

Act Normal

1. Invite the Spirit

Feb. 26, 2023

Good morning! My name is Christy and I'm one of the pastors on staff. We are so glad you're here worshipping with us. We are in week one of our series, Act Normal. Let's pray and invite God to speak to us.

A couple of weeks ago, our Life Groups put on a prom called Night to Shine for people with special needs. It was an amazing evening! The Life Groups recruited a team of 170 volunteers and were able to host 90 guests, while 86 caretakers also enjoyed some respite and networking while being served in another space in the building. The evening was decked out with red carpet, photographers, limo rides, dancing and dinner with hair, makeup, shoeshines and special treats. Our Life Groups live on mission and are always ready to bless and serve others.

Leading up to the event, one of our members reached out to me because she knew I had a popcorn machine. She asked to use it for the event and I gladly obliged. I had my husband Frank load it in my car but I made one minor error; I forgot it was back there. I hit a huge pothole (#winterinpittsburgh) and looked in my rearview mirror to see my professional grade popcorn machine fly up in the air and land on its side. I thought it was probably rugged and didn't think another thing of it. The next day, I got a call from Erin who was setting it up who said she just couldn't get it to work. The light came on, but it didn't appear that the motor is working. I told her it was probably broken due to my carelessness and I'd have Frank check it out when we got there. When we went to investigate, the light came on, but it was dim. It was so strange. But my husband immediately told me what the problem was. The extension cord was too long and therefore it wasn't getting enough power. He tested his theory by plugging it into the wall and the next thing we knew, the light was bright and the motor was functional. I would never have figured out that it just needed more power to work properly and get the job done.

Today in week 1 of Act Norma we are going to talk about how the normal life of a follower of Jesus requires the correct amount of power. And without that power we just won't be able to get the job done. The power that we need is the power of the Holy Spirit. Turn with me to Acts 19:1-7.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when^[a] you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."³ So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. ⁴ Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus."⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul placed his hands on

them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues^[b] and prophesied. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

Paul, a disciple of Jesus met up with these other disciples who also claimed Christ and asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit. They answered they didn't even know there was a Holy Spirit. He inquired further about their baptism and they told him they received John's baptism. John, famously known as John the Baptist was a cousin of Jesus who is most often quoted saying, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*" (Matthew 3:2) The baptism they received was one of repentance. But Paul told them there was more! Paul was really giving these men a gift by letting them know this because without the Holy Spirit, they were following Jesus in their own power. And we all need a greater power to follow Jesus. We need His Spirit living within us.

Having the Spirit in you doesn't mean you don't ever need to repent again. Having the Spirit helps normalize repentance as part of our way of life. Repentance doesn't have to be a hard thing; it's actually a blessing. To repent means to go in a different direction. The normal life of a follower of Jesus is constant course correction. Instead of behaving as if we have it all together since we know Jesus, we are now more open to correction by the Holy Spirit and are able to repent. And repentance makes us better. Repentance can heal relationships. Husbands and wives who yield to God's Spirit that is alive in them will repent of behavior that is hurtful. Repentance says, "I'm sorry. I blew it."

As a follower of Jesus, it's important to me to model repentance when I've messed up. Having the Spirit living within us normalizes saying I'm sorry to our children, our friends, our church family, our parents and our spouses when we need to go a new direction! Paul asked those men if they had received the Holy Spirit, because he knew without it, we really can't change. We are white knuckling it. But God's Spirit sets us free and brings us peace and the power to truly change.

Life in the Spirit is ever changing. I am not the same person I used to be. And I'm confident that as long as I continue to ask for God's Spirit to keep filling me, I am not the same person today that I will be in the future. We have this promise in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that we "*are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*" Which leads me to my next point:

The Holy Spirit is a "who," not a "what."

- The Holy Spirit is not a force.
- The Holy Spirit is not an energy.
- The Holy Spirit is not an experience or feeling.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. When we say we are being filled with the Holy Spirit, God Himself takes up residence within us. Jesus gave His disciples this promise. In fact, Jesus tells the disciples something that

would have been hard to understand at the time. He told them, “It’s good that I’m going away.” And then he promised to send the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ point to His followers was that God living inside of us is better than having Jesus here in person! The Holy Spirit helps you live a life sustained by God’s power. And that’s a pretty big deal! The Holy Spirit is for anyone in Christ. If you are a follower of Jesus; this is your birthright! A promise of God that He will freely send His Spirit to dwell inside of us to help us become more like Jesus and live out our lives in victory.

The Holy Spirit has a variety of functions in our life. Jesus told his followers about the Holy Spirit they would receive. *John 14:15-20*

15 “If you love me, keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be^{with} in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. What Jesus said is amazing! He gave us a promise that we will realize He is in His Father, and we are in Jesus, and He is in us! God dwelling in us! He calls the Holy Spirit:

- An Advocate
- A Helper...to help us and be with us forever!
- A Spirit of Truth...guiding us to all truth!

A person filled with the Holy Spirit is marked by obedience.

