

LIVING

in the Power of the Spirit

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VALERIE WILSON



Dedication

To Pastor Bryan Augsburger, whose love for and dedication to the Biblical text have been a source of instruction and encouragement to me, and to Jeanie Augsburger, whose eagerness to study the Word has been a blessing to me as a Bible study leader.

Other Books in This Series

Serving in the Power of the Spirit (Acts 13—20)—RBP5126

Persevering in the Power of the Spirit (Acts 21—28)—RBP5453

Living in the Power of the Spirit

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Preface

Several years ago I had the privilege of leading the ladies of First Baptist Church in Arlington Heights, Illinois, in a study of the Gospel of John. As we neared the end of John and pondered what to study next, the ladies encouraged me to consider Acts. That seemed to make sense since Acts is really a continuation of the gospel story. For the next nine months we dedicated ourselves to an in-depth study of Acts—and that study is the basis of this guide.

The purpose of this study is to help you uncover for yourself the rich truths in this book. Each lesson is divided into two major sections: Study the Scripture and Apply the Scripture. In Study the Scripture, I will provide some historical and theological perspective from time to time, but you will need to use your Bible to discover the answers to the questions. In Apply the Scripture, I will direct your thoughts to ways you can apply the Scripture to yourself. My suggestions are only starting points. The Holy Spirit will make the truth personal to you as you depend on Him.

In teaching the ladies at First Baptist, I was able to give them resources to supplement their study. Regular Baptist Press has chosen to make these resources available to you via its website. Please read carefully “Resources for Your Study” (pp. 9, 10) before you begin this study.

Living in the power of the Spirit is an exciting life! The believers in the early church certainly knew this—and you and I can know it too! The Spirit’s ministry was not limited to New Testament times. I pray that as you study Acts you will realize more of the Spirit’s power in your own life.

Resources for Your Study

A number of extra resources will enhance your study of Acts 1—12. Go to www.rbpstore.org/downloads. Locate the downloads for this study, *Living in the Power of the Spirit*. The folder contains seven documents. For individual study, you will need to print *thirteen* copies of resource 1 and one copy of the remaining six resources.



Resource 1: The Acts Acrostic will help you focus your Bible reading and study. I suggest that you read the entire Scripture passage for each lesson at one sitting. As you read, look in the text for **A**ctions of the Holy Spirit, **C**hurch Facts, **T**ransitional Details, and **S**upernatural Events. Jot down your findings on the acrostic for that lesson. Your acrostic may be slightly different from someone else's; that's okay. Some overlap between the letters is to be expected. After you have read the entire Biblical text and filled in the acrostic, go back and read the separate sections of verses, and answer the questions.



In each lesson you will find this designation, alerting you to specific things to record on your acrostic if you have not already done so.



Resource 2: You will use the map of New Testament Israel and the surrounding area several times during your study. Your study is enriched if you get some sense of the location of Bible places.



Resource 3: Lesson 2 includes the study of Pentecost, which often raises questions about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This resource will help you better understand how the Spirit worked in the Old Testament and how He works now. You can check your answers in the answers section of this study guide.



Resource 4: In Acts 3 we learn of the power of Jesus' name. "Join All the Glorious Names" will help you appreciate and worship our Savior.



Resource 5: A number of Jewish religious groups are mentioned in Acts. This resource will help you understand the distinctives of these groups.



Resource 6: Stephen outlined much of Old Testament history in his sermon (Acts 7). You will be able to follow the flow of the sermon as you complete this resource.



Resource 7: Several members of the Herodian family are mentioned in Acts. Referring to this chart from time to time will help you know who's who.

God's Plan of Salvation

As you study the Scriptures—alone or with a group of women—you may realize that you have never entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We use a number of different terms to designate this relationship:

- being born again (John 3:3, 7);
- accepting the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23);
- being saved (Acts 4:12);
- receiving Christ as Savior (John 1:12);
- becoming God's child (John 1:12).

These descriptive terms are synonymous. Sometimes it is easier to understand one concept more than another, but all of them are true of a person who “believeth in him”—that is, God's Son (John 3:16, 18, 36).

A person who wants to enter this personal relationship with Jesus Christ must acknowledge and believe five basic truths.

(1) *I am a sinner.* The Bible says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” and “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:23, 10). Until a person recognizes that she is a sinner in God's eyes, she will not be able to admit she needs a Savior.

(2) *God loves me.* The Bible says, “But God commendeth [showed] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus said that God loved the world of sinners so much that He sent His Son into this world (John 3:16, 17).

(3) *Jesus died for me.* The Bible says, “Who his [Jesus] own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” and, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 2:24; 1:18, 19). Jesus loved *you* enough to die for *you*.

(4) *I receive Him.* The Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death; but

the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). It also says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). The basis of our salvation is what Jesus has done for us, not what we can do for Him.

(5) *I am God’s child.* The Bible says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). When you receive Christ by faith, God makes you His child. He is now your Heavenly Father, and this is a forever relationship! The Bible says no one or no thing can ever take you out of God’s hand (John 10:28, 29), and nothing at all can ever separate you from God’s love (Romans 8:38, 39).

If you are ready to make this life-changing decision, you may want to express your desire to God in prayer. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). As soon as possible, tell someone else about your decision.

Welcome to God’s family!

Introducing Acts

Acts 1

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

I love books! Some of my favorite childhood memories are of trips to the library to hear the story lady. And then getting my own library card—what a thrill! I have collected books since I was a young child. While I had to cut my library rather severely when I retired, I still find it hard to resist adding new books to my library. Now I have a new way to build my library without needing any additional physical space: e-books! Even though I like to underline and write in the margins, I am finding that some books are just fine on an e-reader.

