak boldly to these educated men. Jesus' promises in Acts 1:8 as well as Matt. 10:19-20 were coming true. Before Pentecost, Peter usually just opened his mouth and put his foot in it. But now, filled

with the Holy Spirit as on Pentecost, he astonished the leaders with his speech and courage. And, all the disciples were being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit to bear testimony to Jesus beginning in Jerusalem.

***What kind of power do you usually rely on?**

Many of us rely on our own strengths—our intellect, our will, our skills, our appearance or background—whatever we consider our best assets. Few of us have learned to live like Jesus and always depend on the Father—the power of His Word, and the power of His Spirit (John 5:19-20,30; John 8:28).

7. What do you think concerned these religious leaders?

They wanted to hold onto their religious and political power, but see it slipping away. In response to the preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the church had grown almost 60% in a few days to about 5000 men. (Now that's a work of God's Spirit!) If your group doesn't pick up on the amazing numerical growth, you can call their attention to Acts 4:4, or mention the size before asking the next question.

8. Optional: How long do you think it took the Columbus Vineyard to get to that size?

That growth took about 14 years, from ca 250 people in 1987 to over 5000 in 2001. And yet many people consider our church to have a rapid growth rate, so consider the impact of this new church forming in less than a year following Jesus' death.

9. Will someone please read Acts 4:13-18 aloud? What were the rulers' reactions to the healing and Peter's preaching?

They were astonished—at the unschooled apostles' courage and speaking ability, and at the man who was now healed. They conferred privately and admitted that this was an “outstanding miracle,” but they still wanted to squelch it. This man had been crippled over 40 years (v. 22), and yet the so-called men of God didn't rejoice or give thanks. These leaders refused to believe in Jesus. Instead they were very threatened and began to plot. Their responses revealed fearful, hard hearts as they attempted to maintain control. Many of us might react the same way, not easily embracing the miraculous things the Holy Spirit does when He comes in power. These leaders may have been exhibiting pride, hurt, anger, jealousy, competition, and/or revenge in warning the apostles not to speak of Jesus any longer.

***Do you know of situations today where there has been a miracle, but people still will not believe? Why?**

People today say that if they could only see a miracle, they would believe. That is not true. The problem is not a problem of the lack of facts or not satisfying the mind. There are recorded and verified examples of miraculous healings in many

books. It is a problem of the will and of the heart. Unbelief is a condition of the human heart that is in stubborn rebellion against God. You might want to have an example ready to share if no one speaks up, but don't elaborate or take too much time with the details. For reference, see *Power Healing*, "Appendix F: Signs and Wonders in Sheffield"; *Power Evangelism*, "Appendix B: Signs and Wonders in the Twentieth Century," (Wimber and Springer).

10. Let's finish with Acts 4:19-22. How did the apostles reply to the Sanhedrin?

"But Peter and John replied, 'Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard'" (v. 19). They were prepared to defy this threat.

11. What had they learned about authority?

They believed that God's authority surpassed all other authority, including that of the religious leaders. As Creator and Ruler, He has authority over everyone and everything in both the spiritual and physical realms. Certainly Jesus' resurrection from the dead had driven this home! Many Scriptures emphasize God's sovereign control including Deut.4: 39; Is. 40:9-28; 46:10-11; Dan. 4:25-37; John 8:48-58; Col. 1:15-20; Rev. 4; Rev. 19-22.

12. Why would they not keep quiet?

They had been eyewitnesses to the greatest miracle ever performed—a dead man not only rose but He met all the criteria for the long awaited Messiah. They had become witnesses of Jesus just as He said they would in Acts 1:8!

***When have you felt you just had to tell someone what God has done in your life?**

APPLYING THE TEXT

***In summary, how did God demonstrate His power and authority through Peter and John?**

He healed a man who had been unable to walk his entire life!

He gave Peter courage to preach the gospel and call the crowd to repentance and faith in Jesus.

He enabled Peter and John to stand before powerful religious leaders and boldly proclaim the healing was in Jesus name, the One they had crucified.

