**Sermon Based Community Group Leader Guide**

**Acts 1**

**\* Read Acts 1:1-11. Open in Prayer.**

**\* Sermon Overview**

In this sermon, Pastor Aaron will focus on the person, promise, and power of the Spirit. He outline will be the Spirit centers us on Christ, the Spirit convicts us of sin, and the Spirit compels us to mission. The Spirit empowers us to be witnesses so that we may proclaim the kingdom of God in fulfillment of the mission of God. As we walk through this sermon series, may we all ask ourselves: What keeps me from being unhindered?

*Note: Please know that this section may change to reflect what the pastor emphasizes on Sunday morning, if the discussion guide is revised.*

**\* Prompt Questions**

1. Was there anything that stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Are there any clarifying questions that you may have regarding the sermon?

2. How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

3. What was the take away from the sermon for you? If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

4. How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week? How can we be praying for you specifically?

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

*Note: Please do not feel compelled to get through every one of these questions. I have given them in hopes that they will drive us back to the text so that we may diligently search the Scriptures as the Bereans did (Acts 17:10-15). These questions will give us a grasp of what the text says/means so that we can apply the text to our lives. I would encourage you to spend the majority of your time on application questions so that we can become “doers of the Word and not hearers only” (James 1:22).*

**1. What is the context of Acts 1?**

*Luke wrote Luke and Acts (written around A.D. 62) to Theophilus in order to give him an accurate account of the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and to tell how Jesus continues to work through Spirit-empowered witnesses to carry the gospel to the end of the earth without hindrance and with boldness. Acts 1:8 serves as the theme verse of the book and as the outline for the book, for chapters 1-7 focus on Jerusalem, chapters 8-12 focus on Judea and Samaria, and chapters 13-28 focus on the end of the earth. The risen Lord sends His Spirit to empower followers of the Way to be witnesses who proclaim the kingdom of God to the end of the earth.*

*Acts 1 covers the promise of and preparation for the outpouring of the Spirit. In Acts 1:1-11, before He ascends to the right hand of God, Jesus instructs His followers to wait upon the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower them to be His witnesses to the end of the earth. After the ascension of Jesus, Acts 1:12-26 tell what the disciples did while they waiting on the outpouring of the Spirit—they prayed and replaced Judas with Matthias. In this sermon, Pastor Aaron will focus on Acts 1:1-11, specifically emphasizing the person, promise, and power of the Holy Spirit who empowers and enables us to fulfill the mission of God.*

*A key question to ask throughout this series is this: What keeps up from being unhindered?*

*For review on Acts 1:1-11, see Luke 24:36-53.*

*About the structure and theme of Acts, the NIV Zondervan Study Bible states: “This (Acts 1:8) is both the general outline and central theme of Acts. The gospel will proceed from Jerusalem (chapters 1-7), to Judea and Samaria (chapters 8-12), and to the ends of the earth (chapters 13-28). Thematically, the disciples’ role is to be Jesus’ ‘witnesses.’ Their power is the Holy Spirit. Their task is to take this message from ‘Jerusalem…to the ends of the earth.’ This movement is both geography (from Jerusalem to Rome) and ethnic (from Jews to Gentiles).”*

**2. What is the kingdom of God?**

*The “kingdom of God” is a key phrase that is a short-hand descriptor for much in the Gospels and the book of Acts. Broadly, the “kingdom of God” embodies God’s plan of salvation from creation to new creation. More specifically, the “kingdom of God” refers to the inbreaking rule and reign of Jesus through His life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and continuing work through the Spirit to empower and enable believers to proclaim the gospel boldly and to grow in holiness daily. Practically, the “kingdom of God” is a descriptor of what life looks like when Christ is ruling and reigning in and through our lives. For Luke, the concept of the “kingdom of God” frames the entire book of Acts, as it appears at the beginning (1:3) and end (28:23, 31) As the Spirit empowers believers to be Jesus’ witnesses, they go out proclaiming the “kingdom of God” to the end of the earth.*

*Note that the phrase “kingdom of God” occurs six times in Acts (1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31).*

*ESV Study Bible: “The ‘kingdom of God’ means not an earthly political or military kingdom but the present spiritually directed reign of God, gradually transforming individual lives and entire cultures through the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

*NIV Zondervan Study Bible: “In its broadest sense, the ‘kingdom of God’ refers to God’s sovereign rule over his creation, a rule that Jesus restores by bringing forgiveness of sins and reconciliation through his life, death, and resurrection.”*

