

Date	June 13, 2010
Series	God's Empowering Presence
Title	God's Empowering Presence For The Call
Big Idea	We must PURSUE and never PRESUME God's empowering presence to fulfill The Call.
Text	Acts 1:1-8
Speaker	Roger Valci

Introduction:

*About two months ago, I had the privilege to share a meal with **Austin and Joanne Ashmore** in their home, a couple who has been in this church for over 35 years. By the way Joanne makes some great salmon. During our discussion that night, Joanne told me that **she misses at VCC some of the practices she learned from the Episcopal Church**. Having been in Episcopal churches before, I thought she would **mention the robes, the readings, the ceremonies or the special days**. What she said next surprised me. Joanne said,*

*"In the Episcopal Church **we studied the Holy Spirit**. One night, at a conclusion of a study on the Holy Spirit at our church, I was invited to a prayer time. I came forward and was asked to open my mouth and start singing to the Lord. At first, this request seemed strange and weird, but I decided surrender myself to it because I wanted more of God's Spirit in my life. To my great surprise, I started speaking in tongues. At first I was afraid of how God would use this gift in my life. **What I found is a wonderful connection to God that I have practiced almost daily for 38 years.***

*Pastor Roger, this gift God gave me have become a big part of my life and **I feel comfortable flowing in it everywhere except for one place - Valley Christian Center. Why is that? Why don't we have more openness to the Holy Spirit at Valley Christian Center?"***

Every organization has its elephant in the room issues and I believe it is time we address this one concerning the Holy Spirit. I will do this in two manners. **Each week from the pulpit throughout the summer we will teach God's word concerning God's empowering presence.**

*We will cover a variety of topics concerning God's empowering presence **from spiritual gifts, to passionate and genuine worship, to miracles, to spiritual warfare. Each topic will ALWAYS be connected to The Call. Each Wednesday night, I will host a class to discuss both the Biblical, practical and pastoral issues associated with what we bring to the pulpit. I will also solicit a panel of pastors and teachers to help me answer any and all questions that arise.***

When I first began exploring the possibility of becoming your senior Pastor, people described VCC flavor and style to me in more Presbyterian terms than Assembly of God. Being the inquisitive person that I am, I decided to ask various leaders of VCC their take on this issue. I spoke to: **Charlie Self, James Brady, Ray Noah, Ward Tanneberg** even **Steve Madsen**. Now I respect my predecessors and turn to them often for advice and prayer, but in this case, it appears to me that a certain philosophy was chosen early on in this church that decided that particular expressions of the Spirit were either deemed **whimsical, distracting** or **too divisive** to allow. Having been apart of the VCC story for almost 2 years now, I believe it is time to address this issue for the following reasons.

Why do we need to talk about this?

1. **Identify Confusion – Valley Christian Center IS an Assembly of God church** - a fact that I have found we, for some reason, seem to want to distance ourselves. For instance, in the 101 binder I teach with Pastor Don, there are two statements of faith (NAE and the 16 Fundamentals of the Assembly of God). Why two? The visitor DVD created for this church has a line in it that says, **“Valley Christian Center is a non-denominational church affiliated with the Assemblies of God.”** That is sort of akin to saying “I was born in Korea and the Congo.” Can you be both? Our web site, when I first came here, had no mention that we were an Assemblies of God church, or at least I couldn't find it. Our yellow page ad listed us as Non-denominational, not Assemblies of God. All this to me is quite confusing.

The Assemblies of God was birthed in 1928 as a mission's movement. The coming of the Spirit, in the Azusa Street revival in 1906 was seen as a part of global movement that some perceived would precede the return of Christ. People who were touched by the Spirit went around the globe to share the gospel. In the past century, the Assembly of God has become one of the largest global missions movements ever seen in the church's history.

