

BE

DYNAMIC

EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF GOD'S PEOPLE

NT COMMENTARY

ACTS 1—12

Warren W. Wiersbe

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*This book is for some missionary friends who
have challenged and enriched our lives and
whose ministries have extended the church:*

Paul and Kathie Buyse

Don and Alene Dix

Don and Vera Hillis

Abe and Marj Van Der Puy

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THE BIG IDEA

An Introduction to *Be Dynamic*
by Ken Baugh

Twenty-three years ago, my wife and I were sitting in our car parked in front of a beach in Malibu, California, watching the waves and eating our quarter pounders with cheese (that was when I could eat a quarter pounder without looking like one). We were on our honeymoon, and as we were sitting in the car, basking in our love for each other, I noticed a homeless man moseying around on the beach. He finally sat down by a trash can directly in front of our car.

My sweet wife suggested that I go over and share Christ with this man, but to be honest, that wasn't my first thought. I was more interested in finishing my burger and fries than I was in the eternal destiny of this man. But then, being the incredibly intuitive person that I am (yes, I'm being sarcastic), I realized that this was a test. My wife wanted to see what kind of spiritual stuff her new husband was made of. So, being the spiritual giant that I am (again, I jest), I told her that I would love to go over and share Christ with this man, but I didn't have an evangelistic tract or Bible to use. I thought this would get me off the hook. But to my chagrin, Susan just happened to have a *Four Spiritual Laws* booklet in her purse. Now

I was on the spot, so I relented, set down my burger and fries, took one last slurp from my Coke, got out of the car, and walked over to where the homeless man was sitting.

His name was Paul, and I asked him if I could sit down and talk with him. He said, “Sure.” As we talked, I found out that at one time he had been a prominent businessman but had lost everything, including his wife and family, so he just dropped out of normal life. Paul’s story was truly tragic. As we talked, I slowly steered the conversation toward spiritual matters and gently shared the gospel with him. He was fairly polite but not very interested in continuing our dialogue, so after about ten to fifteen minutes, I thanked him for taking the time to talk with me, gave him the booklet, and wished him well.

As I walked back to the car, I saw my new bride beaming with pride, thinking that her new husband was a bold and dynamic man of God, willing to share the gospel with a total stranger. But I knew the truth about myself: that I would never have taken the initiative to talk to Paul without Susan’s prompting. You see, twenty-three years ago it was difficult for me to share my faith with strangers. And to be honest, even today after I’ve been in ministry for over twenty years, it’s still difficult.

Yet the mandate of the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all people groups is a command for every true follower of Christ, not just for those who have the gift of evangelism. God wants every disciple to be a dynamic witness for Him. This is the Big Idea that runs throughout the first twelve chapters of the book of Acts. Peter was just a fisherman, untrained in the fine details of theology, yet the Holy Spirit used him in dynamic ways to bring many people to a saving faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

So here’s my question: How can we be like Peter and share our faith with others in effective ways even when we’re scared and may not really want to? The answer lies in knowing how to use four tools of evangelism:

service evangelism, lifestyle evangelism, friendship evangelism, and confrontational evangelism. Let's open up our evangelism toolbox and learn how to use each one effectively.

Tool #1: Service Evangelism. Think of service evangelism as a way of sharing the love of Christ with others in practical ways that meet specific felt needs. It's giving that cup of cold water to someone who is thirsty (see Matt. 10:42). Now, the difference between humanitarian aid and service evangelism projects is that humanitarian aid doesn't typically share openly about the person and work of Jesus Christ, but in service evangelism you do. And as you serve people, with no strings attached, you will quickly discover that they ask you why you are helping them, and this gives you the opportunity to share the gospel: "I'm just sharing God's love in a practical way. Can we talk about Jesus?" Recently, I was part of a team from our church that brought aid to those affected by Hurricane Ike in Galveston, Texas. We had our food-pantry truck with us, and we went to Walmart and loaded it up with water, drinks, socks, T-shirts, blankets, and food items and drove to a campsite where there were dozens of people living in tents who had been displaced by the hurricane. As we were handing out these goods to the people, they were both grateful and inquisitive as to why we were helping them, and it gave us a great opportunity to share with them the love of Christ. So service evangelism is a simple way to meet human needs while talking about Jesus.

