

Summit Church

28 Days of



Jan. 2021 A 28 Day Walk Through the Book Of Acts

28 Days of Fire

Welcome! “28 Days of Fire” is a devotional written by some of our people, representing different age groups and perspectives. It has been designed for the whole church to press into the Lord’s presence as we pray for a mighty outpouring of God’s spirit. As we dive into the book of Acts, let our cry be, “Lord, do it again.”

Starting on January 3rd, read one chapter of the book of Acts each day, as well as the devotional. May you be encouraged by the devotional, then follow the prayer point or journaling prompt.

On Day 7, we will incorporate our 21-day fast; consider what this fast will look like for you, and most importantly, let’s all be praying with the intention for a mighty move of His Spirit. I pray that you will not only participate but that you will also enjoy these exciting 28 days of fire! May the Lord challenge you, and may his word come alive.

Zechariah 4:6—So he said to me, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.

Blessings,
Pastor Lance

Day 1 - Read Acts 1—Pastor Lance Steeves

Acts 1:8—*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (NLT)*

Witnessing can be a daunting task. For those of us who grew up in Sunday School, our teachers would reward us for bringing friends. They would challenge us to tell people about Jesus, we would hear evangelists' stories of life transformations, and then the challenge would be proclaimed: Step out in faith, you can do it, it's easy!

So, we muster up boldness. *Today is going to be the day that I share Jesus with... well... anybody!* The day comes, we watch people walk by, and a fierceness rises up deep within. Some of the people we notice as friends, some strangers; regardless, we wait for our moment like a cat waits to pounce on its next meal. Then, fear starts to penetrate, anxiety rises up, heartbeats start to rise, and before we know it, another day has come and gone, and you have no amazing story to share on Sunday. You begin to feel disheveled.

In our Key verse, we learn something powerful. *When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be my witnesses telling people about me everywhere.* Isn't that powerful! We have a partnership with the Holy Spirit. Another verse puts it like this: Zechariah 4:6 - "...it's not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty." Fear may still rise, anxiety may come; however, the difference is that we don't share about Jesus alone; we don't share to win a contest or to have a cool story. When we partner with the Holy Spirit who is inside of us, we follow His lead, and that changes everything!

Prayer Point: Perhaps you have always been nervous to share your faith. Ask the Holy Spirit to partner with you to overcome fear. Start praying for the person he lays in your heart, and then step out in obedience! Remember when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. *You will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere.*

Blessings, Pastor Lance

Acts 2 - Michael Collings

Verse 4—*And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

In Genesis, the man Adam is seen walking with God in the cool of the evening. There is conversation, fellowship, and intimacy shared between both the Creator and His creation. Later, we see man fall from God's grace through his own sin and rebellion and cast from the Garden to a place of separation—not just in self but also from others, and most importantly, God.

Moving into Exodus 33, we then see the person of Moses arguing with God, refusing to lead God's people any further unless God's presence also accompanies them. Later, still in the Gospel's, we see Jesus telling his disciples, *It is good that he goes so that the comforter may come, the Holy Spirit, the abiding and manifest presence of Almighty God*. Then, upon the very life of our Lord Jesus Christ surrendered on the cross, we see the veil of sin that has separated man from God's presence being torn from top to bottom. This then opened the way, once again, for man to experience God's presence in a living and breathing way. Just as Adam experienced God's presence in the cool of the day so now we also can experience that same intimacy through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Breath of God now bringing life to our spirit, igniting our heart, filling our lungs, and speaking forth His life through our tongue in declaring the glories of God as the Spirit now gives us utterance.

Have you experienced the presence of God in a real, tangible way?

Do you desire greater intimacy with God?

What does more of God's presence look like to you?

Have you ever sought after the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Journal about these questions and pray for an increase of God's presence in you and over our nation.

Acts 3 - Sharon Juel

Vs. 5—The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. But Peter said, I don't have any silver or gold for you. Vs. 6 But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!

In the previous chapter, Acts chapter 2, the church was born with the giving of the Holy Spirit to all who believe. One hundred and twenty believers received the Spirit of Christ in their hearts.

Peter preached, and 3000 joined them. God wants everyone to receive His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers believers and leads them in the footsteps of Jesus.

In the Passion Bible's introduction to Acts, there are two statements regarding the New Testament Church and the Holy Spirit. I would like to share them with you.

1. "The church of Jesus Christ is a distinct community who are on a love mission by the One Who loves the world with a fiery passion."
2. "Because of this Spirit, this community is an active community on an intentional mission to bear witness to the risen Christ in both word and deed."

The miracle in Acts 3:1-10 is the first recorded miracle of this church on a mission of love to the world. The Holy Spirit is central to the healing of this man crippled from birth. It would seem that Peter was compelled to speak the words in Acts 3:6 out love and compassion. "I don't have money, but I will give you this—by the power of the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, STAND UP AND WALK."

Peter then reaches out and pulls the crippled man to his feet. "Suddenly, POWER SURGED into his crippled feet and ankles!"

Peter and John were Jesus 'yielded lovers that the Holy Spirit was able to work through. They risked all, knowing that they could not heal this man, but God could. And He did. Their obedience caused so much joy and praise and dancing and astonishment.