**3. Who is the Holy Spirit? What does the Holy Spirit do in the lives of believers?**

*The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, equal in essence with the Father and the Son. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity regarding salvation is to apply the work of Christ to our lives. In a believer, the Spirit regenerates him, indwells him, empowers him, and seals him. The passages in John 14-16 make clear to us that the Spirit centers us on Christ, convicts us of sin, compels us to mission. As for what the Spirit is doing in Acts, He is regenerating, indwelling, conforming, empowering, equipping, and enabling believers to be witnesses to the end of the earth. Much more could be said about the person and work of the Spirit, but the one for us to remember regarding this passage is that the mission of God could not be completed apart from the work of the Spirit in our lives empowering us for the work.*

*For more passages concerning the Holy Spirit, see Luke 3:15-17; 24:44-53; John 14:15-17, 25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Romans 5:5; 7:6; 8:1-39.*

*R. C. Sproul writes, “The mission of the church, the reason we exist, is to bear witness to the present reign and rule of Christ, who is at the right hand of God. If we try to do it in our own power, we will fail. The reason for the outpouring of the Spirit is not to make us feel spiritual. It is not to give us a spiritual high. It is so that we can do the job that Jesus gave the church to do.”*

*ESV Study Bible: “This powerful new work of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost brought several beneficial results: more effectiveness in witness and ministry (Acts 1:8), effective proclamation of the gospel (Matthew 28:19), power for victory over sin (Acts 2:42-46; Romans 6:11-14; 8:13-14; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 3:10), power for victory over Satan and demonic forces (see Acts 2:42-46; 16:16-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 John 4:4), and a wide distribution of gifts for ministry (see Acts 2:16-18; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; 1 Peter 4:10). The disciples likely understood ‘power’ in this context to include both the power to preach the gospel effectively and also the power (through the Holy Spirit) to work miracles confirming the message.”*

**4. What is the importance of the ascension of Jesus?**

*Luke is the only writer in the New Testament who mentions the ascension specifically. The ascension is important for two primary reasons. First, it signaled the dawn of the new age, which is the outpouring of the Spirit. Christ promised to send another Helper, which was contingent upon Him being exalted to the right hand of the Father. Second, it pictured how Jesus would one day return—in the clouds, bodily, visible, in glory/power. Until that day, Jesus commissions His church to be Spirit-empowered witnesses of the gospel of Christ. We are to be ministers of reconciliation who call people into relationship with Jesus.*

*Derek Thomas identifies three purposes of the ascension: “First, it provided a visible demonstration of Jesus’ final return to heaven….Second, it portrayed the manner of the return of Jesus from heaven at the end of the ages….Third, the ascension was a visible demonstration of Jesus’ promotion (to the right hand of God; see Psalms 24:7-10).”*

**5. What is our role in God’s mission?**

*“Witness” is a key term for Luke throughout the book of Acts. Our role in God’s mission is to be witnesses of His saving power. A witness is one who testifies about things they have seen firsthand, have experienced firsthand. As those who have experienced the grace of God and have relationship with Jesus, we are to proclaim to others the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are to lead others to know and follow Jesus.*

*ESV Study Bible: “Jesus corrected them, not by rejecting the question (in 1:6), but by telling them that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit, not in order to triumph over Roman armies but to spread the good news of the gospel throughout the world. In other words, the return is in God’s timing; in the meantime, there are other things believers are to do.”*

**\* Application Questions**

*Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions. I’ve tried to offer enough for you to pick the ones you think will best fit your group, as you know what your ladies or men are going through at this time and may need to hear. Also, please note that these questions might be adjusted to reflect what the pastor calls us to do in application of the sermon.*

1. Here are some good questions to reflect on in every passage (these are from Danny Akin):

 A. What does this passage teach me about God?

 B. What does this passage teach me about man?

 C. What does this passage teach me about Christ?

 D. What does this passage want me to know?

 E. What does this passage call me to do?

2. Here are some good questions to reflect on and act on this week (these were passed along to me by Pastor Aaron and Dr. Jones):

 A. What do you take as the main theme from this sermon?

 B. What have you learned today about Jesus’ character that has affected you daily?

 C. Do you have any clarifying questions concerning the sermon?

 D. What did the Holy Spirit convict you of because of His Word today?

 E. Will you ask forgiveness and what will you change?

 F. Will you be willing this week to pass on to someone else what you’re learning about Jesus? How will you be intentional this week to do so?