Tool #2: Lifestyle Evangelism. This means of evangelism is based upon Jesus' words to be light in the world (see Matt. 5:14). To be the light that Jesus is referring to simply means that as a Christian, I am to reflect who Jesus is to others. For example, the moon has no ability to generate light on its own; it simply reflects the light of the sun. In the same way, as believers, we are to reflect the light of Christ's love, mercy, and kindness to others everywhere we go. No doubt you've heard some variation of this illustration: "If you were put on trial because of your claim to be a

Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” That’s what we’re talking about in lifestyle evangelism, living out the faith in such a way that others see the difference and ask you about it.

Tool #3: Friendship Evangelism. A few years ago, I was working with a trainer down at my local gym. He knew I was a pastor, but I never brought it up. Instead I was willing to wait and see what might happen. One day after a few weeks, I was in the middle of a set, lifting a couple of very heavy dumbbells, when he just blurted out, “So what’s the deal about Christians believing that Jesus is God?” I was so surprised, I almost dropped the weights on my head. For some reason, my trainer felt safe enough because of our growing friendship to ask me a spiritual question that had been on his mind for a long time. I think friendship evangelism operates in a similar way to another statement Jesus made about Christians: We are to be salt in the world (see Matt. 5:13). Salt was used to preserve meat without the aid of refrigeration, and salt is also a flavor enhancer. I believe as we build relationships with unbelievers, and they get to know us and we them, our friendship can act like a flavor enhancer bringing out the God flavors of His Word. I like how *The Message* version of the Bible puts it: “Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth” (Matt. 5:13). When a believer becomes friends with an unbeliever, their friendship becomes a God-ordained flavor enhancer that draws them to Christ.

Tool #4: Confrontational Evangelism. I consider most street preachers to be fairly confrontational in their approach to evangelism. I used to be really turned off and even embarrassed by their approach. However, I have come to believe that street preaching can be very effective. My good friend Lon Solomon, pastor of McLean Bible Church, became a Christian through the ministry of a street preacher while he was attending the University of North Carolina. Today, Lon has a thriving ministry in the Washington D.C. area, including a weekly radio broadcast that takes the gospel to tens

of thousands of people each week, and all because a street preacher was bold enough to proclaim the gospel in a direct and compelling way. The confrontational approach isn't for everybody, and it certainly isn't the most effective tool in every situation, but it sure works in the right context.

So now you have a full toolbox of evangelistic tools that you can choose from, depending on the situation you find yourself in. Just remember, God doesn't call you as a Christian to save people, just to sow the seed of the gospel. And as you do, the Holy Spirit will do the rest of the work, drawing people into relationship with Jesus Christ in dynamic ways.

Dr. Wiersbe's commentaries have been a source of guidance and strength to me over the many years that I have been a pastor. His unique style is not overly academic, but theologically sound. He explains the deep truths of Scripture in a way that everyone can understand and apply. Whether you're a Bible scholar or a brand-new believer in Christ, you will benefit, as I have, from Warren's insights. With your Bible in one hand and Dr. Wiersbe's commentary in the other, you will be able to accurately unpack the deep truths of God's Word and learn how to apply them to your life.

Drink deeply, my friend, of the truths of God's Word, for in them you will find Jesus Christ, and there is freedom, peace, assurance, and joy.

—Ken Baugh
Pastor of Coast Hills Community Church
Alison Viejo, California

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

We call Dr. Luke's second volume "The Acts of the Apostles," when really it is the "Acts of God's People Empowered by the Holy Spirit." It is a story of power.

That's why I have called this book *Be Dynamic*. I think Dr. Luke would approve; for, after all, God's people today share the same spiritual dynamic that energized the early saints. If we are yielded to the Spirit, we can be adding new chapters to the exciting story of the church.

There are some nonrepeatable events in Acts, as well as some transitional happenings; but the basic spiritual principles are the same today as when Peter and Paul ministered.

We need to look beyond the accidentals to the essentials and discover afresh the spiritual dynamics of the Word of God and prayer, love and fellowship, persecution, and personal witness for Christ.

Vance Havner used to say that our church services start at eleven o'clock sharp and end at twelve o'clock dull. But it doesn't have to be that way. If we will lay hold of the "power principles" recorded in Acts, we can be dynamic and see our local churches do exploits for the Lord.

I trust that your study of the book of Acts will do that for you and your church.