Here are some thoughts for you to meditate on:

1. Do you believe God still heals today?
2. If you are sick today, give it to the Lord and see what He does with it.
3. Pray for someone who is sick today.

Prayer:

Thank You, Lord, for giving the church Your precious Holy Spirit. Teach me, Holy Spirit, about healing miracles. Help me to love the person in front of me.

Amen.

Acts 4 - Tamilla Simpson

While reading and studying, I came away with a few different lessons:

1. When you are obedient, you never know what God will do. In chapter three, a man in his forties, who was lame from birth, was healed. The religious leaders could not deny it. This healing was the cause of five thousand men (alone) being saved. I noticed the absence of women and children and wonder how many also came to Jesus? This was a big event. The Holy Spirit filled Peter, and it gripped men's hearts.
2. Peter preached the resurrection of Jesus and that of Salvation through Jesus alone. The Sadducees, who were the religious elite, didn't believe in a resurrection. Jesus is the cornerstone and was a stumbling block to them. They, along with the priests and captain of the temple, rulers, elders, scribes, "teachers of the law" were grieved, disturbed, and perplexed that Peter and John would preach this.
3. Noticeably absent to me are The Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection from the dead. They are mentioned throughout the New Testament. Where were they in this passage? I am wondering how many of the five thousand men who came to believe were Pharisees? Nicodemus was a Pharisee. Both he and Joseph of Arimathea were members of the Sanhedrin (the Council). Both helped to bury Christ.
4. Peter preached the salvation message to Annas, the high priest, Caiaphas, and the other rulers and elders of the people. Peter and John were just ordinary men. Noticing Peter and John hadn't gone to bible school or college, but because they had "been with Jesus" and were filled with the Holy Spirit, they became BOLD. Even though they were commanded and threatened by the religious leaders to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, they obeyed God by speaking the truth. They had to obey God over men and speak the truth about what they had seen and heard.
5. "All the people were praising God for what had happened." They were of one heart and soul. All possessions they had were shared. What is noticeable is that they obeyed the commandments from their hearts to "love one another."
6. Peter and John went back to their own community. They reported what was said and done. They praised God and prayed. The place was shaken. They were filled with the Spirit, and they were all speaking the word of God boldly. I noticed the more they obeyed, the bolder they became.

What do you "notice" when you are reading God's Word? Think about the times in your life when you have obeyed, and it made you bold. Pray that God will show you places in your life where obedience is lacking. Journal if you will and keep on obeying.

Acts 5 - Derrick Oliveira

(NKJV)—*If this is of God you cannot overthrow it.*

40. And they agreed with him and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded them that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go.

41. So they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

It makes you think about suffering, shame, and how this can be done for Christ's sake, for His name. I can only imagine that while the apostles were being beaten, they were not counting themselves worthy. They were most likely scared and praying. Similar, to sharing a shameful portion of your testimony. Put another way, suffering shame for Christ. This may be no comparison to being physically beaten, yet the world and its ways can metaphorically beat down the Christian. Fortunately, being sure of your submission to His will, you too can suffer shame for Christ in this world. You may not be counting yourself worthy while its occurring. However, like the apostles, when God delivers you from the beating you just received, and you have listened to His guidance, you can rejoice that you too are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. Similar to completing a daunting task appointed to you from God, you can feel God smiling on your spirit. There is no greater joy than that which comes from the Lord.

What task will you perform today to possibly suffer for His name and rejoice that you are counted worthy of this blessing?

Application: Step out of your comfort zone in one area of your life this week and testify of the power of Christ in your life. Be transparent and share even if it is shameful. Pay attention to what happens afterward. I pray that you find yourself rejoicing in what the Lord has done. Bring glory to His name through your pain and suffering. It truly is a blessing.

Prayer: Pray for wisdom and guidance in this area In Jesus name.

Acts 6 - Cindy Steeves

Acts 6:1—*But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.*

2. *So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program.* 3. *And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility.* 4. *Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word."*

Rumblings. Rumblings are the sounds that tell us something bad is coming, such as a pending storm or low tire pressure in the vehicle we're driving, like the old saying, where there's smoke, there's fire!

The truth is growth is messy. It's easy to keep small areas tidy, but expansion means mess, and the church was expanding rapidly. I have driven by mansions and sighed at how wonderful it would be to live there and then soberly thought, but then I'd have to clean it!

God, in His faithfulness, doesn't just allow rumblings, but he also orchestrates them. The answer to resolving unity is valuing each other enough to address needs and concerns to bring solutions. The Apostles had the God-given wisdom to establish a team with the responsibility of distribution of the food. Everyone liked the idea, and the church continued to grow.

Ask the Lord, *what rumblings do I need to take action on? Father, what is your solution?*

Dear Father,

You are faithful in all your ways. Thank you for leading me through the messy days to bring me into the fullness of your plans.

Acts 7 - Tressa Mancini

Acts 7:57-59 - Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him 58 and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 He fell to his knees, shouting, Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died.

Prayer Devotion and Point: Today, pray for the persecuted church. Christians all over the world are facing daily persecution; let's pray for them right now.