They went on and stated that salvation was found in Jesus alone, which implied that the temple sacrificial system the Jews had followed for 1300 years (Douglas, p. 215) would no longer be necessary. However, this was not fully understood until later, and the disciples continued to meet in the temple for sacrifices, worship, and prayer. By calling Jesus the "Christ" (Greek for

“anointed one” or equivalent to the Jewish term “Messiah”), the apostles were reprimanding these leaders who had rejected and approved of the death of the Savior promised by God to His people. See Is.9: 6-7; Jer.23: 5-6.

Finally, God strengthened the apostles to defy the leaders’ threats against speaking any more about Jesus.

*** What were they risking when they confronted some of Jesus’ primary enemies? What are you willing to risk to share the gospel with others?**

They could have been re-arrested, accused and tried for blasphemy, turned over to the Roman authorities, and also put to death as Jesus had been. Or, they could have faced an angry, murderous mob scene and been put to death on the spot just as Stephen was in Acts 6 and 7.

***The Holy Spirit was their source of wisdom, boldness and strength. How can this small group tap into the Holy Spirit’s power more effectively?**

The disciples preached the news of Jesus, worked healing miracles, boldly answered questions, and stood up to authorities that defied God’s kingdom purposes. But these ordinary working class men did not do this on their own power or ability. They had to rely on the revelation of wisdom and truth and on the infilling of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised them in John 14-16 and Acts 1:8. The Spirit came as promised, but they had to wait as Jesus commanded. Several key times in the Holy Spirit empowered the new church leaders were times they had gathered to pray. See Acts 2:1-4; 4:23-31; 13:1-4; 16:25-34; and instances of laying on of hands, which may have also been times of prayer.

***How can the resources of Vineyard Columbus help equip us to respond to the demands of our world?**

Vineyard Columbus offers ways for believers to gather corporately for teaching, worship, prayer, and hands on learning of what is taught. Some examples include weekend services, small groups, Saturday Life of the Disciple Classes, marriage seminars, conferences, Vineyard Leadership Institute, resources available at the bookstore and on line, etc. Vineyard Columbus also offers opportunities to reach out and share what we’ve learned or received such as Fruit of the Vine Food Pantry, Free Medical Clinic, Homeless Ministry, Project Compassion, prison and nursing home ministries, pro-life ministries, short term mission trips, single parent outreaches, etc. We try to offer opportunities to both learn about the words and participate in the works of Jesus.

Pray together for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit during the close of the study. Wait on His ministry either after this or after you take time to worship as a group.

WRAPPING IT UP

This week, as we go about our usual tasks, keep in mind that God wants to use us to reach others who are lost. We are His witness to those around us. They are already watching how we speak, treat others, work, drive, and spend our money. Be alert for the Holy Spirit's leading us to someone rather than viewing people as interruptions. Listen to the needs expressed by others and pray the Holy Spirit would open their hearts and also empower us, so they could hear about the good news of our Risen Savior and Lord.

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Acts 4:23–31

Part Two

By Don Smith

“Before Christ sent the church into the world he sent the Spirit into the church. The same order must be observed today.”

John Stott

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AIM OF STUDY

- To learn to depend on the Holy Spirit's power for witnessing since it is a supernatural activity and because we will need His help when we will face opposition.

KEY VERSES

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
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“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

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OPENERS

Last week, we discussed two patterns frequently occurring in the New Testament book of Acts: one, **connecting** with God and other members of the Body of Christ so our faith is strengthened; and second, **reaching out** to or **interacting** with others who are not yet part of Jesus' Body. Did anyone have a significant conversation with a non-Christian this past week that you could briefly share?

If not, go on and ask the following after encouraging them to keep praying for openings with friends or acquaintances.

Would anyone like to share about a time this week when you felt God strengthening your faith or increasing your ability to talk to others about the gospel?

Be prepared to answer this one first especially if folks seem hesitant to speak up or uncertain of what to share. Examples of this might be a sense of God speaking to you from a passage of Scripture you read or studied in your quiet time; a time in which you felt your faith stirred up in worship or when someone prayed for you; a sense of expectation as you interceded for someone who is not yet trusting Jesus; some practical help you got from attending a class on evangelism, etc. Remember to emphasize that we are dependent on the Holy Spirit's power to be able to witness effectively although we are also responsible to be available to tell others about Jesus Christ and responsible to grow in our skills of sharing our faith.