2. **Quench the Spirit** – Its sorts like that we want have invited the Holy Spirit to do certain things in our midst, **salvation, healing of a marriage or a financial miracle**, but there are certain parts of His resume we steer away from – **spiritual gifts, miracles or transformative encounters**. This concerns me because **if we continue with this trend, we could be quenching/grieving His work in our midst**.
3. **No other way to fulfill The Call** – If we are going to take serious our part in the Great Commission, especially answering The Call to reach a city God cares about, **then we certainly need EVERY TOOL AND SUPPORT THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN GIVE US. SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE TOOLS TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION, NOT TOYS FOR SELFISH INDULGENCE (2X)**.
4. **Integrity issue for teaching the Scriptures** – In seminary, I was dubbed by my Presbyterian friends as a **“thinking” Pentecostal.** I actually sort of like the label. In my first year in school, I was asked by a student, *“Why do you Pentecostals exegete your experience?”* meaning *“Why do you take an experience and then through a few verses behind it to justify your beliefs.”* I didn't know how to answer him until one day, I came to realize this question, *“Why do you exegete your LACK of experience?”* meaning *“Why do you take your lack of experience and then read the Bible from that lens take out anything supernatural or limit the supernatural to the First Century?”* **In the end experience, or lack of it, cannot be the final factor – God's word must be. What does the text say? How should we read it?** I believe **THIS IS THE CENTRAL ISSUE in the body of the Biblical text because it is tied to God's global endeavor to reach humanity.** There is more body of evidence on God's empowering presence in the Bible than there is: communion, bulletins, singing hymns, having choirs, even water baptism.

Apprehension:

I do sense a fair amount of apprehension as we broach this topic together.

1. **Excess** – *Will VCC turn into some Pentecostal circus where people experience is emphasized over the word of God? Will manifestation become badges of spirituality and a necessary prerequisite for leadership?* Personally, I don't think excess is our problem at VCC. Furthermore, with 19 years of education, 4 degrees, 3 of them in theology and a rather drab personality, I don't think you have to worry about excess from your pastor. *If you see me get excessive about anything, it will be the church's Call to fulfill the Great Commission locally.*
2. **Divisive** – This topic is too divisive and we should stay clear of it. Well so is **hell**, do you want me to stay clear of that one? So is **the definition of marriage**, do you want me to stay away from that one. How about **one-way to God through Jesus Christ?** For me, this is an INTEGRITY issue. Folks, I gave my life to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I vowed to preach **the WHOLE COUNSEL of God's word**, not just the fun and safe parts of it.
3. **Weird** (Speak in tongues, fall, laugh) – **Just because something is weird does not make it God.** In my opinion, some people get too excited over mystical, bizarre or coincidences and tend to read a lot into them. Corollary, **just because something is weird does make it NOT God** (naked prophet, spit to heal, marrying a prostitute, building arks, speaking to rocks). *In the end, we need the Spirit's help to discern such events as they appear in our own lives.*
4. **Be someone other than I am** – To be honest, even though I have spent most of my in Pentecostal settings, much of it did not fit my personality or taste. In some of these meetings there is pressure to conform to a certain practices. Sometimes, **it appeared to me that I had to stop being me in order to be accepted in that culture.** I refused to give into that pressure and **I encourage you to always be who you are, BUT be willing to follow the Spirit's leading.**
5. **Zealous, but unloving people**– Some people who flow in this manner are more zealous than loving. What I mean is that their zeal for the Spirit has at times alienated many from even considering such practices. That's what happened in my family (my families divorce).
6. **Language confusion and superior** – Describing this experience whether verbally or in writing **has been always been** a problem. Tends to create a caste system of the **"have's"** and the **"have nots"**. I will be careful and use the language of Scripture as much as possible and to pastor with people and not allow a false hierarchy to appear. After all spirit baptism is not a sign of maturity, but a grace.
7. **Turn off my mind** – that somehow to grow in Christ, I had to turn off thinking. That is scary, if not cultic, to me. We should always search the Scriptures to validate and interpret all our practices. That being said, it is a "faith" journey and some practices we

may never totally understand. For those situations, we will look at the fruit of the situation and ask the Holy Spirit who wrote the Scriptures to help us understand its application in our own setting.

Behind each of these apprehensions are **negative experiences that skew our readings of the text**. The bottom line question still stands: **“What does the Bible say?” Are we reading it correctly? Does my life match what the text says?**

Preview:

So I want us to begin our journey by looking at a few verses together in the book of Acts. This morning I want to show you that **we must PURSUE and never PRESUME God’s empowering presence to fulfill The Call**. Open up your Bibles and let us look the first eight verses. I want us to see together:

1. The **CONNECTION** of God’s empowering presence with **The Call**.
2. Look at **WHEN** God’s empowering presence occurs in one’s walk.
3. Ask **HOW** one postures themselves to receive God’s empowering presence.

I won’t answer every question on this topic this week, but I want to lay a foundation to get us started and pointed us in the right direction.