Stephen had a message for Israel's religious leaders: They were *enemies* of God. They resisted the work of the Holy Spirit, just like their ancestors. They had murdered the Messiah, Jesus Christ! The Jewish leaders refused to listen. Instead, they made Stephen the first Christian martyr.

Today, more than 260 million Christians live in nations where they face severe persecution. As the authorities of Stephen's Day, many governments and political leaders around the world are hostile to the Gospel. Sometimes, those closest to a believer—family members and former friends—become the persecutors. "From Sudan to Russia, from Nigeria to North Korea, from

Colombia to India, followers of Christianity are targeted for their faith. They are attacked; they are discriminated against at work and at school; they risk sexual violence, torture, arrest, and much more” (Open Doors).

We are called to remember imprisoned saints and mistreated believers (Hebrews 13:3). Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you anew with Jesus’ love and compassion for the persecuted church. Pray for them. Take your time and let the Lord lead.

Ask God to comfort, protect, and strengthen them—that our persecuted brothers and sisters will endure and then inherit the crown of life (James 1:12). Pray that, like Stephen, they will forgive their persecutors. May their testimonies be a witness to those who oppose the good news of salvation.

Precious to the Lord are the lives of His children lost for Christ’s sake (Psalm 116:15).

Acts 8- Tressa Mancini

Acts 8:26-27—As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.” 27 So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship.

God commanded Philip to go on a detour, and He didn’t say why. The Lord simply expected Philip to go. Philip listened and obeyed.

He found a foreign eunuch puzzling over a passage in Isaiah. The Lord had softened the man’s heart, and he was ready to hear the Good News. The place, the timing, the people—God arranged each detail. He even ordained the eunuch’s choice of reading material!

The fruit of Philip’s obedience transcended distance and time. Through the eunuch, the Gospel came to Ethiopia. The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to include Philip’s story in Acts for posterity (us!). All of this happened because Philip listened and obeyed.

What is the first part of Summit Church’s motto? To know God! We learn to know God by listening to Him, whether He speaks through an angel or directly in a still, small voice. Today, pray that you will hear God with greater clarity. Pray that the Lord will open your heart to increased obedience to Him. Let Him expand His Lordship into new areas of your life. May the Lord show you the good works He has prepared in advance for you to do this day (Ephesians 2:10).

May your path grow brighter like the dawn as you walk in growing obedience to the voice of Jesus (Proverbs 4:18).

Prayer Devotion and point: Here at Summit Church, we desire to know God! Philip had a visitation from an angel telling him that he had to go for the Lord had an assignment for him. Pray today that you would grow in obedience to the voice of the Lord, however He chooses to speak.

Acts 9 - Jerry Gregoire—The Endearment of God

Acts 9:3-5—Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to The Way, whether men or women, he might take them prisoners to Jerusalem.

My wife often says, "God is a crazy man." Who would have conceived the plans that Jesus had for this man? How often do we write someone off as too far out and go for easy fruit—people who agree with our world view, people like us, people with our political bent. Yet Jesus taught his disciples to "pray and bless those that persecute you." This tormentor, who dragged believers out of their beds, out of their homes—this man who tore parents away from their children and husbands from their wives—was on the top of their list.

Jesus called out to Saul, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" By repeating Saul's name twice, Jesus wasn't trying to get his attention; the blinding light sufficiently accomplished that. Rather, Jesus was showing His endearment to Saul. I'm sure that the believers understood God's love for Saul, just as we would. But did they understand God's endearment of Saul? Did they understand how deeply Jesus loved Saul? Do we understand that for those who are against us?

Paul was deeply immersed in the word of God. He had meditated on it. He sought to live it out. His zeal knew no bounds. And he felt that he had to protect it, at least his understanding of it. So deep was this in Saul that he forsook the advice of Gamaliel, his teacher and mentor. Gamaliel, who cautioned the Sanhedrin not to come against The Way, "For if it is of human origin, it will fall away, but if it is from God, you will not be able to stop it and you will only find yourselves fighting against God." Saul's fault was not that he rejected God but that he did not understand.

A goad is a sharp instrument used to keep an animal on the right path. If they kicked against it, they would only hurt themselves. The Rabbis of the day taught that the word of God was a goad. Its purpose then and now is to keep us on track so that we might have life. And yet, this very goad that Saul so trusted in, he now found himself kicking against. This time not just the word of God but the Living Word of God. Yet Jesus did not condemn Saul's lack of understanding, but in concert with His preordained will and the prayers of the believers that were in accord with His will, God does the unthinkable. Yes, "God is a crazy man!" If we allow Him to take our prayers out of a box, we will find ourselves praying His will, and we will see unimaginable things happen with those who persecute us, to those who God is endeared.

Acts 10 - Liberty Steeves (Age 12)

Acts 10: 1-8—In Ceasarea there lived a Roman army officer, named Cornelius. Who was the captain of the Italian Regiment. He was a devout for God-fearing man, as everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regulator to God. One afternoon about 3 o clock he had a vision and what she saw at angel of God coming toward him. Cornelius! The angel said. Cornelius looked at him and tear. what is it sir?" he asked the angel. And the angel replied, your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! Now send some men to Joppa, and summon A man name Simon Peter. He is staying with Simon, a tanner Who lives near the seashore. As soon as the angel was gone Cornelius call two of his household servants and a devout soldier, one of his personal attendance. He told them what had happened and sent them off to Joppa.