—Warren W. Wiersbe

A SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

Theme: The expansion of the church in the world

Key verse: Acts 1:8

- I. The Ministry of Peter (Acts 1—12)
 1. Jerusalem the center
 2. Ministry primarily to Israel
 - A. Peter and the Jews (Acts 1—7)
 - B. Peter and the Samaritans (Acts 8)
 - C. The conversion of Paul (Acts 9)
 - D. Peter and the Gentiles (Acts 10—11)
 - E. Peter's arrest and deliverance (Acts 12)
- II. The Ministry of Paul (Acts 13—28)
 1. Syrian Antioch the center
 2. Ministry primarily to the Gentiles
 - A. Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13—14)
 - B. The Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15)
 - C. Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:1—18:22)
 - D. Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23—21:17)
 - E. Paul's arrest and voyage to Rome (Acts 21:18—28:31)

THE FAITH OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

(Acts 1)

A famous Hollywood producer once said that for a movie to be successful, it must start with an earthquake and work up to a climax. Luke certainly didn't follow that formula when he wrote the book of Acts. Except for the ascension of Jesus Christ, events recorded in Acts 1 are anything but dramatic. After all, what is exciting about a business meeting?

Then why record these events? Why didn't Luke just start with the story of Pentecost? For several reasons.

To begin with, Luke was writing volume two of a work that started with what we call the gospel of Luke (see Luke 1:1–4), and he had to begin with the proper salutation and introduction. We don't know who Theophilus was or even if he was a believer, but Luke's salutation suggests that he may have been an important Roman official (see Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). Likely Theophilus was a Christian or at least a seeker who was carefully studying the Christian faith. His name means "friend of God," and we hope he lived up to his name.

But even more important, Luke had to build a bridge between his gospel and the book of Acts (Luke 24:50–53). At the close of his gospel,

he had left the believers in the temple, praising God. Now he had to pick up the story and explain what happened next. Imagine how confused you would be if, in reading your New Testament, you turned the last page of the gospel of John and discovered—Romans! “How did the church get to Rome?” you would ask yourself; the answer is found in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is also the account of the work of the Holy Spirit *in* and *through* the church. The gospel of Luke records what Jesus “began both to do and teach” in His human body, and the book of Acts tells us what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through His spiritual body, the church. Even today, congregations can learn much about church life and ministry from this book, and this even includes the business meetings!

In this chapter, we see the believers taking care of “unfinished business” and getting ready for Pentecost. What they said and did reveals to us the faith of the church. In what did they really believe?

THEY BELIEVED IN THE RISEN CHRIST (1:1–11)

After His resurrection, Jesus remained on earth for forty days and ministered to His disciples. He had already opened their minds to understand the Old Testament message about Himself (Luke 24:44–48), but there were other lessons they needed to learn before they could launch out in their new ministry. Jesus appeared and disappeared during those forty days, and the believers never knew when He might show up. It was excellent preparation for the church because the days were soon coming when He would no longer be on earth to instruct them personally. We believers today never know when our Lord may return, so our situation is somewhat similar to theirs.

The Lord taught them several important lessons during that time of special ministry.

The reality of His resurrection (v. 3a). Some of the believers may have had their doubts forty days before (Mark 16:9–14), but there could

be no question now that Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead. To strengthen their faith, He gave them “many infallible proofs,” which Luke did not explain. We know that when Jesus met His disciples, He invited them to touch His body, and He even ate before them (Luke 24:38–43). Whatever proofs He gave, they were convincing.

Faith in His resurrection was important to the church because their own spiritual power depended on it. Also, the message of the gospel involves the truth of the resurrection (Rom. 10:9–10; 1 Cor. 15:1–8), and if Jesus were dead, the church would be speechless. Finally, the official Jewish position was that the disciples had stolen Jesus’ body from the tomb (Matt. 28:11–15), and the believers had to be able to refute this as they witnessed to the nation.

These believers were chosen to be special witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, and that was the emphasis in their ministry (Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:30–32). Most of the people in Jerusalem knew that Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified, but they did not know that He had been raised from the dead. By their words, their walk, and their mighty works, the believers told the world that Jesus was alive. This was “the sign of Jonah” that Jesus had promised to the nation (Matt. 12:38–41)—His death, burial, and resurrection.

The coming of His kingdom (v. 3b). This refers to the reign of God over the hearts and lives of those who have trusted Him (see Matt. 6:33; Rom. 14:17; 1 John 3:1–9). When you read the four Gospels, you discover that the apostles had a strong political view of the kingdom and were especially concerned about their own positions and privileges. Being loyal Jews, they longed for the defeat of their enemies and the final establishment of the glorious kingdom under the rule of King Messiah. They did not realize that there must first be a spiritual change in the hearts of the people (see Luke 1:67–79).

