

The Bigger Story – Empowered

Week Twenty-Two

Notes & Discussion Questions on Acts 2:1-13

The Spirit moves suddenly, tangibly, from heaven, full of force, might and power...

Acts 2:2: The AUDIBLE sound of the Spirit:

- In the Greek and Hebrew languages, the word for “spirit” is the same word for “breath” and “wind.” *What other Scriptures does this bring to mind? What do we learn about the Spirit? What is the author saying?*
- Genesis 1:1-2: The Spirit of God blows over the waters of the newly created earth.
- Genesis 2:7: The Spirit of God blows life into newly created man.
- Ezekiel 37:9-10: The Spirit of God, moving over the dry bones of Israel, bringing them life.
- See also: Jeremiah 30:23, John 3:8

Acts 2:3: The VISUAL presence of the Spirit: Fire (see Matthew 3:11)

- Fire usually represents purification/refinement, but can also reference the Lord (Exodus 3:1-2, 13:21, 19:18, Hebrews 12:29)
- *How does the Spirit purify? Why is it important the Spirit rested on “each one of them”?*

Acts 2:4: The VERBAL presence of the Spirit: Tongues

- A known language (except to the speaker) that God gives some (1 Cor. 12:20) for the purpose of prayer and/or praise Him, allowing a person to temporarily bypass language/education barriers for prayer/praise purposes, empowered by the Spirit (Acts 2:11, 10:46, 1 Cor. 14:2, 14-15)
- Tongues is not a prophetic message and Scripture discourages tongues in public worship services (1 Cor. 14:18-19, 23) but is for individual communication w/God. Acts 2:11: The crowd had a common language (Greek) which Peter preached to them (Acts 2:14-40)...the disciples did not use tongues to preach but to speak of the “might works of God”, which was overheard. The tongues stopped when the preaching began.
- Tongues can be evidence of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, but it is not the exclusive evidence (1 Cor. 13:1) *What is evidence of the Spirit?* Love: 1 Cor. 13:13, 14:1

Two different reactions to Jesus’ followers speaking in tongues: some were curious (Acts 2:12) some were critical (Acts 2:13). *Discuss.* Read 1 Peter 4:10-11 and *discuss spiritual gifts.*

This Week’s Readings

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------|----------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1 Kings 6-7 John 10 | 1 Kings 8 | 1 Kings 9 John 11 | 1 Kings 10-11 | 1 Kings 12-13 John 12 | 1 Kings 14-15 |
| Acts 2:1-21, Numbers 11:24-30, Psalm 119:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12:3-12 | | | | | |

Notes & Discussion Questions on Psalm 119:1-8

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible. There are **22** sections, corresponding to the **22** letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each section has **8** verses, each verse is written in alphabetic acrostic form, so every verse of that section begins with the same letter. This Psalm is about delighting in God’s Word and the blessings of Scripture.

Psalm 119: 1-8: **Aleph א**: **The blessedness of those who walk in God’s word and the longing to do so.**

The one who walks in God’s word knows the true blessedness of living and enjoying an undefiled life. *What does this look like? What is the connection between being “undefiled” and “walking in the law of the Lord”? How do we know how to walk? How do we long to walk this way?*

“Heart” (verse 2, 7) “walk” (verse 1, 3) and “keep” (verse 2, 4, 8) are repeated. *What does this imply?*

- Notice the emphasis on “whole heart.” *What does this mean? Why is it important?*
- Keep means “doing” or “guarding” (not just hearing) and implies action, as does “walk.” *Why does God want us to act in this manner? How are we then blessed?*

Read verse 5 as a prayer for the ability to obey God. Apart from Him, His sanctifying work in us, we cannot keep His commands. We can pray for the power to live in this way, an unashamed life. *Discuss.*

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

Notes & Discussion Questions on Acts 2:14-40

Acts 2:14-15: Peter begins his sermon, standing up as the representative of the disciples and raising his voice. **Compare** this with the “previous Peter” and **discuss** the empowering force of the Spirit. **Spontaneous?**

In the sermon, Peter quotes three Old Testament Passages (Acts 2:25-33 connects Psalm 16 and the resurrected Jesus and Acts 2:34-36 links Psalm 110 explaining the divine Messiah).