I think it is very important to recognize that our good deeds are recognized and paid back with Jesus. I remember once when I lived in Cold Lake, a lady from my church came up to me and gave me a skirt. She told me something along the lines of, "Thank you for taking care of my family. Your family has helped us so much, and remember, God always gives back!" I had that skirt for another year until friends from a different province came to our house. They had two children who would have to ride hours home with no toys to keep them occupied. I gave the little girl some toys and that skirt. I love how God will bless you, and you get to bless others. There is joy in getting a gift and also in giving a gift.

Pray and ask the Lord who he would like you to bless.

Acts 11 - Jerry Claar

2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him 3 and said, "You went into the house of the uncircumcised men and ate with them." 4 Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story...

Peter had just done what his culture believed was a vile and unclean thing. He met with the Gentiles in their home, and worse than that, he ate with them. This violated the law of Moses.

To the Jews, this was unthinkable and was of more concern to them than what God was doing with the Gentiles. Remember that Jesus was also criticized for eating with Gentiles *and* tax collectors. They found out that Peter had shared with the Gentiles about salvation through Jesus, who was their very own Personal God. Jesus did not belong to the uncircumcised Gentiles; Salvation was only for the Jewish people.

Peter then took them back to the beginning of the dream that had been given to him three times. God sees things so much differently than we do. He loves *all* mankind to the point of the death of His only begotten Son.

So, what can we take from this? Don't be surprised if when we follow what God has told us to do, and we have backed up what we have heard with His Word, that we may not have been believed, or that we may have been criticized. This will come not only from our enemies but also from friends and those close to us. People may even walk away from us. Remain strong and courageous. Do as God has directed you to do and follow through. This will please God and bring you closer to Him. As a result of Peter's faithfulness, we have been allowed to hear and respond to the Good News of God's salvation for us! Can we do any less?

Acts 12 - McKenzie Steeves

11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen." 12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.

Peter didn't even notice what had happened! Everyone has heard the saying, "God works in mysterious ways." I disagree! God works. God works in His perfect time. Working at the exact time that He knows is best! Peter was half asleep; he was groggy. He was unready and unprepared. It dawned on him that the power of prayer and petition through his fellow family in Christ after he realized he was saved he continued to pray. God works in ways we can never

understand, but how can He work if we do not ask? God moves when we speak. It's not mysterious or hidden. God moves when we ask. God is not a God of secrets. He's a God of love and mercy. God wants to be known; he wants to help us; and he wants to take care of us. But we need to ask—we need to ask relentlessly. The Jewish people prayed day and night. And then God moved, and Peter praised him. Prayer for rescue and asking for aid is not complicated. It's simple. Before you decide that God is mysterious and unreal, have you prayed? Have you asked your friends to partner with you? God wants to move, and he wants to include us in His plans, so let's pray.

Let's ask God to forgive us for not praying and let Him fill us with a renewed passion for His kingdom to come.

Acts 13 (Encourage One Another) - Jerry Gregoire

Paul and Barnabas had just made the arduous journey from Paphos. The journey took them through rough country that was the hideout of bandits and thieves. At Paphos, they had seen the miraculous hand of God rebuke Elymas, a sorcerer, who was opposing them. God, at Paul's word, removed Elymas' sight. Now, we find them on the Sabbath at the Synagogue. After the reading of the Scriptures, Paul, as a visiting rabbi, was asked to share encouragement. Rather than extolling the miracle that they had just seen days earlier or the protection of God through dangerous territory, Paul chose to share another journey: The journey of the Jewish family through time. His purpose is to connect the promises of God through the ages to Jesus. It is a deep dive into history, and it earns him an invitation for more. The following week, however, things go awry as the people's heart motives are revealed. 1 Paul formally turns to the Gentiles, fulfilling Jesus' purpose for his ministry spoken in Acts 9.

Paul's encouragement is more than simply a nice word or blessing that all agree with and send him on. It is saturated in truth and points to Jesus. Jesus' opportunity to speak encouragement ended similarly in Luke 4:16-28. In both cases, the encouragement was rooted in truth, revealed the heart, and ended, one might say, "Not so well!" Yet God's purposes are fulfilled.

Encouragements are not to make us more esteemed by people. They are to build up and make the Kingdom of God more visible in our world. They are rooted in truth. At times, they don't end well. Sometimes the reason is us, and we need to walk humbly. Other times it is the hand of God on a person's life. Have you ever had a well-intentioned word go badly? We must always walk humbly with our God and love our fellow man. Spend some time with an open heart and allow the Holy Spirit to test your heart. Pray. Forgive. If necessary, seek forgiveness. Always love with an open heart.

When I was a young man, I lived on encouragement (nice words). Then I found myself in a group that would encourage me, but it was more than just a feel-good time. It had the sting of truth in it. It caused me to struggle. I needed to learn that encouragement comes not to make me feel good but to draw me closer to Jesus.