Jesus said if you love me, you will obey my commands. Obedience without God’s Spirit is behavior modification, which rarely lasts. But a life with the Helper, brings transformation. I think Paul was asking a great question! Sometimes as followers of Christ we just want people to behave. We want the appearance of goodness. We want people to follow the laws. We want obedient children and students who follow rules but what if we wanted God in them more than we wanted good in them? Instead what if our question is, “Have you received the Holy Spirit?” Paul asked this question because he knew that without God’s Spirit, there is no true transformation. When we have God’s Spirit, we can break free from addictions, our speech can be edifying, we are able to love God and love people! Our desires are changed.

A person filled with the Holy Spirit is Jesus-focused.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we bring glory to Jesus. We’re able to do what Jesus told us to do which was to go and make Him known! Jesus told the disciples that they would be His witnesses, but not to leave Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit. *Acts 1:8 “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.”* When we are witnesses of Jesus, we will do the things he did. We will love people the way Jesus loved them! We will serve people the way that Jesus served people!

Our lives will demonstrate something unusual to the world, but as followers of Jesus we will be acting normally! We will live generous lives! I've seen the generosity of Crossroaders! I have seen Crossroaders give up vacation time to clean up flood damage for our neighbors here in Oakdale! I've seen Crossroaders sacrifice to build a clinic in Mozambique! I've seen Life Groups providing for the needs of people in their groups! A normal life that is Jesus-focused looks unusual to those who don't know Him yet! And when we operate in God's Spirit, it opens doors to share our story with those who need Him desperately!

A person filled with the Holy Spirit is naturally supernatural.

At Crossroads, we describe ourselves as naturally supernatural. At times, I think the Holy Spirit has gotten some bad press. The Holy Spirit isn't strange or weird! People can act strange or weird, but I assure you the Holy Spirit does not! The Holy Spirit gives us gifts! 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 describes these naturally supernatural gifts! *To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,^[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.^[b]¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.* And at the end of the chapter, it goes on to say, "eagerly desire the gifts." It's okay to desire these gifts from God! We believe in all the gifts here at Crossroads! You will hear us quite often emphasize gifts of healing and prophecy. When people are healed, it demonstrates God's power to both believers and unbelievers! And prophetic words are words of encouragement! God uses both these gifts to build up the Church and demonstrate His power and love to those who are not yet followers of Jesus. That's why we send everyone each week in love and power!

We have seen people healed here at Crossroads. And I believe God will faithfully increase more healings and prophetic words among us as we step out in faith to exercise the gifts He freely distributes to us! As a disciple-maker, one of the things I want people to learn is how to hear from God. There are so many ways God speaks. It's not some booming voice from heaven. It can be an impression, a picture God gives you, a dream, a vision. As a young believer I'd never heard about the Holy Spirit and the gifts, just like these guys in Acts 19. Over twenty years ago, my husband and I were being discipled by a couple who told us that God speaks today through His Spirit. I had never been taught this before but I eagerly desired that gift! This is a gift that is available to anyone. You can practice it in your groups and grow in it! God has given me words for total strangers that have blown me away and blown them away. God has used others to give me words that encouraged me! And more importantly God Himself has encouraged me by speaking to me.

A person who is filled with the Holy Spirit is prayerful.

It's not a matter of which comes first; the chicken or the egg. We pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit and then the Holy Spirit draws us to pray. About a year ago, our team here at West began praying together once a week. Now that might not sound like a big deal, but this was in addition to our regular meetings, equipping and coaching and everything else we have going on around here. So about a year ago I asked for an additional day from our team to come together to pray. And I'll be honest with you, it was not fun. After a couple months of gathering to pray, I thought to myself, "who's idea was this?" But we persevered in prayer and in recent months God has begun to do something amazing. God meets us in powerful ways. His Spirit is obvious when we gather to pray. The last two months in particular have been so sweet.

There is no guide, only His Spirit guiding our prayers. We pray for you. We pray for our board. We pray for our Life Group Leaders and Coaches and families here. There has been weeping for one another, weeping for the lost, praying for our teens and kids. A couple of weeks ago there was a heaviness in our prayer. But God's Spirit met us. And I couldn't help but be inwardly excited because this is the stuff movements are made of! God is doing something really special. When I look at what has been happening at Asbury and college campuses with a generation who has grown up primarily outside of the church, it's hard not to get excited. God's hand is open to us. He is calling people to gather both on the weekends and in groups. It is a great move of His Spirit, calling out to people.

This expression of God's Spirit being poured out has been described as great peace. What a good God to pour out His peace in one of the most turbulent times we've experienced in years. There is a sense of unity. What an amazing thing for God to do when we have experienced so much discord! What we are seeing is something that is normal for God! He's pouring out His Spirit on ordinary people like you and me!

When we gathered on Ash Wednesday; a day marked in church history for repentance and lamenting, it was evident to me that God is up to something. I want to encourage you to engage in these next several weeks by attending service, trying out a life group and meeting with God daily. But I don't want you to "white knuckle" it and do it in your own power. And so today, as Paul asked, I ask you, "Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit?" I want you to be filled either afresh or for the first time with the Holy Spirit. God's hand is open to us today.