Acts 2:14-21: references Joel 2:28-32 and focuses on the promise of God to pour out His spirit on all flesh.

- Joel prophesied about judgment coming to ancient Israel but also gave the encouragement of promise from God: like promised outpouring of the Spirit.
- What happened on the day of Pentecost was a *near* fulfillment of that promise, the *final* fulfillment coming in the “last days”
- Last days: a season, the time of the Messiah, who came in humility and will return in glory at any time.

How does this connect to last week’s idea of “waiting on the Lord”?

Peter, quoting Joel, describes the Spirit poured out on “all flesh” (v. 17) and emphasizes “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (v. 21) **What was he trying to communicate? How is this different?**

Acts 2:22-24: Peter then describes how Jesus is the Messiah, connecting history and known concepts with the essential Gospel message... **what can we learn about evangelism through this example? How can we start with what is previously known about Jesus and build on that? Why is it significant to connect Jesus with the Old Testament and the plans of God? How does Scripture continually point to Jesus?**

Acts 2:25-36 (Psalm 16, Psalm 110): Jesus is not bound by death but defeated it. **What does this mean? Why is it significant?** The pains of death are “loosed.” **What does this mean for the believer?** Jesus is “raised up” and “exalted to the right hand of God”, “which we are all witnesses”. **What is the significance of the Ascension of Jesus? What is the significant of the name of the name of Jesus?** (see also John 1:12)

Acts 2:37-41: **What is the response to this message? Peter’s offered invitation?**

Empowered: Next Week’s Readings – Proclamation

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|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Kings 16-17 John 13 | 1 Kings 18-19 John 14 | 1 Kings 20 John 15 | 1 Kings 21-22 | 2 Kings 1-3 John 16 | 2 Kings 4 John 17 |
| Isaiah 9:6-7, Psalm 119:9-16, Acts 2:36-41, Matthew 28:16-20 | | | | | |

Notes & Discussion Questions: Numbers 22:24-30

Previously in Numbers 11: The people complain (1-3) about lack of meat (4-9) about Moses (10-15) Beware of those who:

- Consistently bring up your past (to try and pull you back in) Numbers 11:5
 - **Discuss** life after committing to follow Christ. **Have others tried to pull you back? Bring up the past?** (Philippians 3:13-14)
- Question God’s goodness, thinking it isn’t enough or really “good” Numbers 11:6, 34
 - **Discuss** God’s goodness. **How can you maintain a grateful and content attitude?**
- **How do you identify such negative influences? How do you respond? How has God provided for you?**

Numbers 11:24-25: The Spirit of the Lord comes upon the 70 elders:

- God is providing the people what they didn’t ask for (leadership/oversight) but really need (rather than meat)... **What does this show about God? Discuss a time in your life in which God gave you what you needed, not necessarily what you desired.**
- For the leaders to do the job, they needed an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the same spirit as Moses had. **How does the Spirit equip and empower? Compare** this with the coming Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

Numbers 11:26-30: Upon Eldad and Medad and upon all God’s people

- The spirit is not located to one place (the camp) and leaders should long that all God’s people receive this gift. **Discuss** this outpouring of the Spirit of God (see also Ezekiel 36:27, Joel 2:28-29).

The Bigger Story – Empowered

Week Twenty-Three: Proclamation

Notes & Discussion Questions on Acts 2:36-41

Acts 2:14-15: Peter begins his sermon, standing up as the representative of the disciples and raising his voice.

- **Compare** this with the “previous Peter” and **discuss** the empowering force of the Holy Spirit!

Acts 2:34-36: Quoting Psalm 110, Peter explains the Divine Messiah.

Psalm 110:1 is quoted in the NT more than any other single verse, at least **25** times. In this Psalm, David understood (through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) and proclaimed the deity of the Messiah!