Encouragement is a two-way street. Whether on the giving end or receiving end, we will make mistakes. But love always builds up both the giver and receiver.

How often are we to encourage? Hebrews 3 says it pretty succinctly, "As long as the day is still called 'Today.'" Why do we encourage? Hebrews continues, "So that none of us will be hardened."

Ask the Lord to remind you of someone who encouraged you with the truth. Thank the Lord for that person and send thanks or encouragement to them.

Acts 14 - Kim Bares

Acts 14:14-15—14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting, 15 Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.

The context of these verses is that after the pagan people of Lystra and Derbe witnessed Paul heal a man, lame from birth, they sought to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods. Paul and Barnabas tore their clothing because only the living God is worthy of worship. In Jewish tradition, tearing of clothes is associated with mourning, grief, and loss. It is a sign of humility. In Joel 2:13, the Lord, through the prophet Joel says to "rend your heart and not your garments." Rending our hearts is the spiritual reality of a physical action of turning from sin and turning to God. Pride (the opposite of humility) is sin. Romans 12:3 says "... do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you." Pride is deceptive. It is a blind spot for many. We often do not see it in our own lives, but we readily see it in others. If we do see it in our own lives, we may see it as a good thing or put a positive spin on it. However, pride is not positive. Synonyms of pride are arrogance, conceit, smugness, and self-importance. Luke 18:11 reveals how God feels about pride. "The proud Pharisee 'prayed' this prayer. 'Thank God, I am not a sinner like everyone else, especially like that tax collector over there! For I never cheat, I don't commit adultery ...' In verse 14, Jesus says, "I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home forgiven! For the proud shall be humbled, but the humble shall be

honored.” Think of people you know who are prideful or arrogant. Do you enjoy being around them? Do others think of you that way? Be open to the Holy Spirit to show you if pride is an area of sin in your life. If it is, then repent and ask the Holy Spirit to help you be humble. This needs to be a daily exercise. If you do not humble yourself, God will! Mother Teresa said, “Humility is the mother of all virtues; purity, charity and obedience. It is in being humble that our love becomes real, devoted and ardent. If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are. If you are blamed, you will not be discouraged. If they call you a saint you will not put yourself on a pedestal.”

S.M.O.R.P. Acts 14.

(Scripture, Message, Obedience, Response, Pray)

Acts 15 - Derrick Oliveira

Acts 15:28—For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.

In this verse, we see the Holy Spirit’s guidance and the apostle’s alignment to God’s will. Seeking to yield spiritual fruit, the apostles are aligning their will to freely choose to seek God’s will. Free will is attached to God’s will for our lives. This is where spiritual fruit is found. When our will is submitted to God’s will, we are in the will of God. The right to choose good or evil is our choice. It all boils down to this important choice. Choose to withstand evil and do good. God’s will. Freely surrender!

Joshua 24:15 - “choose for yourself who you will serve”

Matthew 23:37 - Jesus tells Jerusalem they were not willing.

Rev. 22:17 - let him take the water of life freely.

The big question is, will you take the water of life freely? When your free will is submitted to God in a state of surrender, your will begins to be for His kingdom to come, and as the prayer says, “Your will be done,” not mine.

Through a yielded vessel, the Holy Spirit can guide and empower. Through this process, you begin to have the mind of Christ (the renewing of the mind), the heart of God (a new heart), and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (a new spirit). This process gives you the perspective of God’s heart on situations and on proper Christian behavior and lifestyle choices. By choosing to be empowered and not influenced, we bear fruit of the Spirit, not the world.

Application Challenge:

Ask for God's heart on a specific situation this week. Choose to be guided by and obey the Holy Spirit's direction.

Acts 16 - Lucas Steeves (age 15)

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Notice how it says the other prisoners were listening to them. We don't know how the prisoners reacted to the singing, but we do know that when the doors were opened, they didn't leave! They could have been free, but they stayed there. Worship can bring the presence of God in such a way you don't want to move. It would take a lot of self-control to stay in a place where you are treated like garbage. It would be natural to want to flee to see your family and friends.

Today, worship God to one of your favorite songs, and ask him for self-control, even when it is difficult.

Acts 17 (Be a Noble Berean - Acts 17:11) - Chris K. Grinnell

In Acts 17, Paul and his companions visited the cities of Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens to spread the gospel of Christ. In Thessalonica, Paul endured opposition and attack. In Athens, he was surrounded by idols. But in Berea, he met Jews who "were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11, NIV).

We are living in complicated, serious times. How we respond to the world's messages is crucial—now more than ever. Acts 17 shows us three possible responses to evaluate the messages coming at us. Will we attack the messenger? Will we rely upon our philosophical idols? Or will we take what we hear and, like the noble Bereans, examine the Scriptures to see if those messages line up with God's truth?

Attacking those whose messages we do not like is normal these days. In this way, we are very much like the Thessalonians, and Christians are very much like the world. Is this our knee-jerk reaction in discussions, social media, and church?