1. What are your earliest recollections of books? What are your favorite books?

When I think of books, I can't help but marvel that God chose to make the revelation of Himself “permanent” in the form of a book. He could have chosen any method of His own creating, but the Bible is a book. And this one book is actually a library all its own with sixty-six distinctive books.

The Bible is really like a continued story—especially when you read the books in chronological order. Each book builds in a unique way on the one before. In this study, you will consider the book of Acts. You undoubtedly have some knowledge of this book, even if it is limited.

2. If the Bible went from the Gospel of John to Paul's epistle to the Romans, what would we miss? What kinds of questions might we have?

Well, that is strictly a hypothetical question. We do have the book of Acts, so we are not left to wonder about these things. We will discover the answers as we study this fascinating book.

Study the Scripture

Preliminary Words (Acts 1:1–3)

Read Acts 1:1–3.

3. Do you know who the "I" is in verse 1? Are you aware of another book written to a man named Theophilus?

If you look at Luke 1:1–4, you will see that the Gospel of Luke was written by Luke to a man named Theophilus. It seems, then, that Luke was picking up in Acts where he had left off in Luke.

4. The Bible gives us some insight into the man Luke. Look at Acts 16:8–10. What do you notice about the pronouns, particularly in verse 10?

Luke may have answered the Macedonian call with Paul. We know that he sailed from Troas to Miletus with Paul (Acts 20:13). He continued on the third missionary journey with Paul (Acts 21:1), and he was with Paul on the journey to Rome (Acts 27:1).

5. What does Colossians 4:14 teach us about Luke?

The Bible does not tell us anything about Theophilus. His name means “friend of God.” It is possible that he was a Roman by nationality—or at least a Gentile, as Luke was. He was either a believer already, or he was a genuine seeker, learning all he could about Christianity.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–8)

Read Acts 1:4–8.

6. Even though the disciples had been with Jesus for forty days since the Resurrection, they still did not get the big picture. What did they think Jesus was going to do?

7. After Jesus said He would take care of kingdom details in His own time, what did He say would happen?

Acts 1:8 is the key verse for the book of Acts as well as for chapter 1. In a real sense, the verse is an outline of the book of Acts. Chapters 1–7 chronicle the work of the Spirit in Jerusalem; chapters 8–12, His work in Judea and Samaria; and chapters 13–28, “the uttermost part of the earth.”

The word “witness” is an important word in Acts. As a noun or a verb, it is used twenty-nine times in the book. (You might want to make a list of the places “witness” is used as you read through the book of Acts during this study.) Our English word “martyr” is from the Greek word translated “witness.”

8. How would you define what a witness is or does?

Soul-winning seems to be a spiritual gift that God gives to some people. (See, for instance, Ephesians 4:11, where the gift of evangelist is listed.) We recognize that some people do seem to have a special ability to present the gospel to people and to call for a response. Not all of us fit into this category. But we cannot excuse ourselves altogether.

Acts 1:8 makes it clear that all of us are to be *witnesses*; we are to tell others what we ourselves have experienced in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

9. What kinds of opportunities come up in everyday life to either *be* a witness or *give* a witness (or testimony)?

The Ascension (Acts 1:9–11)

Read Acts 1:9–11.

Even though Luke had told Theophilus about the Ascension at the end of the Gospel (Luke 24:50–53), it was necessary for Luke to include the details again.

10. Read John 16:7. Why did Jesus need to return to Heaven?

11. Describe what happened as the disciples watched.



*Be sure to record a **Supernatural Event** on your Acts Acrostic: the ascension of Christ.*

The Prayer Meeting (Acts 1:12–14)

Read Acts 1:12–14.

Jesus had told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came (Luke 24:49), and they obeyed!

12. Where did they meet, and who was there besides the eleven disciples?

We will find the little expression “with one accord” or “in one accord” several times in the early chapters of Acts. These believers

were a united group, and in this instance they were “with one accord” in prayer.

The Choice of Matthias (Acts 1:15–26)

Read Acts 1:15–26.

The disciples faced a dilemma. Judas Iscariot was no longer with them. They wanted to choose someone to fill his place so the “team” would be full strength again.

13. What were the requirements for an apostle according to verses 21 and 22?

Two men in the group met the requirements: Joseph (also called Barsabas, or Justus) and Matthias.

14. How did the group make the choice?

We understand the praying part of the process; we do that today. But what about casting lots? This practice was common in Old Testament times. When Joshua apportioned the land of Canaan to the tribes, the Bible says that he did it “by lot” (Joshua 13:6; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; et al). We don’t know exactly what this process entailed, except that God, in His sovereignty, used it to make known His will to His people. The eleven disciples used this “approved” method for picking Judas’s successor.

But keep in mind that Acts is a transitional book. It bridges the gap, as it were, between the practices of God’s people under the Mosaic law and the new era of the church and grace. We learn from Acts, but we do not follow all of the procedures of Acts.



*Record the Transitional Detail on your Acts Acrostic:
casting lots to choose Matthias.*

Apply the Scripture

- You cannot apply the Scripture if you do not know the Scripture. Take time right now to commit, before the Lord, to study each lesson carefully. Record specific items on your Acts Acrostic as you

read the Scripture passage. Carefully answer the questions. Note any questions that arise in your mind as you study; ask your Bible study leader or pastor to help you find the answers.

- Look for opportunities this week to be a witness; that is, to relate to someone else what you have experienced as a child of God. Look for openings in everyday conversation with friends and family as well as people you meet in carrying out the routines of daily life.