As we look at the next portion of Acts 4, let's look for ways that the Holy Spirit is working either to build faith or increase the impact of the church on their community.

First of all, let's pray together expecting that God's Spirit will teach each one of us something valuable from His Word.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Tradition has assigned the name, "The Acts of the Apostles" to the book we are studying. But the book of Acts actually shows the "acts" of the Holy Spirit *and* the "acts" of a whole lot of ordinary people like us. In the beginning of the book, these Christians appear confused and fearful just as we are at times. But throughout the book we see them progressively reaching out to the whole world in power and love to proclaim salvation in Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. Something happened early in the life of the church to cause this dramatic change. Acts 1:8 provides the answer: "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." Luke, the physician who traveled with Paul wrote both the gospel of Luke and Acts. Besides the role of the Holy Spirit, he emphasizes the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jews) and the establishment and growth of the early church.

STUDY THE PASSAGE: Acts 4:23-31

Last week we discussed the events in the first part of Acts 4: 1-22. The religious authorities had arrested Peter and John after the apostles had played a part in the healing of a man lame from birth. A crowd had gathered, Peter had preached the gospel, and the religious leaders felt threatened. While being questioned by two of the men who helped instigate Jesus' arrest and death, Peter and John showed amazing courage proclaiming the gospel. They were threatened not to speak about Jesus any further, "but Peter and John replied, 'Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard'" (v. 19).

So, in the passage we are studying, we see that the new believers in Acts were under tremendous pressure from the world. They encountered their leaders' arrest (Acts 4:1–3), rage and plots against them (4:25), and threats (4:21, 29). Let's see how they responded to the danger and dilemma they faced.

1. Let's have someone read Acts 4:23-28. What's the first thing Peter and John did on their release (v. 23)?

They returned to their circle of Christian friends and reported everything that the Jewish leaders had said. They knew they needed the support of other Christians, and believed God would be present in power when they fellowshiped and prayed in unity.

2. How did the church members respond to the apostles' accounts of being arrested, questioned, and threatened (v. 24)? (What didn't they do?)

They turned to God in prayer. They didn't panic. They didn't hold a meeting to discuss revenge or vote on worldly strategies to protect themselves. Instead, they immediately began to pray in a united effort. They probably didn't automatically begin praying the exact same words at once, so what's recorded in Acts is probably what was at the core of their prayer time.

It may be worthwhile to point out that prayer is asking for and seeking God's will, not just trying to convince Him to follow our agenda. If questions arise about how to know God's will when we pray, Adrian Rogers (*Believers' Study Bible*) offers this: "The secret of knowing God's will in prayer is not only to know the Bible and let its truth abide in us, but to be very, very sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. Remember that because you are a temple of God and a house of prayer, God's Holy Spirit abides within you, and He will help you pray (Rom. 8:26, 27).... Prayer is the Holy Spirit's finding a desire in the heart of the Father and then placing that desire into our hearts. The desire is then sent back to heaven in the power of the cross. This is why we must learn to wait before the Father in meditation and openness when we pray." When we examine the believers' prayer in Acts 4, we see that they are led to pray both from the Jewish scriptures, Psalm 2, and to pray for God's gospel to go forth, not their lives to be free of troubles. We would have to admit that this is not what would come naturally to our minds apart from the work of God's Word and Spirit guiding our thoughts and feelings.

3. How did they address God? How did the passage of Scripture quoted in their prayer shed light on their situation?

They spoke to Him as the Sovereign Lord who made and ruled over everything—even their enemies. In quoting Ps. 2:1-2, they recognized the futility of any institution or power opposing the Lord and His Servant. The arresting officials were actually plotting against the Lord and His Anointed One, not just the apostles. They realized that God was not caught off guard by Peter and John's arrest, but in fact that He had predicted and known it would happen! He had even decided that His

own Anointed One, Jesus, would suffer and die at the hands of the Jewish and Roman elite. Note that “anointed one” refers to Jesus being set apart or chosen by God for His special service or work. This idea was used in the Old Testament for kings, prophets, and priests, and specifically referred in the prophetic writings to the coming Messiah.