Maybe we hide behind idols—the protective beliefs, political affiliations, or personal biases we elevate above God. Perhaps no sin in the Bible is spoken of with such hatred by God as idolatry. And yet, are we not guilty of idolatry when we elevate our own opinions and personal philosophies above the words of the Lord?

There is more coming at us now than ever before. Let us be followers of Christ who are not quick to attack those who say things we do not like, nor build up philosophical idols and ways of thinking that make God in our own image. Let's go to God's Word and weigh what we hear by God's truth and character. The Bible has what we need for these complicated, serious times. Let's be noble by standing upon the truth of Scripture and being transformed by its words.

Ask the Lord to show you where His gospel message is being drowned out by your response to what people say or believe. Ask Him to show you what excites you or what you are more passionate about than Him. Repent of these things and ask the Lord to give you a renewed passion for Him and strategies for immersing yourself in His Word.

Acts 18 - Liberty Steeves (age 12)

Acts 18: 24-28—24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor^[a] and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

27 When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. 28 For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

I remember when we first moved here about four years ago. I saw the worship team in children's ministry, and I remember thinking to myself, *Wow, that looks really fun.* I wished I could lead someday. I didn't know any of the actions. I didn't know any of the songs. It was completely different from Canada. A few weeks later Pastor David asked Jocelyn and I if we wanted to help lead worship, I was very nervous, but I knew I wanted to, so I went ahead and

did it! After that, Jocelyn and I were helping lead worship almost every single Wednesday for kids 'ministry. Pastor David moved and Pastor Pat became the new children's Pastor. I wondered what would change for me. I have continued to lead worship almost every week, and this has led me to what I feel is my calling: To become a children's pastor! I think it's very important to follow your heart. When it pleases God, it may lead you to God's calling for your life.

Dear heavenly Father, open my ears and my eyes to your leading and help me to focus on your calling. Thank you for reminding me that fear is not from the Lord and that you have a plan for me if I listen and follow you. Amen.

Acts 19 - Jerry Claar

11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by Paul hands, 12 so that even facecloths or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.

Extraordinary indeed! What as mere humans can we do with the scripture like this? Well, the answer is nothing! We, by ourselves, are powerless to heal and cast out evil spirits. But fear not. This is where God steps up to the plate.

There are different words used in Greek, which our English Bible translates as Miracles. In this verse, miracle is "dunamis" from where we get our word dynamite. It means an act of power. Here, God has granted Paul special powers of healing and the ability to rebuke demons.

So, can there really be some "dunamis" power in clothing that we can use? Besides this example, are there others? We know the story about the woman who had the bleeding problem for 12 years, and out of desperation, she worked her way through the crowd to touch the hem of Christ's garment and was healed. There is also the example of power in clothes that we can find in 2 Kings 2:13, where Elisha used the mantle of Elijah to part the Jordan River.

But we know that the power is not in the cloth. It is God's power that He used for specific purposes. So, we ask, *what has this got to do with us? How can we use this as we walk with the Lord?*

Let us peek at Mathew 17:14-20. Here we find where a man brought his son to Jesus because of a seizure. Jesus rebuked a demon and cast it out. The disciples asked why they could not drive it out. Jesus said, "because of your little faith. 'For truly I tell you, if you have the faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'move from here to there, 'and it will move.'"

Is it *really* possible for us to do such things?

Not in our own power, but we can see that in 1Corinthians 12:7-11, each of us (for the common good) with the Holy Spirit living in us, have wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing performing “dunamis,” prophecy, distinguish between spirits tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

So, *yes, we can*. If it is God’s will for us to do so. Go forth and use your faith!

Acts 20 - Lucas Steeves

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

The verse that stood out to me was verse 21: “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance.” I believe repentance is so important. How amazing is it to know that however we messed up Jesus will always forgive us. “And have faith in our lord.” To have complete faith or trust in Gods to truly have peace. When I first moved here, I had to put all of my trust in Jesus. Starting a new school was hard, meeting new people was hard, and keeping up with everyone back in Canada was overwhelming. But God knew why he wanted us in Montana. It was challenging at first, but we all trusted and knew Jesus would help us though every challenge.

Question: Was there ever a time in your life where trusting God was your only option?

Pray for a heart of repentance and faith.

Acts 21 - Patrick Lannoye

13 Then Paul answered, Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

"Is it safe." That is a question we ask a lot. From simple things like going hiking or camping, to going to the store during the height of COVID-19, to going on a mission's trip, is it safe? We like adventure but only if we know it's going to turn out okay in the end. Even in our favorite shows, we enjoy seeing our heroes in danger, but deep down, we know they'll win before the end credits roll. And that's the way we like it.

We like our relationship with God to be the same way. Safe. It's fun to sing worship songs, exciting to see new people at church, and encouraging to read Scripture. But please don't ask me to make too drastic of a change to my life, or do something uncomfortable, or perhaps even risk my finances, security, or life. We want it safe. But to truly follow God, we've got to be willing to let go of our idea of safety. Christ comes first. Following Him is above all. No matter where He leads. No matter what, He calls me to surrender. My purpose in life needs to be His purpose. And that very often is not "safe," but there is no better place to be than in the center of God's will. When we're there, we discover a brand-new safety: Eternal safety. That's the safety that God is concerned with—for us and everyone else. So, His plan may put my temporal safety in jeopardy, but it secures my eternal safety. And that's the safety that matters. "Is it safe"? No, but there's no safer place to be. Are you playing it safe?