Jesus did not rebuke them when they “kept asking” about the future

Jewish kingdom (Acts 1:7). After all, He had opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:44), so they knew what they were asking. But God has not revealed His timetable to us, and it is futile for us to speculate. The important thing is not to be curious about the future but to be busy in the present, sharing the message of God's *spiritual* kingdom. This is another emphasis in the book of Acts (see Acts 8:12; 14:22; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

The power of His Holy Spirit (vv. 4–8). John the Baptist had announced a future baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; and see Acts 11:16), and now that prophecy would be fulfilled. Jesus had also promised the coming of the Spirit (John 14:16–18, 26; 15:26–27; 16:7–15). It would be an endowment of power for the disciples so that they would be able to serve the Lord and accomplish His will (Luke 24:49). John had spoken about “the Holy Spirit and fire,” but Jesus said nothing about fire. Why? Because the “baptism of fire” has to do with future judgment, when the nation of Israel will go through tribulation (Matt. 3:11–12). The appearing of “tongues of fire” at Pentecost (Acts 2:3) could not be termed a “baptism.”

Acts 1:8 is a key verse. To begin with, it explains that the power of the church comes from the Holy Spirit and not from man (see Zech. 4:6). God's people experienced repeated fillings of the Spirit as they faced new opportunities and obstacles (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9). Ordinary people were able to do extraordinary things because the Spirit of God was at work in their lives. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not a luxury; it is an absolute necessity.

Witness is a key word in the book of Acts and is used twenty-nine times as either a verb or a noun. A witness is somebody who tells what he has seen and heard (Acts 4:19–20). When you are on the witness stand in court, the judge is not interested in your ideas or opinions; he only wants to hear what you know. Our English word *martyr* comes from the Greek word

translated “witness,” and many of God’s people have sealed their witness by laying down their lives.

We hear a great deal these days about “soul winning,” and the emphasis is a good one. However, while *some* of God’s people have a calling to evangelism (Eph. 4:11), *all* of God’s people are expected to be witnesses and tell the lost about the Savior. Not every Christian can bring a sinner to the place of faith and decision (though most of us could do better), but every Christian can bear faithful witness to the Savior. “A true witness delivereth souls” (Prov. 14:25).

Acts 1:8 also gives us a general outline of the book of Acts as it describes the geographical spread of the gospel: from Jerusalem (Acts 1—7) to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8—9), and then to the Gentiles and to the ends of the earth (Acts 10—28). No matter where we live, as Christians we should begin our witness at home and then extend it “into all the world.” As Dr. Oswald J. Smith used to say, “The light that shines the farthest will shine the brightest at home.”

The assurance of His coming again (vv. 9–11). Our Lord’s ascension into heaven was an important part of His ministry, for if He had not returned to the Father, He could not have sent the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (John 16:5–15). Also, in heaven today, the Savior is our interceding High Priest, giving us the grace that we need for life and service (Heb. 4:14–16). He is also our Advocate before the Father, forgiving us when we confess our sins (1 John 1:9—2:2). The exalted and glorified Head of the church is now working with His people on earth and helping them accomplish His purposes (Mark 16:19–20).

As the believers watched Jesus being taken up to glory, two angels appeared and gently rebuked them. Angels play an important role in the ministry described in Acts, just as they do today, even though we cannot see them (see Acts 5:19–20; 8:26; 10:3–7; 12:7–10, 23; 27:23). The angels are the servants of the saints (Heb. 1:14).

The two messengers gave the believers assurance that Jesus Christ would come again, just as He had been taken from them. This seems to refer to His public “coming in the clouds” (Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7) rather than to His coming for His church “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:51–52; 1 Thess. 4:13–18). Regardless of what views different people may take of God’s prophetic program, Christians agree that Jesus is coming again and that He can come at any time. This in itself is a great motivation for faithful Christian service (Luke 12:34–48).

THEY BELIEVED IN EACH OTHER (1:12–14)

They obeyed their Lord’s commandment and returned to Jerusalem “with great joy” (Luke 24:52). It is likely that the group met in the upper room where the last Passover had been celebrated, but they were also found at worship in the temple (v. 53).

What a variety of people made up that first assembly of believers! There were men and women, apostles and “ordinary” people, and even members of the Lord’s earthly family (see Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). His “brethren” had not believed in Him during His ministry (John 7:5), but they did come to trust Him after the resurrection (Acts 1:14). Mary was there as a member of the assembly, participating in worship and prayer along with the others. The center of their fellowship was the risen Christ, and all of them adored and magnified Him.