3. In the sermon, Pastor Aaron challenged us to be Spirit empowered witnesses of the kingdom of God. What is kingdom of God? How can you discern whether you are living for the kingdom of God or for the kingdom of man?

4. Who is the Holy Spirit? What does the Holy Spirit? Why is the Holy Spirit vital in the mission of God?

5. If our task is to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, how is that going for you? When was the last time you shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with an unbeliever? How can you be a faithful witness where you live, work, and play?

6. Until Jesus returns, what are we to be doing? What distracts us from living for the mission of God? How can we as a community group keep the mission of God before our eyes this week?

7. One of the points that Pastor Aaron made in the sermon is that the Spirit centers us on Christ. What does it look like for our lives to be Christ-centered? How does the Spirit center us on Christ?

8. Another aspect of the Spirit’s work that Pastor Aaron emphasized is the Spirit’s conviction of sin in our lives. How have you experienced the convicting work of the Spirit this week? What sin is the Spirit exposing so that you may put it off and put on Christ? How can we as community group members help one another fight sin in our lives?

9. The Spirit empowers us for mission and compels us to mission. How should this truth shape the way we live? If the Spirit is concerned with the mission of redeeming and restoring people to relationship with the Triune God, then ought that not to be our concern? Do you often pray for the Spirit to guide, empower, and enable you to live on mission today? Do you pray for the Spirit to bring opportunities to share the gospel and for the Spirit to give boldness to share the gospel when he gives opportunities (Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 4:3-4)?

10. One of the key terms in this passage is “witness.” What is a witness? As you look in Acts 1:8, whose witness are we to be? How does our experience of Jesus shape our witnessing for Jesus?

**\* Sermon Take Away**

As we read this passage, one application question ought to be pressed upon our hearts: Am I living on mission?

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

**1. Monday—Romans 10; 1 Samuel 12**

**2. Tuesday—Romans 11; 1 Samuel 13**

**3. Wednesday—Romans 12; 1 Samuel 14**

**4. Thursday—Romans 13; 1 Samuel 15**

**5. Friday—Romans 14; 1 Samuel 16**

**6. Saturday—Romans 15; 1 Samuel 17**

**7. Sunday—Romans 16; 1 Samuel 18**

* **Unhindered: A Study of Acts (Part 1)**

1. September 17th –Acts 2

2. September 24th –Acts 3:1-4:31

3. October 1st –Acts 4:32-5:11

4. October 8th –Acts 5:12-42

5. October 15th –Acts 6:1-7

6. October 22nd –Acts 6:8-8:3

7. October 29th –Acts 8:4-40

8. November 5th –Acts 9:1-31

9. November 12th –Acts 9:32-11:18

10. November 19th—Acts 11:19-30

* **Advent 2017 (Passages are Likely to Change)**

1. November 26th—Luke 1:1-25

2. December 3rd—Luke 1:26-38

3. December 10th—Luke 1:39-56

4. December 17th—Luke 1:57-80

5. December 24th—Luke 2:1-21

* **Unhindered: A Study of Acts (Part 2)**

1. January 7th—Acts 12 (Herod’s Persecution and Death/No government can stop God’s church)

2. January 14th—Acts 13-14

3. January 21st—Acts 15:1-35

4. January 28th—Acts 15:36-16:5

 5. February 4th—Acts 16:6-40

6. February 11th—Acts 17:1-15

7. February 18th—Acts 17:16-34

8. February 25th—Acts 18:1-23

9. March 4th—Acts 18:24-28

10. March 11th—Acts 19:1-41

11. March 18th—Acts 20:1-16

12. March 25th—Acts 20:17-30

**--. April 1st (Easter Sunday)**

13. April 8th—Acts 21:1-26

14. April 15th—Acts 21:27-22:29

15. April 22nd—Acts 22:30-23:35

16. April 29th—Acts 24:1-27

17.May 6th—Acts 25:1-12

18. May 13th (Mother’s Day)—Acts 25:13-26:32

19. May 20th—Acts 27:1-44

20. May 27th (Memorial Day Weekend)—Acts 28:1-31

1. For the discussion guide, I used the following resources: Darrell Bock, *Acts*; I. Howard Marshall, *Acts;* F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*; Derek Thomas, *Acts;* R. Kent Hughes, *Acts;* R. C. Sproul, *Acts;* John B. Polhill, *Acts; ESV Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)