S.M.O.R.P a portion of Acts 21. Journal a prayer of trusting God to keep you safe.

Acts 22 - Jerry Claar

Please take a few minutes to read this chapter. I would encourage you to start in Chapter 21:15 to get more of the whole picture.

Paul is in real trouble here. His own people want to kill him for what he has been doing for the last 20 or so years of his ministry. It was bad enough that he went against everything that he had been taught about Jewish life and law. Paul, as you have just read, had asked for and received permission to capture and even kill those Jews who had forsaken their beliefs and way of life. But now, he was teaching the Way (Christian life) not only to the Jews but also to the vile gentiles.

So, what then are we supposed to do with this knowledge that we now have? After all, we are not facing people who want to kill us for our belief in Christ, at least not here or at this time. The answer is simple: We need to be ready to tell others!

In 1 Peter 3:13-17, we read, *"Who then will harm you if you are devoted to what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear or be intimidated, but in*

your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will than for doing evil."

I am going to practice this on you with a much-shortened version of my testimony.

I grew up with four sisters and a brother. It was a harsh yet simple childhood with lots of chores to keep us busy. Dad was an angry man who took it out on mom and me, so I tried to do what had to be done and stayed out of his way as best I could. Mom, on the other hand, made sure we went with her to the Catholic church every Sunday.

I was quiet and afraid of almost everyone. I lived in great fear of my dad until I was nineteen. I was also suicidal.

I only had a couple of friends in high school. Fortunately, one of them was a Christian and started to take me to a bible study. Here I heard the Good News of Salvation and accepted the gift of salvation that Christ has already paid for.

Did my life immediately change? No, but I now had peace and assurance that I was loved and adopted into God's family. God even proved this to me when, in a fit of anger, my dad came into the living room, cocked a rifle, and pointed it at my head. God stepped in, and I stood up and wrestled it away from dad. The shot intended for my head went through the ceiling. I was no longer afraid. Peace now flows through me, and I know that because of this and how God has been working in my life that He is real.

How did salvation come to your life? Never underestimate the power of an invitation to someone who needs Jesus. Be ready to share your story—it could change someone's life.

Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to share the good news.

Acts 23 - Jerry Gregoire—An Unnatural Life of Honor

Read chapter 23, emphasis on verses 3-5.

Paul is at the end of his missionary travels. From Jerusalem, he will go to Rome under guard where he will testify before Caesar and eventually be martyred. Here we find Paul before the powerful but corrupt Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin had devolved from an honored forum of law and leadership of ancient time into a self-serving political body where the High Priesthood was bought and sold on a regular basis. It would often change hands in less than a year. Tithes

meant for the sustenance of the priests were regularly stolen, leaving some to die of hunger. It was no longer the standard bearer for the Jewish nation that it was meant to be. Rather, it had degenerated into a cesspool of political intrigue and greed.

Paul was factually correct when he called the High Priest a whitewashed tomb. Yet, though he had not walked with Jesus, he undoubtedly heard His words in his spirit: “The teachers and Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses, so you must obey them ... but do not do what they do.” Paul quickly repented for his transgression.

I once said in a ministry class, “It is easier to submit if you know the authority is for you.” This is true, but God calls us to have a reverent heart of submission and honor irrespective of how an authority regards us. Often our submission only goes as far as our agreement. But as in love, Jesus calls us to an unnatural place. This is a place where only faith can protect us from cynicism. A place where only true love and reliance on the Father can take us through.

I was in a ministry school, where during the time of our schooling, there were some strict rules. The rules were there to protect our focus on the task at hand. Yet, there was something I felt I needed to do that wasn’t following the rules. Quieting myself before the Lord, He said, “Ask of Gordon, (my authority), but receive from Me.” I was not sure what the outcome would be. All I knew is that I was to submit, but whatever came, I was to receive as from Jesus. To my utter surprise, Gordon granted my request. I was beginning to learn that all authority comes from God, and I could trust God even though I was under a fallen man.

This is particularly true in America now. We are society suspicious, irreverent, and divided on many issues. But our Father calls us to a very unnatural, uncommon life of honor. One that does not make sense, but one that, when lived out, will sound through the turmoil and noise like a clarion bell. We can begin our journey by praying for all those in authority and settling in our heart that how we honor authority is how we honor God.

Take time to pray for every level of leadership/authority in your life.

Acts 24 - Phil Hoover

16 So, I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Accusations! Have you ever been accused of something you did not do? That’s exactly what was happening to Paul in chapter 24. He was being accused of being a “troublemaker” and “stirring up riots.” Paul makes an impassioned defense against the false accusations, but he also makes an equally impassioned defense of his faith. See, those accusing Paul were also believers in

God. He concludes the section this way: "...I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. So, I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man."

