

Acts 1-2

Begin Again

Image Church // Study through Acts #13

MPT: The Spirit is promised, the Spirit comes, the Spirit clarifies, the Spirit changes lives.

MPS: The Holy Spirit changes lives and multiplies the mission of the gospel

Introduction

Well hello Image Church, I everyone is doing well, if you are a first-time guest with us we are so glad that you are here with us tonight! Listen, before we jump in tonight I want to take just a couple of minutes and share with you some exciting things happening in the life of our church!

The first thing that you need to know us that we are to-date, **9 weeks away** from our official launch on **January 21st** which is huge! I cannot believe how fast time has flown by, our launch day will be here before we know it- it is literally right around the corner!

That's going to be such an exciting day for us, but as we look to the future I don't want us to miss what God has already done as He is building his church. I want to encourage you with some of those things:

There were **32 people** that moved down here over the summer and into the fall to help plant Image Church since we started gathering in August **that number has doubled in size!**

We've hosted **2 preview Services** with a high attendance of **94 people!**

And a total of **86 FTG's** that have come through since we have started gathering... that's 86 people that have heard the gospel!!

But even more important than that is that we have **47 people engaged in Community Groups!** And some of those people aren't even attending our gatherings yet! We want Community Groups to be the front door to our church not the back door.

- This is incredible for us because we believe *the weekday is just as important as the weekend...* and *we don't want to create an event, we want to create a community of people living life together!*

And, here is something that's cool: In ***addition*** to those **47 people** in Community Groups...

We ***just*** launched a High School Community Group that met for the 2nd time last week with **15 people**- **13** of which do not part of our church "yet"...

AND... we just launched a College Community Group a few weeks ago that has **6 people** in it- of which **5** do not part of our church "yet"...

***That actually means that right now we have **68 people** currently engaged in and Image Church Community Group!

- That's something to celebrate right there!!!

We've also had the chance to get on campus at KSU and do a *pop-up cookout* to connect with college students where we were able to feed somewhere between **45 and 65** college students (hard to tell with how much students eat)

Listen, I know that I have given a lot of numbers but you have to understand that those numbers represent souls in this city!! ***Numbers matter because of what they represent!***

Something else that's happened recently is that we've had the chance to connect with the principal of **East Cobb Middle School** (*a Title 1 school*) through one of our Core Team members who has done an incredible job there!

The Principal actually sent us a list of things that we can do and ways that we can be involved- this is an amazing opportunity for us- you will hear more to come on how you can be involved!

And another huge thing that's happened is that we were able to secured a contract with **Life University**—which is a Chiropractic School with 2500 students where there is little to no gospel exposure—that will be the place where we will be gathering!

Speaking of that, write this down, put it in your calendars, we will begin meeting there on **December 9th**... Now, if you're calendar savvy you will recognize that's a Saturday.

That's because on **December 9th** our trailer with all of the portable contents we need to gather will be delivered and we want to be there for a training one how it all works to get ready for our first Sunday there which is the next day on **December 10th**! This is the day we will finally move to Sunday morning!

- *There will be more details to come on all that as well, but mark your calendars for December 9th and 10th!*

Church, God has already done, and is doing some incredible things! **We are a 13 weeks old** and we are still in the **soft launch phase!!** If you cannot see God's hand at work, I don't know what else to tell you!

He is building His church here in Atlanta—He is building THIS community for the sake of moving the gospel forward in such a time as this!

And it may be hard to see right now, but I believe with all my heart that if we are faithful to love God, love each other, and live on mission, that God will use this church to be one of the most impactful churches in this city, and that it will thrive until Jesus returns- not because we're special but because we are being faithful to live out the gospel!

Now, I know some of you hear that and it sounds good but you don't really believe that can happen... its sounds kinda crazy... Maybe some of you feel inadequate or overwhelmed, maybe you didn't realize all that went into planting a church...

You thought it was more of a moral support thing... and you're asking the question: "what does this all look like!?!? And how can I manage all of this??"

Others of you walked in here tonight and you've had a long week, your tired, your drained things have been tough lately...

Well, all of those emotions and feelings you're having, or have had, is exactly what the disciples of Jesus were feeling...

If you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to Acts 1...

I know what you're thinking- *wait a minute*... we have been working through a series in the book of Acts and we were all the way to Acts 16... Well we're going to start over- **JK!**

Up to where we ended last week, in Acts 16, just to that point alone- we had seen the message of Jesus expanding all over the world to all kinds of different people and nationalities... we had seen the church grow to the 10's of thousands of people...

We've watched the greatest movement to ever happen on earth unfold... remember though, without this movement that we read in Acts, there is no us here today... their impact **FAR** exceeded anything they ever imagined...