How easy it would have been for someone to bring division into this beautiful assembly of humble people! The members of the Lord’s family might have claimed special recognition, or Peter could have been criticized for his cowardly denial of the Savior. Or perhaps Peter might have blamed John because it was John who brought him into the high priest’s house (John 18:15–16). John might well have reminded the others that *he* had faithfully stood at the cross, and had even been chosen by the Savior to

care for His mother. But there was none of this. In fact, nobody was even arguing over who among them was the greatest!

The key phrase is “with one accord,” a phrase that is found six times in Acts (1:14; 2:1, 46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25; and note also 2:44). There was among these believers a wonderful unity that bound them together in Christ (Ps. 133; Gal. 3:28), the kind of unity that Christians need today. “I do not want the walls of separation between different orders of Christians to be destroyed,” said the godly British preacher Rowland Hill, “but only lowered, that we may shake hands a little easier over them!”

It is not enough for Christians to have faith in the Lord; they must also have faith in one another. To these 120 people (Acts 1:15) the Lord had given the solemn responsibility of bearing witness to a lost world, and none of them could do the job alone. They would experience severe persecution in the days ahead, and one of them, James, would lay down his life for Christ. It was not a time for asking, “Who is the greatest?” or, “Who committed the greatest sin?” It was a time for praying together and standing together in the Lord. As they waited and worshipped together, they were being better prepared for the work that lay before them.

THEY BELIEVED IN PRAYER (1:15, 24–25)

Prayer plays a significant role in the story of the church as recorded in the book of Acts. The believers prayed for guidance in making decisions (Acts 1:15–26) and for courage to witness for Christ (4:23–31). In fact, prayer was a normal part of their daily ministry (2:42–47; 3:1; 6:4). Stephen prayed as he was being stoned (7:55–60). Peter and John prayed for the Samaritans (8:14–17), and Saul of Tarsus prayed after his conversion (9:11). Peter prayed before he raised Dorcas from the dead (vv. 36–43). Cornelius prayed that God would show him how to be saved (1–4), and Peter was on the housetop praying when God told him how to be the answer to Cornelius’s prayers (v. 9).

The believers in John Mark's house prayed for Peter when he was in prison, and the Lord delivered him both from prison and from death (Acts 12:1–11). The church at Antioch fasted and prayed before sending out Barnabas and Paul (13:1–3; and note 14:23). It was at a prayer meeting in Philippi that God opened Lydia's heart (16:13), and another prayer meeting in Philippi opened the prison doors (v. 16:25ff.). Paul prayed for his friends before leaving them (20:36; 21:5). In the midst of a storm, he prayed for God's blessing (27:35), and after a storm, he prayed that God would heal a sick man (28:8). In almost every chapter in Acts you find a reference to prayer, and the book makes it very clear that something happens when God's people pray.

This is certainly a good lesson for the church today. Prayer is both the thermometer and the thermostat of the local church, for the "spiritual temperature" either goes up or down, depending on how God's people pray. John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, said, "Prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to Satan." In the book of Acts, you see prayer accomplishing all of these things.

THEY BELIEVED IN GOD'S LEADING (1:16–23)

The Lord Jesus was no longer with them to give them personal directions, but they were not without the leading of the Lord, for they had the Word of God and prayer. In fact, the Word of God and prayer formed the foundation for the ministry of the church as recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 6:4).

Peter has been criticized for taking charge, but I believe he was doing the will of God. Jesus had made it clear that Peter was to be their leader (Matt. 16:19; Luke 22:31–32; John 21:15–17). Peter was "first among equals," but he was their recognized leader. His name is mentioned first in each listing of the apostles, including Acts 1:13.

But should Peter and the others have waited until the Spirit had been given? We must not forget that the Lord had previously "breathed" on

them and imparted the Spirit to them (John 20:22). When the Spirit came at Pentecost, it was for the purpose of filling them with power and baptizing them into one body in Christ.

We must also remember that the Lord had opened up their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). When Peter referred to Psalms 69:25 and 109:8, he was not doing this on his own, but was being led by the Spirit of God. These people definitely believed in the divine inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 1:16; and see 3:18; 4:25), and they also believed that these Scriptures had a practical application to their situation.

A radio listener once wrote to ask me, “Why do you teach from the Old Testament? After all, it’s ancient history and it’s all been fulfilled by Jesus!” I explained that the only “Bible” the early church had was the Old Testament, and yet they were able to use it to discover the will of God. We need both the Old and the New; in fact, the New Testament writers often quote from the Old Testament to prove their point. St. Augustine said, “The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is by the New revealed.”