***What part do you see God playing when you or loved ones are going through extreme pressure?**

***Why do you think God doesn't always remove us from difficulties?**

This question could take up an entire meeting, so decide beforehand how much time you want to spend or whether you want to postpone it to another time. You could reply to any group member's question that the problems of why evil exists, why God allows suffering, or why God tests us are thorny ones that take a lot of time to sort through. If you do discuss this, you may want to summarize that ultimately, some of God's purposes are a mystery to us that we may not understand until we see all of eternity when we are in heaven. In a nutshell, God does not remove us from difficulties partly because we learn to depend more completely on Him than ourselves; partly because we learn to exercise faith in His dependable character; and partly because He can bring attention to and increase His name/reputation by working when no one else can deliver us.

4. Let's go on to Acts 4:29-31. What do they ask God for?

They asked for boldness to share the gospel; and for healings, miracles, signs and wonders done in the name or in the manner of, or to honor Jesus. It's amazing that they didn't ask God to remove them from difficulty. They wanted the good news of Jesus Christ to go forward no matter what!

***What do you usually ask God for in hard circumstances? Why?**

5. How was their prayer answered (v. 31)?

The Lord visited them powerfully and they knew it! The place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were again filled with Holy Spirit who enabled them to speak God's word boldly. In answering their prayer, God both encouraged their faith in Him with a sign of His presence (shaking) and increased their ability to witness by filling them with courage.

6. Optional: What do you think they were expecting to have happen?

Certainly the 120 believers who were physically, emotionally, and spiritually impacted by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost might have expected some miraculous touch from God. See Acts 2:1-4 if you think most of your group is not familiar with this event. But the shaking may have also reminded them of Old Testament manifestations of God that resembled earthquakes as in Ex. 19:18 and Is. 6:4

(Marshall, p. 107). Later God would deliver Paul and Silas from prison and advance the gospel through another miraculous shaking in Acts 16:26.

***What do you expect when you ask God to help you to share the good news with others?**

Most of us don't expect God to visit or manifest Himself so dramatically. We set our sights much lower and hope that God might nudge us to speak to someone we see nearly every day at work, school, or living near us. The real emphasis here should not be on the miraculous experience but on the empowering and increased ability to share Christ effectively. An absence of earthquakes should not stop us from asking God for more power and effectiveness in witnessing to His Son's gift of life.

APPLYING THE TEXT

***When you read this passage, do you want the Holy Spirit to fill and embolden you to witness?**

***Would you be willing to go through the same things the disciples faced in order for this to happen in your life?**

***What would you be willing to do to see this happen in our church and our small groups?**

Here are some possible answers, but you group members may think of more. First, let the group brainstorm for a few minutes. Don't jump in too soon since they are more likely to remember and internalize the answer if it comes from them. If they have trouble responding, you could suggest one of these at a time to help jump-start the discussion.

Worship?

Fast and pray?

Maintain the unity of the Body? How would you promote that?

Change your normal routine?

Serve others?

Take risks?

Be a witness?

Experience rejection or face persecution?

***What one thing would you like to see more of in this small group that would help you trust God and witness more effectively?**

WRAPPING IT UP

As modern-day believers we, too, face the drain of unfriendly encounters in our lives and work. Like the Christians in Acts, we need to gather regularly for spiritual encouragement, for refocusing on the truth in God's word, and for refueling—to be filled up again with the Holy Spirit. The Lord knows how important it is for us to be connected to His Person through the

dynamic filling of His Spirit both in private, in public gatherings of His Body, and as He calls on us to speak boldly the truth we know about His Son Jesus Christ.

Pray together asking the Holy Spirit to help each of you believe that He will come and fill you, give you a desire to share the good news, and open hearts of those around you to receive Him.

You may want to continue to wait on His Presence or move to a time of worship and then wait for His leading and filling.

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