

This guide is an invitation to follow Jesus with greater purpose and hope. It will help you to explore the scriptures and challenge you to live out your faith. Each week we'd love for you to think about how you relate: **Up** (with God), **In** (with church) and **Out** (with neighbors).



Weekly Questions:

- How is God getting my attention? For help, think about these areas:
- How are you living up with God?
- How are you living in community with other followers of Jesus?
- How are you living out on mission with your neighbors?
- What are you going to do about it?

From Garden to Garden: Church 1 **Acts 2:36-37**

Cut to the Heart: Choosing the God Who Chose You As we enter Act 6 of God's overarching story—Church: The Kingdom Embodied—the temple of God is no longer a stone building, but a people filled with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, Peter preaches to a crowd that has just witnessed the Holy Spirit fall with power. Quoting the prophet Joel, Peter reveals that God's rescue plan is expanding to everyone—sons and daughters, young and old, servants and free. When the crowd hears that Jesus, whom they crucified, has been raised by God as Lord and Messiah, they are "cut to the heart" and ask: "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter calls them to turn from self-reliance to a new story through repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit. God has already chosen us in love, but discipleship begins when we actively choose God back—allowing God's grace to disrupt our comfortable traditions and bend our whole lives toward Christ.

- When you consider your daily life, what story (cultural success, personal independence, or God's kingdom) do you find yourself living out most naturally?
- God has chosen you, but in what specific areas of your heart or routine are you being invited to actively "choose God" today?
- When was the last time you felt "cut to the heart" by God's truth and were led to ask for forgiveness or seek a new direction?

Unhistoric Acts: The Gift & Power of the Spirit In our modern culture, value is often tied to influence, followers, and public visibility. Yet George Eliot perceptively wrote in *Middlemarch*: "The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs." Being the church is not about amassing fame, acquiring power, or unlocking an elite level of spiritual status. When Peter declares that the gift of the Holy Spirit is "for you and your children and for all who are far off," he reminds us that the Spirit empowers ordinary, unnamed saints to live faithfully hidden lives. Like a race pacer who runs ahead to reduce the cognitive burden for another runner, the Holy Spirit moves in and through us in quiet, uncredited ways—smiling instead of frowning, offering grace after a disaster, or helping a neighbor. Our lives point not to our own legacy, but to the One whose body could not be held by a tomb.

- How does Eliot's insight about "unhistoric acts" reframe your view of ordinary daily tasks, quiet kindness, and hidden service?
- Who is an ordinary saint in your life—someone whose name won't be in history books—whose faithful life helped pass the faith on to you?
- In what ways do you try to achieve spiritual progress in your own strength, rather than resting in the Holy Spirit as a free gift and promise?

Devoted Community: Intentional & Sacrificial Life Together What did life look like for the first 3,000 believers who received the Spirit? Acts 2:42–47 paints a simple picture: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." They didn't just attend an occasional gathering; they lived intentionally and sacrificially together. They met in temple courts and shared meals in homes with glad and sincere hearts. They held everything in common, selling property and possessions whenever anyone had need. In a fast-paced world where calendars quickly fill with work, sports, cross-country meets, and family obligations, to be the church means intentionally moving toward one another. Sacrificial living isn't just donating spare change; it is giving of our very selves—our time, homes, tables, and resources—so that the love and unity of Jesus become tangible to a watching world.

- How can you build intentional rhythms of fellowship, table-sharing, and prayer into your schedule despite the demands of a busy season?
- What does living sacrificially for the good of your church family and neighbors look like in practical, tangible terms this week or month?
- How does gathering around tables in homes and breaking bread help to cultivate gladness, sincerity and unity across differences?

Practice: Embodying the Spirit-Filled Community

To be the church is to be committed to the growing good of the world empowered by the Spirit while living sacrificially with one another. Put this into practice with some of these rhythms this week:

- **The Pocket Scripture (Grounding in the Story):** Write down a verse from Acts 2 on a small card and keep it in your pocket or put it as your phone background this week. When you feel overwhelmed, anxious or tempted to respond in fear or anger, pause and read the scripture and ask: "Holy Spirit will you guide my response right now?"
- **Sacrificial Table & Sharing (Expanding Your Resources):** Identify one tangible possession, resource, or meal you can share sacrificially with someone in need or a neighbor. Invite someone to your home for coffee or a simple meal, or quietly meet a physical need without seeking recognition or repayment.
- **Unhistoric Encouragement:** Perform one, unhistoric, hidden act of encouragement or service this week for someone who is struggling or unnoticed. Reach out directly in a real face-to-face conversation or personal note to share how God's grace and presence has impacted your life.
- **Will you let Jesus' love empower you to BE the church this week—living faithfully in the unhistoric, sacrificial, and grace-filled moments of everyday life?**