

# reACT

catching up with the spirit

daily devotions for week 2

WHAT GOD DOES



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## MONDAY – So now what?



**Isaiah 43: 18** *Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!*

**Acts 9: 28** *But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.*

A broad concept for Acts is:  
*Ever expanding circles of God's church by the work of the Holy Spirit.*

The historical account of the birth of the church is fascinating, but that is not its purpose. It instructs our faith and directs our lives. God gives hope and guidance to a troubled world. He gives us a 'helper' to navigate the way. The Holy Spirit from that first Pentecost, is the same helper that we are given today. Acts gives us a narrative of ordinary, flawed people, who love Jesus, living their faith in a crazy world.

Events happen in our lives that can change everything – our future, our plans, our thinking. Our future can be set on an entirely

different trajectory (*Acts: Catching up with the Spirit, Matthew Skinner*). How we respond will determine how God uses us. Your life will change, as did the lives of those in Jerusalem that day of Pentecost “*as a consequence of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension and gift of the Holy Spirit.*” (Matthew Skinner)

So for you – what now? Is it just a good story or a challenge to walk in the early church founders' footsteps?

Is it time to earnestly seek the Holy Spirit and take seriously your commission to be God's witnesses?

Will you let God do a 'new thing' in your life?



**Prayer:** Lord, help me to be bold and courageous in speaking out for You. In the new world that will dawn, how can I be different? Guide and refresh me Lord. AMEN

## TUESDAY – Things are different now



**Acts 3: 19 & 20** *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.*

Sins may be wiped out. Times of refreshing.

By God's Spirit we can embrace new things. There is little doubt that Acts records terrible suffering of the early believers, and as a result they scattered. But the adversity that comes to us from the world, God uses for good. (*Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went Acts 8: 4*). So instead of silencing them, the Gospel spread even further! Their setback turned into remarkable ministries.

They embarked on their missions without a clear-cut plan, just following the Spirit's lead. We simply cannot see what the Lord sees! When we encounter

difficulties, we tend to fall in our tracks. But perhaps now we could seek to embrace the new and ask instead "Lord, what are you trying to teach me?" "What is my new direction?"

**Reflect:** How do you view difficulties? Are they a threat or an opportunity? Remind yourself that your journey will embrace sorrow AND joy; the Cross AND the Resurrection but God is always working out something new.

As we enter this spring-time and we shake off the weight of winter, ask the Lord to see opportunities in difficult times and for strength to embrace the new rather than mourn the old. May it be an awakening!



**Prayer:** Thank you Lord, deepening faith through pain and for growing us through difficult situations. Give us eyes to see beyond our circumstance and courage to go forth. Thank You for Your sovereignty. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY –Them too!



**Acts 8: 45** *Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there.*

**Acts 8: 26 & 27** *Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south ..... and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch.*

**Acts 10: 45** *The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.*

August is the month of the wild flowers! And if it is a good season, the veld is spectacular. Colour far off into the distance. It is a joy to behold.

Then there is Spring. The bulbs are out – of every colour and shape. The roses are budding, the blossoms cast a light pinkness and is colour emerging. So much variety. Don't we just love it? The beauty and colour refreshes and we say “God is good.”

So what happens when it comes to the **people** God created in variety, shape and colour. We don't seem to find that quite as refreshing as flowers! Through the Samaritans, the Ethiopian eunuch and the Gentiles, “...*believers discover that God is moving them beyond any*

*confined understanding of what the church is supposed to be” (Matthew Skinner).*

We all have prejudices and God is saying – as far back as AD 1 – that nationality, social class, sexual identity or gender do not matter in God's church. If we have accepted the Gospel and received the Holy Spirit, we should be happy to love and worship side by side with anyone.

Picture the Pentecost scene with all the different people praising God together. What a joy!

Could you bring spring-time to our community by seeing those you struggle with as Jesus sees them?



**Prayer:** Lord, may Your Spirit move through our community refreshing us and giving us a new understanding of how Your church is meant to be. AMEN

## THURSDAY – Follow the Spirits lead



**Acts 2: 17** *In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.*

*Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.*

Acts encourages us to find ways, just as the early Christians had to, to follow the Spirit's lead.

Can you imagine Jesus' followers? If the resurrection and ascension weren't enough of a surprise to them; imagine their surprise and bewilderment at Pentecost! It must have been a real eye-opener and challenge.

Jesus had instructed His disciples to wait and He would send a helper. I am not sure the events of Pentecost were quite what they expected from this helper: 5000 converts in one day; and thousands of people speaking different languages!

But that is the point – we need to expect the unexpected. We do not know how God will work. It may be through our quiet thoughts, or it may be through a 'burning bush'. Prayerfully ask God **how** to follow the Spirit's lead.

We tend to limit God through our unbelief and fear that He will not do what He promises. We do not need to be super Christians; we just need to show up and earnestly call out to God. The amazing thing about God's plans, is that the more we get to know and trust Him, the more surprised we will be.



**Prayer:** Holy Spirit lead me into the direct presence of the Father in prayer. Nudge my heart and mind to stay in close communication with You during my day. Help me to remember that prayer is about a relationship with You rather than a task.

*(Spirit Calling, Hal & Carla White)*

AMEN

Spirit of the living God: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYfzcYohWZg>

## FRIDAY – GO in His name



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

Large parts of the ancient world were significantly changed because of Jesus’ early followers taking seriously the Commission of Pentecost. Large parts of our community can be changed by us.

What if:

- ❖ enemies can really become allies?
- ❖ strangers can teach us things about God?
- ❖ God really values ALL my neighbours as highly as He values me?
- ❖ I truly let the Holy Spirit lead me?

*Many parts of Acts lead us to expect big things from God and to discover new possibilities becoming realities. Usually when those discoveries happen, the Holy Spirit is illuminating the way (Matthew Skinner).*

Acts still encourages us to seek opportunities to include and commit ourselves to others. Acts says we will be changed. Acts calls us to be filled with the Spirit and take the Gospel into a changing society.

- Are you able to talk about the Gospel outside of church and your Christian friends?

We are all involved in creating something new together. A new hospitable community, which includes all. After so many months of the pandemic, do you not want something new and refreshing. To be part of something larger than yourself? God is moving out in front of the church. His Spirit is equipping and encouraging – are you willing to catch up?



If you want to be part of the Acts story may this be your **Prayer** now:

*O God, the Holy Spirit, come to me, and among us; come as the wind, and cleanse me, come as the fire and burn, come as the dew and refresh; convict, convert, and consecrate my heart and life to great good and to thy greater glory; and this we ask for Jesus Christ’s sake. AMEN. (UMH #335)*

Go Forth in His name: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNQxMSMh5GI>