In all of this though, I think we forget sometimes how hard they had it...

I mean we have **Facebook** and **Instagram** for marketing, they had a good pair of Sandals... we can text people and ask them to come with us, they had to actually walk and invite people to come with them...

And then there was the beatings, these weren't like little spankings, these were like beat down to within inches of your life... and jail, and if that's not enough they had friends being killed because for preaching the same thing...

The thing that allowed them to continue on, to endure, to persevere, was remembering what happened in Acts Chapter 1... **What kept them confident about the future, was what Jesus had done in the past!**

So, as we close out our series through the book of Acts today, I wanted us to take a fresh look back to the beginning in light of what all we have seen unfold...

*My hope is that we would be refreshed and remind of how all this started and that we would be empowered as we look to start a gospel movement here in Atlanta!

So here we go, a fresh look into Acts 1 and 2!

Now, remember as we start reading at the beginning of Acts— Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke—is also the author of Acts, and what he does here at the beginning of Acts is circle back around to the end of Jesus time on here on earth to lay out some very important details that happen just before Jesus heads back to Heaven.

I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach **2** until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. **3** After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

So, it's important to note that Jesus didn't just raise from the dead and then head straight back to Heaven... he was on earth for another month and some change...

4 While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "**Which,**" he said, "**you have heard me speak about;**

Jesus is referring back to what He said in **John 14: 25-26** where he told them that the Father would send the Holy Spirit to teach them and to remind them of everything He had said...

And then He says in verse 5:

5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days."

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?"

7 He said to them, "**It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.**

So, the disciples are like "OK, great we got it so you're going to restore the kingdom of Israel right?"

And Jesus is like "wrong, that not for you to worry about" ... they were clueless, they we not putting things together yet...

And then Jesus saying this:

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

I can only imagine what was going through their heads when they heard this... "what does Jesus mean that we are going to be witnesses all over the world??"

And then if that's not enough craziness look at what happens right after that

Verse 9:

9 After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. 11 They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.

You have to see the humor in this... Jesus says you're going to be witnesses all over the earth and then He is taken up into Heaven and they are all looking up like what Just happened???

A bunch of people just standing there, frozen, (*with "let it go" playing in the back ground*) looking up... "uhhh... so He was here and now He is not here... just trying to add this up" They still haven't figured it out...

I feel like they had to have been looking up for a while... to the point where 2 Angels had to come and say "Guys what are you doing? Why are you stand here looking into Heaven???"

Apply:

This is probably how a lot of you felt when you decided to help plant this church... "Ok, I am here, what are we supposed to do now?"

- Or maybe how you felt when you became a Christian... what's this Christianity thing look like now??

Can you imagine the questions that the disciples have, can you imagined how overwhelmed they feel... I mean they had left everything to follow Jesus and then Jesus just up and leaves!

And then some angels come and say why are you standing here looking into heaven... they are like really? Did you not just see what happened??

After that they do the only thing they can think to do... they all get in a room to pray together...

And then Acts Chapter 2 happens... out of nowhere there's a sound like a violent rushing wind and the Holy Spirit comes upon them and they all start speaking in tongues... they are speaking in different languages and people start to gather there in Jerusalem as they are hearing different people speaking their native language!!

And people are like what's going on?? Why is this happening??

And Peter stands up and preaches one of the greatest sermons in the NT!

- He says this- the prophets said long ago that this would happen! This is happening as proof of what God has done and that Jesus is Lord...

Jump down to Acts 2:32 and look at the conclusion of his message:

32 "God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this.

33 Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you both see and hear. **34** For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says:

The Lord declared to my Lord,

'Sit at my right hand

35 until I make your enemies your footstool.',

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

It all makes sense now! See, God sent Jesus to do what could never be done by mankind... there was separation between God and man, between us and God— because of our sin—and there is nothing that we could ever do to change... **Only God could provide a remedy to an eternal problem!**

And so, God sent Jesus to come and live a perfect life in our place, the life that's required by God because He is perfect and Holy... and then Jesus is killed... **He was sinless, yet He died for the sinful...** And just like Peter says, God raised Jesus from the dead... Jesus was the promised deliverer for mankind, He is the Messiah!!

And then look what happens in verse 37:

37 When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: "Brothers, what should we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The people hear this and they are pierced to the heart and they ask "What do we do?" ...

And Peter says repent and trust in Jesus for forgiveness of your sins.

- **Spurgeon says:** "Repentance is a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is in fact a change of mind."
 - It's the recognition of and the turning from your sin, and trusting in Jesus!