Peter’s sermon concluded with a summary: All Israel should know that, though they crucified Jesus, God has declared Him both Lord and Christ! **Why is this important?**

Acts 2:37: The people respond with a question: **What shall we do?**

This was a significant work of the Holy Spirit. The crowd listening to Peter was moved by Peter’s bold proclamation of the truth. They asked Peter how they should respond. Acts 2:40: And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

- The response of the crowd puts the events of Pentecost into perspective: The exercise of the gift of tongues produced criticism/curiosity. It wasn’t until the gospel was preached that conviction from the Holy Spirit came. This was the work God really wanted to accomplish. **Why?**
- **How does conviction from the Holy Spirit “cut to the heart”?** With this realization comes the knowledge that they were responsible for the death of Jesus (as each of us are) and that they had to do something in response to this responsibility. **How does the Word (sword) cut? Heal?**
- When God is working on someone’s heart, they want to come to Him. **Discuss.**

Acts 2:38-40: Peter invites the multitude to come to Jesus.

This was in response to the question, “What shall we do? ” Repent, and let every one of you be baptized”

- To repent does not mean to feel sorry, but it means to change one’s mind or direction. Repentance describes what coming to God is. You can’t turn towards God without turning from the things He is against.
 - John the Baptist preached: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! ” (Matthew 3:2)
 - Jesus preached: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ” (Matthew 4:17). Now when Peter began to preach, he started with repent.
- **How is there hope in repentance?** You don’t have to continue the way you are going, turn to God!

“Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” This second thing Peter said to do, an expression of belief and complete trust in God.

- As they repented and demonstrated faith and obedience by baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit would be given to them as it was given to the original group of disciples.
- Peter specifically promised that the promise of the Holy Spirit would be given to those who believe in all succeeding generations (all who are far off). Since the promise is for all who are far off, it includes all people up to the present time.

Acts 2:41: **What is the response to Peter’s sermon?** On this day of Pentecost the church went from about 120 people to 3,120 people!

- Many of the 3,000 were undoubtedly pilgrims who came to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. Many in this crowd went back home, traveling far from Jerusalem, taking the good news of Jesus Christ with them! They gladly received his word!

This Week’s Readings

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|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Kings 16-17 John 13 | 1 Kings 18-19 John 14 | 1 Kings 20 John 15 | 1 Kings 21-22 | 2 Kings 1-3 John 16 | 2 Kings 4 John 17 |
| Isaiah 9:6-7, Psalm 119:9-16, Acts 2:36-41, Matthew 28:16-20 | | | | | |

Notes & Discussion Questions on Psalm 119:9-16

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible. There are **22** sections, corresponding to the **22** letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each section has **8** verses, each written in alphabetic acrostic form, so every verse of that section begins with the same letter. This Psalm is about delighting in God’s Word and the blessings of Scripture.

Beth ב: Purity of life and meditation on God’s word: The Hebrew letter “Beth” means “a house.” This section tells us how to make our heart a home for the word of God.

Psalm 119:9: **How can you keep your way pure?** Find a cleansed life through God’s Word. **Why does God want us to live in this way?** God spares us the bondage of sin, offering freedom in Him. **Discuss.** This way of living is not accidental, but “sought” “guarded.” If one does not take heed, the natural path is toward impurity and degeneration...**Discuss.**

Psalm 119:10-11: **How does one takes heed of God’s Word?** With our “whole hearts”! With our mouths & minds! The foundation for a morally pure life is found in God’s Word:

- God’s word shows us the standard of purity: what is right and what is wrong
- God’s word shows us the reasons for purity: the wisdom and goodness of God’s commands
- God’s word shows us the difficulty of purity: encouraging us to be on guard!
- God’s word shows us the blessings of purity: an incentive to make the necessary sacrifices
- God’s word shows us how to be born again: transformed by our purse Savior, Jesus
- God’s word shows us the way to be empowered by the Spirit: with the resources to be pure.
- God’s word is a refuge against temptation: providing a way of escape
- God’s word is a light that clears away the deceptive fog of seduction and temptation
- God’s word is a mirror that helps us see our spiritual and moral condition, and thus walk in purity.
- God’s word gives us wise and simple commands; “Flee youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22)
- God’s word cleanses our life in a spiritual sense (Ephesians 5:26, John 15:3).
- God’s word is the key to the renewing of our minds: spurring personal, moral and spiritual transformation (Proverbs 2:10-12, Romans 12:1-2).
- God’s word gives a refuge against condemnation when we have been impure, showing how to repent and come back to a pure life.
- God’s word shows us how to conduct our lives so that we are an encouragement to others!