I admire, but I am also convicted by this last part. Paul "strove" to keep his conscience clear. With whom? "God and man." I see this as the unseen (except by God) and the seen (public relations with others). For what reason? Judgment. "...there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked." Paul was intent to live his life righteously, requiring him to pay attention to his conscience. The definition of conscience, according to dictionary.com, is "the inner sense of what is right or wrong in one's conduct or motives, impelling one toward right action." God created each of us with a conscience, and it is good. But for it to be effective, we must pay attention to it. We must protect it—even develop it. We must keep it clear. When we violate the "values" or "norms" of our conscience, we must recognize the violation and repent that our conscience might not become seared, and therefore, ineffective as a moral compass.

Prayer: Father, I thank you for how you made me—how you gave me a conscience as a regulator of my thoughts and actions for the life and health of my soul. Forgive me for not paying enough attention to my conscience, for not always striving to keep my conscience clear. Where my conscience is warped or injured, please bring healing. Lord, help me live in such a righteous way, always aware that one day I will stand before You at the resurrection. Amen.

Acts 25 - Weston Laskey

7 When Paul arrived, the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem gathered around and made many serious accusations they couldn't prove.

Again, we see people speaking lies about Paul. Have people spoken falsely about you? We have a problem when our sense of justice is violated. When life is not fair, we want to declare our innocence and let everyone know we have been treated unjustly. It is eye-opening to see how many times Paul was lied about, yet he trusted God and was not offended.

Ask the Lord to show you if there is anyone who has spoken falsely about you in the past. Then, allow the Lord to minister to you in this area. Forgiveness is a gift from the Lord. Ask for His help to forgive the people who have spoken against you.

Day 26 - Lance Steeves

27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.” 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” 29 Paul replied, Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

I remember in a leadership class watching some video where people are playing basketball, and the narrator of the video assigns you a little task. He says, “Count how many times a ball is passed to a person wearing a white shirt.” Simple enough! So, you start to concentrate. You count the passes as the ball goes around and around, making sure you only tally the ones caught by a player in white. At the end of the drill, the narrator spoke again and said, “How many passes did it take?” Then, he says, “If you said 15, you were right! But did you see the dancing gorilla that went through the screen?” The class laughed. Dancing gorilla? There was no dancing gorilla. Then, they play it again, and sure enough, the large gorilla dances right through the entire screen. The whole class missed it because we were so focused on watching white shirt players catch a ball.

Paul here, in verse 29, replies to King Agrippa by basically saying *I don't care if you convert quickly or slowly. I pray that you do, however, walk into a relationship with Christ, for this is truly everything! If we are honest, I wonder if all too often we go to a movie, enjoy a summer fair, walk around a park, and enjoy our favorite performance of whatever, and we lose focus of the bigger picture. Lord, do these people in Bozeman know you? If the trumpet were to sound right now, would they enter into your kingdom or be forever separated? May we have the heart of Paul, Lord? I pray that all who listen to me may become what I am in my relationship with you. In the mighty name of Jesus!*

Prayer Point: Open my eyes, Lord, to see what you see and to focus on your heart for those around me.

Acts 27 - Diane Bares

The Lord showed Paul that if the sailors went forward, there would be danger ahead for them. We have the same relationship with the Lord as Paul did—the same Holy Spirit active in us. As we grow in learning to discern God's voice, we hear Him and benefit from his warnings, blessings, and ideas.

The Lord's voice is present in my life. There have been times of protection from harm, as in the time my husband, who also discerns the Lord's voice, hesitated at a green traffic light, sparing us from being T-boned by a car running a red light.

Many times, that still small voice has nudged me to do something specific, like inviting an acquaintance to a women's retreat our church was hosting. I pushed past my fear and invited her. She said yes, and the Lord really ministered to her that weekend. Or the time a young woman came to my door promoting a local business. As I closed the door, I felt the Holy Spirit prompt me to give her some of my dressier clothing. I felt like a lunatic as I grabbed clothing out of my closet, stuffed it in a bag, chased her down the street, and told her I felt like God told me to give the clothing to her! Yes, I was physically trembling the entire time! But the conversation we then had possibly planted some seeds in her heart and mind. My part was to be obedient to His voice, which gave me joy at hearing Him and being used by Him. The Holy Spirit continually gives me ideas. And when I ask Him to help me remember something, He is faithful to do so. It is truly remarkable to live in intimacy with my Lord!

Ephesians 3:12

"In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."

Ask the Lord to speak to you. Ask him to teach you to hear His voice. Quiet your mind and heart, and you will hear Him. If you already live in response to His voice, continue to flow in the blessings this intimacy brings!

Acts 28 - Lance Steeves

8 His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.

I love our city! I have a heart for its people, but all too often, usually in rush hour on 19th street, I am reminded of its desperate need for a savior. At Summit Church, we desire to Know God, Be Transformed, and Live Empowered. The two verses highlighted from Acts 28 really encompass that lifestyle. Paul, without Knowing God, would not have known that he could pray for the sick and witness physical healing. If Paul had not stepped out in boldness, laid hands on this man's head, and prayed with faith, and if he were not transformed from persecutor to saint, we would have missed all of Paul's writings. When the miracle took place, the news spread that Jesus heals and revival sprung forth from this island, transforming the sick to well—mentally, physically, and spiritually.