See, when you trust in Jesus, **He gives you His perfect life in place of your sinful wicked life... He marks "paid" on the death that you owed...** He gives you new life through His resurrection!

- This is incredible news for the people then and for us today!

And then look at how the people respond... Jump down to Acts 2:41

41 So those who accepted his message were **baptized**, and that day about three thousand people were added to them. **42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. **44** Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. **45** They sold their

possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Look at the immediate implications of trusting in Jesus:

- They dedicated themselves to the Word of God
- Fellowship (hanging out) and Breaking bread (eating together)
- Prayer
- Generosity

Here is what you need to see in all of this... Jesus is the long-awaited deliverer who came to make mankind in right standing with God for those who trust in Him... He comes accomplishes, and then He leaves for the specific purpose that the Holy Spirit would come to those who have believed in Him...

And, it's through the power of the Holy Spirit in those who believe that God would continue the **message** and **ministry** of Jesus...

The crazy thing is when you look at the starting line-up of this movement Here in Acts 1 you realize **it has to be by the power of the Holy Spirit...**

I mean, you have a rag-tag group of guys that can't really ever figure it out... they doubt, ask dumb questions and are pretty unaware individuals... who when Jesus leaves are staring up to heaven with no clue what to do... to the point when Angels have to come and say "Hey guys what are you doing!?"

And to take it a step further you have Peter—the guy who denied Jesus, not 1 time, but **3 times**— who comes out of the gate and preaches one of the greatest sermons in the NT and thousands get saved!

Christianity wasn't started by politics, power, resources, or skill level- it was started by Jesus and empowered through the Holy Spirit!

See, the disciples were able to press on because they knew what Jesus did and they recognized the power that they had through the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3 and beyond is only what it is with 10's of thousands of people getting saved because of what God started in Acts Chapter 1...

God set it all in motion... through the salvation offered in Jesus and the power given through the Holy Spirit for those who believe.

*** And then get this... It's the Holy Spirit in these people who have believed, that prompts them to respond as a new community we see in Acts 2, and it's that new community that becomes the church that's the vehicle that God uses to move the message and ministry of Jesus forward! ***

- Listen, that's God's redemptive plan for the world!

None of this was manufactured by the efforts of the people, it was by the power of the Holy Spirit!

It was reflection on the work of Jesus and remembering the power that was given to them through the Holy Spirit that enabled them to endure and the ability to move the message and ministry of Jesus forward!

The question for us tonight... is that true of us? Are we resting in the finished work of Jesus and remembering the power we have in the Holy Spirit??

Do you understand that the same power that was at work in the book of Acts that started at the beginning of Chapter 1 is the same power that is in those of us who believe??

Have you doubted the movement that God can create here in the city?

Listen, God used Spirit-filled community (the local church) in the book of Acts as the means to multiplying the mission of reaching people with the good news of the gospel!

- **God did it then, we have watched what he has done through the first 16 chapters... and He can do it now!** But we cannot forget about how it all started in the power by which it will continue!

Here is the thing that we have to understand, the local church is a movement, and movements move with the goal of reach your neighbors and the world with the message of Jesus!

- Remember Acts 1:8: **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**

That's Local, national and international! That was a charge then, and it's still the same charge for us today!

One of the things we like to say at Image Church is "*do what you do well for the Glory of God and do it somewhere strategic for the mission of God*"!!

- By being in this room you are being strategic for the kingdom with your life, but it doesn't stop there!
- God has given you the power of the Spirit to ***live on mission in order to multiply the kingdom!***

What we don't want to do is look at the church like and Uber (get in only when you need it) in reality the church is a Red Cross rescue vehicle- a vehicle designed to carry people to people in danger in order to present them with a rescue!

Conclusion:

Tonight you should leave here feeling empowered and encouraged and we look back and what God started and remembers that His work isn't finished and that His power is still the same and that in the same way He did what He did then, He is doing something here now...

He has called us here for such a time as this and He didn't intend for us to do this alone... he gave us all that we need through the power of the Holy Spirit... are we trusting in that power? Are we responding to how the Spirit is prompting us??

Are we living as a transformed community?

One big take away that we need to see... right out of the gate we observe that for them church wasn't an event that they attended once a week, it was a group of people that they belonged to, that they were dedicated to. Listen, God didn't save us so we could **attend** church; he saved us so we could **act as** the church.

Look back at how they were responding to the gospel:

- They dedicated themselves to the Word of God
- Fellowship (hanging out) and Breaking bread (eating together)
 - That is our desire at Image Church, we want to act as the church in this city- that's why Community Groups are so important! We don't want to create another event, we want to create a community!
- Prayer- "God we can't but you can"
- Generosity
 - BIG GIVE on December 3rd