Scripture is not a test or rule book but an access point to God: “His [the psalmist] heart had gone after God: he had not only desired to obey God’s laws, but to commune with His person” (Spurgeon) **What does this mean for us?**

Psalm 119:12: A prayer for instruction:

“Teach me Your statutes”: This demonstrates the humility of the psalmist. Though filled with God’s Word and a desire for purity, he sensed his constant need for instruction by God. He didn’t simply need to read God’s statutes; he pleaded with God to teach him. **How does this connect with the way Jesus taught?** (“Lord, teach us to pray...Luke 11:1) **Have you heard the phrase:** “This book will keep you from sin. Sin will keep you from this book”? The psalmist understood this principle, longing for God to be his teacher...**how do we act likewise?**

Psalm 119:13-16: A declaration of commitment. To declare God’s word with our lips is a part of our relationship with and love Him. God’s people should have His word in their minds and hearts, but also upon their lips. **Discuss.**

“When we make the Scriptures the subject of our conversation, we glorify God, we edify our neighbors, and we improve ourselves.” (Horne)

“We may also observe here evidence of adoption. Obedience is not a burden, but a delight. The servant may perform the statutes of God, but it is only the son who ‘delights in them’” (Bridges). **How can our lives be filled with God’s word? In our minds** (meditate/contemplate), **hearts** (delight), and **habits** (not forget)?

| Empowered: Next Week’s Readings – Devotion | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 2 Kings 5-6 John 18 | 2 Kings 7-8 | 2 Kings 9-10 John 20 | 2 Kings 11-13 John 20 | 2 Kings 14-15 | 2 Kings 16-17 John 21 |
| Isaiah 58:6-11, Psalm 119:17-24, Acts 2:36-47, Matthew 9:9-13 | | | | | |

The Bigger Story – Empowered

Week Twenty-Four: Devotion

Notes & Discussion Questions on Acts 2:42

Acts 2:42: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”

“Devoted themselves” or “continued steadfastly” uses a verb which communicates “a steadfast and single-minded fidelity to a certain course of action.” **What are you steadfastly devoted to?**

They were devoted, continued steadfastly, in the APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE: The Word. was to be no departure from the apostles’ doctrine because it was the truth of God, the Word of God. **How do you connect with idea with what Jesus taught? With Psalm 119?**

- **Why is the Word of God foundational to the church? What happens when it is abandoned?**

They were devoted, continued steadfastly, in FELLOWSHIP: the Greek word “koinonia” has the idea of association, communion, fellowship and participation; it means to *share* in something. **What does the church share in?** “Koinonia” speaks to the closeness, caring for and sharing with other people who are united in the common bond of Jesus Christ. **Discuss. What does this mean for the relationships of believers?**

They were devoted, continued steadfastly, in THE BREAKING OF BREAD: a reminder of Christ’s sacrifice. **Why is it important to never forget this?** (see 1 Corinthians 10:16-17). We are one body, unified in Christ. **Discuss.**

They were devoted, continued steadfastly, THE PRAYERS. Prayer is conversation, communication and communion with God. **Why is it important to pray? Individually?** They were devoted to “the” prayers, perhaps indicated corporate, group prayers. **Why is it important to pray together as a church?**

“Prayer is not informing God of anything, but is inviting Him into everything...it is less about moving God’s hand and more about moving our hearts” (Hamrick) **Discuss.**

How are these things (the Word, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers) foundational to the church?

Read Isaiah 58:6-11 and discuss worship. What is acceptable and glorifying to God? How can we remember these things and ensure the church continues steadfastly in them, pleasing God, today?

This Week’s Readings

| | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 2 Kings 5-6 John 18 | 2 Kings 7-8 | 2 Kings 9-10 John 20 | 2 Kings 11-13 John 20 | 2 Kings 14-15 | 2 Kings 16-17 John 21 |
| Isaiah 58:6-11, Psalm 119:17-24, Acts 2:36-47, Matthew 9:9-13 | | | | | |

Notes & Discussion Questions on Isaiah 58:6-11

God exposed the emptiness of two religious rituals, as practiced in Isaiah’s day, Fasting and keeping the Sabbath. Both emphasized not doing things (eating/working). **What can we learn from these verses which guide us in acting/doing/worshipping the Lord in our walk?**

What are some characteristics in these verses which detail a life right with God? What does this life look like?