Certainly we must interpret the Old by the New, but we must not think that God no longer speaks to His people through the Old Testament Scriptures. “*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16). “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every* word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). We must use the whole Bible and balance Scripture with Scripture as we seek to discover the mind of God.

“But it was wrong for them to select a new apostle,” some claim, “because Paul was the one who was chosen by God to fill up the ranks. They chose Matthias and he was never heard of again!”

Except for Peter and John, *none of the original Twelve* are mentioned by name in the book of Acts after 1:13! Paul could not have “filled up the ranks” because he could never have met the divine qualifications laid down in Acts 1:21–22. Paul was not baptized by John the Baptist; he did not

travel with the apostles when Jesus was with them on earth; and though he saw the glorified Christ, Paul was not a witness of the resurrection as were the original apostles.

Paul made it clear that he was *not* to be classified with the Twelve (1 Cor. 15:8; Gal. 1:15–24), and the Twelve knew it. If the Twelve thought that Paul was supposed to be one of them, they certainly did not show it! In fact, they refused to admit Paul into the Jerusalem fellowship until Barnabas came to his rescue (Acts 9:26–27)! The twelve apostles ministered primarily to the twelve tribes of Israel, while Paul was sent to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:1–10).

No, Paul was not meant to be the twelfth apostle. Peter and the other believers were in the will of God when they selected Matthias, and God gave His endorsement to Matthias by empowering him with the same Spirit that was given to the other men whom Jesus had personally selected (Acts 2:1–4, 14).

It was necessary that twelve men witness at Pentecost to the twelve tribes of Israel, and also that twelve men be prepared to sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes (Luke 22:28–30). From Acts 2–7, the witness was primarily to Israel, “to the Jew first” (see Rom. 1:16; Acts 3:26; 13:46). Once the message had gone to the Gentiles (Acts 10–11), this Jewish emphasis began to decline. When the apostle James was martyred, he was not replaced (Acts 12). Why? Because the official witness to Israel was now completed, and the message was going out to Jews and Gentiles alike. There was no more need for twelve apostles to give witness to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Peter’s account of the purchase of the land and the death of Judas appears to contradict the record in Matthew 27:3–10, but actually it complements it. Judas did not buy the field personally, but since it was his money that paid for it, in that sense, he was the buyer. And, since the thirty pieces of silver were considered “blood money,” the field was called “the field of

blood” (Matt. 27:8). It was not Judas’s blood that gave the field its name, for the Jews would not use as a sacred cemetery a place that had been defiled by a suicide. Judas hanged himself, and apparently the rope broke and his body (possibly already distended) burst open when it hit the ground.

The believers prayed for God’s guidance before they “voted” because they wanted to select the man that God had already chosen (Prov. 16:33). Their exalted Lord was working in them and through them from heaven. This is the last instance in the Bible of the casting of lots, and there is no reason why believers today should use this approach in determining God’s will. While it is not always easy to discover what God wants us to do, if we are willing to obey Him, He will reveal His will to us (John 7:17). What is important is that we follow the example of the early church by emphasizing the Word of God and prayer.

Not all our Lord’s followers were in the upper room, for there were only 120 present and 1 Corinthians 15:6 states that at least 500 persons saw the risen Christ at one time. Bible scholars do not agree on the size of the population of Palestine at that time, and their estimates run from 600,000 to 4 million. But regardless of what figure you select, the 120 believers were still a minority, yet they turned their world upside down for Christ!

What was their secret? The power of the Holy Spirit!

Dr. Luke explains this in Acts 2.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. If you had to explain the word *power* with an object, what object would you use? Why?
2. The book of Acts is the story of God's power through His believers. Read Luke 24:44–53 and Acts 1:1–11. How is Acts a continuation of Luke's gospel?
3. What did Jesus teach about the relationship between His resurrection and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?
4. What is the relationship between Christ's resurrection and the responsibility of being witnesses?
5. Read Acts 1:12–26. How does faith in the resurrected Christ affect our unity?
6. How does faith in Christ affect our prayer lives?

7. What is the correlation between faith and our knowledge of God's will?

8. What is the difference between an intellectual understanding of Christ's resurrection and faith in the resurrected Christ?

9. How would you evaluate your faith in Christ?

10. What can you do this week to strengthen your faith in the resurrected Christ?