

ACTS: POWERED FOR PURPOSE

Week 1 • Deeper Study Guide

Acts 1:1–11 | "Between Promise and Power"

THE DEEPER THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

Most of us hear Acts 1 and feel the tension of the disciples' impatience. But there's something more profound at work than just wrong timing. The disciples weren't asking the wrong question because they were impatient — they were asking the wrong question because they were still thinking inside the wrong covenant.

"Has the time come to restore our kingdom?" is an old-covenant prayer. It assumes that God acts FOR His people, descending to fix their situation. But Jesus is inaugurating something entirely new: a covenant where God acts THROUGH His people, indwelling them with power to go fix the world.

Key Theological Shift

- Old Covenant framework: God descends to rescue a nation
- New Covenant reality: God indwells believers and sends them as agents
- The disciples wanted relief — Jesus offered them a role
- The Holy Spirit in Acts is not for comfort. It is a commissioning.

Acts 1:8 key insight: "You will receive power... AND you will be my witnesses." The Spirit and the mission are inseparable. Power is always purposeful in Scripture — it is never ambient, it is always directional.

SCRIPTURE THREAD

Read these passages in sequence and look for the pattern:

- Genesis 12:1–4 — Abraham: promise before a son
- Exodus 3:1–12 — Moses: calling before a nation
- 1 Samuel 16:1–13 — David: anointing before a throne
- Acts 1:4–8 — Disciples: promise before power
- Acts 2:1–4 — Fulfillment arrives

The Pattern:

God always provides the promise before the provision. The gap between the two is not emptiness — it is formation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where in your life are you praying an "old covenant" prayer — asking God to fix your situation rather than use you in it?
- What "kingdom" are you asking God to restore? Is it possible He's inviting you into a bigger one?
- The disciples stared at heaven after the Ascension. What past season, miracle, or loss are YOU still staring at that may be keeping you from moving forward?
- If the same Spirit that drove 120 people to transform the Roman Empire lives in you — what would faithful obedience look like this week?

RESOURCES FOR DEEPER STUDY

BOOKS

- *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* — Jack Deere | A compelling case that Spirit-empowered ministry is not just for Acts but for today's church.
- *The Normal Christian Life* — Watchman Nee | A classic that unpacks what Spirit-empowered daily living actually looks like.
- *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* — Francis Chan | Direct and convicting; asks why the Spirit-filled life of Acts looks so different from modern Christianity.
- *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary (4 vols.)* — Craig Keener | For the serious student; the most thorough scholarly commentary on Acts available.
- *Derailed: Five Lessons Learned from Catastrophic Failures of Leadership* — Tim Irwin | Helpful backdrop for understanding how leaders respond in "between seasons."

PODCASTS & SERMONS

- "Who Is the Holy Spirit?" — Theology of the Holy Spirit series by NT Wright (NTWrightOnline podcast / YouTube). Wright brings rigorous scholarship to a deeply personal topic.
- "Acts" sermon series — Craig Groeschel / Life.Church Open Network (open.life.church). Full series available free; strong on practical application from Acts.
- "The Book of Acts" — The Bible Project podcast series. Excellent overview of Acts' literary structure and theological arc — great for background listening.
- "Between the Promise and the Provision" — Steven Furtick / Elevation Church (YouTube). Directly addresses the "gap" seasons this passage speaks to.
- "Empowered" — Tony Evans sermon series on the Holy Spirit (tonyevans.org). Solid theological grounding with strong application.

ARTICLES & ONLINE RESOURCES

- "The Holy Spirit in Acts" — Bible Gateway Blog. Good introductory overview of the Spirit's role across the whole book.
- "Old Covenant vs. New Covenant" — Got Questions (gotquestions.org). Helpful primer on the covenant shift that frames the disciples' confusion in Acts 1.
- "The Ascension of Jesus: Why It Matters" — The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org). Explores the theological significance of what the disciples witnessed in Acts 1:9–11.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Don't just study Acts — live the question it raises:

- Read Acts 1–2 in one sitting this week. Notice every time ordinary people do something extraordinary.
- Identify one area of your life where you have been waiting for God to restore something. Ask Him: "Am I being invited into a mission here?"
- Memorize Acts 1:8. Write it somewhere you will see it every day this week.

"What feels like an ending may actually be the beginning of something you cannot yet see."