- Verse 8: It is enlightened: “Then shall your light break forth like the dawn”
- Verse 11: It is a guided life: “The Lord will guide you continually”
- Verse 11: It is a satisfied life: “[the Lord will] satisfy your desire in scorched places”
- Verse 11: It is strengthening: “[the Lord will] make your bones strong”
- Verse 11: It is an abundant life: “like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose water’s do not fail...”

Where do we see Jesus here, strengthening, healing, guiding, enlightening...? How does this bring us delight? Joy in the Lord?

How do these verses and concepts of a life right with God, worship acceptable to God, connect with Psalm 119?

Notes & Discussion Questions on Psalm 119:17-24

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm in the Bible. There are **22** sections, corresponding to the **22** letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each section has **8** verses, each written in alphabetic acrostic form, so every verse of that section begins with the same letter. This Psalm is about delighting in God’s Word and the blessings of Scripture.

Gimel ג: The word of God and the trials of life

119:17: A request for a blessing to live and keep God’s Word, *have you asked for this blessing?* The request is to live fully, abundantly, bountifully FOR the purpose of living and keeping God’s Word... a God-honoring prayer and life.

- The psalmist knew persecution (verses 22-23), deprivation and fear (17), seasons when he seemed to get nothing from God’s Word (verse 18), loneliness, rejection and a sense of abandonment (19-20).
- Yet, during this, he wanted to live (fully, abundantly – not just surviving) in a God-honoring way.
 - **Connect** this request/priority with the idea of worship as described in Isaiah 58

119:18: A prayer for insight to understand the Word

- Like Saul turned Paul (Acts 9:18), like Balaam’s closed eyes/minds/hearts (Numbers 22:31) it is our eyes that need opening. We don’t need a “plainer” Bible. We don’t need new revelations. We need new eyes, to see the wondrous things in Scripture:
 - “If we want to see wonderful things in the Scriptures, it is not enough for us merely to ask God to open our eyes that we might see them. We must also study the Bible carefully. The Holy Spirit is given not to make our study unnecessary but to make it effective.” (Boice)
- **How can you incorporate prayer into your Bible Study time? Why is this essential?**
- **Why doesn’t everyone see the Word as wondrous?**
- **Why should the Word be foundational to the church?** (see Acts 2:42)
- **Discuss the unchanging, relevant, powerful, inerrant and everlasting Word of God.**

119:19-20: Longing for God’s Word

- **Why does the psalmist want to know and keep God’s Word? Where is his home?**
 - “If you are trying to follow God, the world is going to treat you as an alien, for that is what you will be. You cannot expect to be at home in it, and if you are, well, it is an indication that you really do not belong to Christ or at least are living far from him.” (Boice)
- “What God intends to give us He first sets us longing for. Hence the wonderful efficacy of prayer, because prayer is the embodiment of a longing inspired of God because he intends to bestow the blessing. What are thy longings, then, my hearer?” (Spurgeon)
 - **What are you longing for? How does God encourage this longing?** (see Psalm 37)

119:21-24: Finding refuge in God’s Word

- What happens to those who stray from God’s commandments? The proud and cursed?
- The psalmist delighted and trusted in God’s word much more than in the people of this earth. **What can be learned here?** (see Psalm 20:7)
- **What hinders the Psalmist time and understanding of the Word? What hinders yours? How does God provide through these seasons?**

| Empowered: Next Week’s Readings: Salvation | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 2 Kings 18 Acts 1 | 2 Kings 19-21 Acts 2 | 2 Kings 22-23 | 2 Kings 24-25 Acts 3 | 1 Chron 1-2 Acts 4 | 1 Chron 3-5 |
| Isaiah 35:4-10, Psalm 119:25-32, Acts 3:1-10, Matthew 9:1-8 | | | | | |