

Deep Practice Discipleship Guide

Acts 1:4–8 — “Take Hold of the Power”

Opening Check-In: Reflecting on Last Week’s Deep Practice

Begin by inviting each person to briefly share about the spiritual practice or commitment they worked on this past week.

You may use a few prompts like these:

- What spiritual practice did you focus on this week?
- Where did you sense growth, challenge, resistance, or encouragement?
- Did you notice any moments where you became more aware of God’s presence?
- Was there a moment where following Jesus required intentional effort or courage?
- What did you learn about yourself this week?

Encourage honesty and reflection rather than perfection.

Sermon Overview & Key Points

Acts 1:4–8

Big Idea

Followers of Jesus are not meant to merely believe truths about God, but to live immersed in and empowered by the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

1. Jesus Commands the Disciples to Wait (vv. 4–5)

“You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Key Ideas

- Jesus tells the disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father.
- “Baptized” means immersed, plunged into, overwhelmed by.
- The Holy Spirit is the active presence of God.
- In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Spirit often empowered people for particular tasks.

- Jesus deepens this understanding:
 - The Spirit is not merely occasional empowerment.
 - The Spirit abides with and within believers.
- John 14:16–17:
 - “He abides with you, and he will be in you.”

Important Teaching

The Christian life was never intended to be lived merely by human effort. Believers are meant to live immersed in the presence and power of God.

2. The Disciples Focus on Speculation (vv. 6–7)

“Lord, is this the time...?”

Key Ideas

- The disciples are focused on the timing of the kingdom.
- Jesus redirects their attention away from speculation.
- Instead of obsessing over what they cannot know, they are called to focus on what they are called to do.

Application

Christians can become distracted by debates, predictions, or curiosity about things God has not asked them to control.

Jesus redirects His followers toward faithful living and empowered witness.

3. “You Will Receive Power” (v. 8)

Receiving is not passive.

Key Ideas

- The Holy Spirit comes upon believers.
- Different traditions explain the timing and experience differently, but all agree the Spirit empowers believers.

- “Receive” carries the idea of grasping hold of, taking hold of, embracing.

Important Insight

The issue is often not that the Spirit is absent, but that believers resist, neglect, ignore, or fail to cooperate with the Spirit’s work.

Supporting Scripture

- 1 Timothy 4:14:
 - “Do not neglect the gift that is in you...”

Clarification

The Spirit is not an object or machine.

This is not emotional hype or dramatic performance.

The Spirit transforms:

- desires
- character
- holiness
- courage
- compassion
- witness

Sanctification

You were not meant to remain unchanged.

4. “You Will Be My Witnesses” (v. 8b)

Three Ways to Understand the Progression

A. Geographic Expansion

- Jerusalem
- Judea
- Samaria
- Ends of the earth

The gospel continually moves outward.

B. Spiritual States

- Jerusalem → spiritually focused people
- Judea → spiritually aware people
- Samaria → spiritually confused or distorted understanding
- Ends of the earth → people far from God in belief and practice

C. Everyday Mission

Every believer is empowered to point people toward Jesus wherever they are.

Witness is not reserved for pastors, missionaries, or experts.

Discussion Questions (Bloom's Taxonomy)

Remembering

1. What command did Jesus give the disciples before His ascension?
 2. What does the word “baptized” communicate in this passage?
 3. What does Jesus say the disciples will receive?
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Understanding

4. How does Jesus expand the understanding of the Holy Spirit beyond the Old Testament pattern of temporary empowerment?
 5. What does it mean to “receive” or “grasp hold of” the power of the Holy Spirit?
 6. Why do you think Jesus redirected the disciples away from speculation about the kingdom?
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Applying

7. In what ways can Christians neglect or resist the work of the Holy Spirit?
8. Where in your life do you most need the transforming power of God right now?

9. What would it look like for you to live more intentionally aware of God's presence this week?
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Analyzing

10. Why do some believers appear spiritually vibrant and courageous while others seem spiritually stagnant?
11. What is the difference between emotionalism and genuine spiritual empowerment?
12. How can a church unintentionally become focused on information without transformation?
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Evaluating

13. Which of the three ways of understanding "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth" most challenges you personally?
14. What are some signs that a person is cooperating with the Holy Spirit's transforming work?
15. What dangers arise when Christians try to live the Christian life without dependence on the Spirit?
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Creating

16. If you were explaining Spirit-empowered living to a new believer, how would you describe it?
17. What practical habits help a believer remain open and responsive to the Holy Spirit?
18. How could our church become a more Spirit-empowered witnessing community?
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Storying Exercise

Acts 8:26–40 — Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Story Summary

Philip is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert road where he encounters an Ethiopian official reading Isaiah. Philip listens, asks questions, explains the gospel, and the Ethiopian responds in faith and baptism.

Connection to Acts 1:4–8

This story demonstrates what Spirit-empowered witness looks like:

- attentiveness
 - obedience
 - courage
 - compassion
 - willingness to go where God leads
 - pointing others to Jesus
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Storying Activity

1. Read the story aloud together slowly.
 2. Have one person retell the story from memory.
 3. Invite the group to fill in missing details collaboratively.
 4. Ask participants to imagine:
 - What Philip may have been feeling.
 - What the Ethiopian may have been wondering or searching for.
 5. Read the passage again and reflect on new observations.
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Storying Discussion Questions

1. What stands out most to you about Philip's responsiveness to the Spirit?
2. What would Philip have missed if he ignored the Spirit's prompting?
3. Why do you think the Ethiopian was ready to receive the message?
4. How does this story challenge our assumptions about evangelism?
5. Who might be the "desert road" person God is calling you to notice this week?

Deep Practice Commitment for the Week

Take a few quiet moments and write down one specific way you will cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit this week.

You may continue working on a previous practice or begin a new one based on today's lesson.

Possible practices:

- Begin each morning with a prayer of surrender and openness to the Holy Spirit.
- Spend 10 minutes daily in silence listening for God's direction.
- Intentionally encourage or pray with someone this week.
- Share your faith story or invite someone into a spiritual conversation.
- Pay attention to moments where you sense conviction, prompting, or compassion and respond instead of resisting.
- Practice obedience quickly when you sense God leading you toward kindness, witness, or holiness.

Encourage participants to make their commitment:

- specific
- measurable
- realistic
- spiritually meaningful

Invite them to write it down and be prepared to reflect on it next week.

Closing Prayer

Close by praying:

- for openness to the Holy Spirit
- for courage to witness
- for transformation and holiness

- for sensitivity to God's prompting
- for empowerment to live as faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ wherever God sends them