The Text:

Acts 1:1 *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about **all that Jesus BEGAN TO DO and TO TEACH***

Acts 1:2 *until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.*

Acts 1:3 *After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*

Acts 1:4 *On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.*

Acts 1:5 *For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 1:6 *So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

Acts 1:7 *He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.*

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem**, and in all **Judea** and **Samaria**, and to **the ends of the earth.**"*

Notice that Jesus BEGAN and DID NOT FINISH (SEE VERSE 1). This is a thematic verse for the whole book as much as the infamous verse 8. Jesus' work continues throughout time, but the mode drastically changes. We will see, with His departure, that:

1. **THE ACTS AND TEACHINGS of Jesus continue through ordinary people. Notice that it is NOT merely verbal, but demonstrative. (To DO and To Teach).**
2. **Notice the scope of The Call according to verse 8: city, region and nation (Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth. Individuals is implied, but at the center is transformative regions that glorify God.**
3. **The CALL is done BY THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT.**

THE CALL ACCORDING TO ACTS 1:1,8 IS THE WORDS AND WORKS OF JESUS THROUGH ORDINARY PEOPLE TO REACH CITIES, REGIONS AND NATIONS THROUGH THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT.

God's Empowering Presence for The Call (not politics):

We have a **contrast**, technically an adversative with the conjunction “**But**” in verse 8 that sets apart what is said in verse 6 & 7. We are 50 days after the Resurrection. The Apostles have seen Jesus die on the cross, raised from the dead and have now walked with them for several weeks. They are now eager to leverage the resurrection towards a course they aspire. Verse six, shows us that aspiration.

*Acts 1:6 So when they met together, they asked him, “**Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?**”*

Essentially, they are saying: “*Jesus, its time to go **POLITICAL.**” “Let’s reestablish the Davidic kingdom, overthrow our Roman oppressors, establish you as King and we can be your cabinet.”*

Jesus dismisses their political aspirations and refocuses on His Kingdom agenda.

*I stand here today to declare that the church’s attempt to change our culture through politics the past 20 years has **failed**. From Jerry Farewell to Pat Robertson, street protests to voter guides, my sense is that our attempts to change culture through politics have had some serious misgivings.*

1. The Church is despised more now than anytime in my lifetime.
2. We have gotten caught up in the polarization of political parties. (Can a person be a Democrat and a Christian?)
3. We have abandoned our moral plateau. (The Church as the moral conscience of society.)
4. **We have lost confidence in God’s empowering presence to change culture.**
5. **The Call has regressed rather than advanced.**

Jesus dismisses such aspirations and immediately turns the conversation FROM POLITICS TO THE KINGDOM. Essentially, He says, *“The Kingdom trumps all other priorities.” “Politics is not the way.” “Focus on The Call.” “Focus NOT on the current political world.” “Focus on my global endeavor for this world through the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit.” “Politics can only change laws...I can change hearts and you will never have true transformation of individuals, society and nations until you change a heart.”*

Ok, Jesus...

If your are saying the politics is NOT the way to change culture or society.

If you want to continue Your works through me to reach cities, regions and nations which sounds a bit idealistic to me,

Then **HOW** can one person like me ever have an impact in this world?

God's Empowering Presence is APART from Salvation (Separate, but Distinct)

All throughout the Scriptures we see God's empowering presence as **THE TRANSFORMATIVE EVENT that converts ordinary people into world changers.** And throughout Scripture this heavenly encounter is typically seen **AS SUBSEQUENT AND DISTINCT FROM THE MOMENT OF SALVATION.** We could take several examples to prove this. I will focus on the one example at hand in our text that being the **DISCIPLES.**

John 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

John 20:22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**"

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

Acts 2:2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

Acts 2:4 **All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.**

Acts 4:8 Then Peter, **filled with the Holy Spirit,** said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people!

Acts 4:29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

Acts 4:30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

Acts 4:31 ¶ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.**

Three different settings. Three distinct fillings. Three times on the Apostles. One on the day of the Resurrection. One on the day of Pentecost. One in a setting where the early church gathered after Peter and John were arrested. One must ask what is going on here?

1. One option is to believe the disciples believed, were saved, lost their salvation and there were resaved. My Presbyterian friends won't accept that option since they don't believe you can lose your salvation.
2. Others say this is a unique experience to only them and is not be repeated. To them I would say, what else in Scripture is a unique experience only to them. Perhaps water baptism and communion are unique experiences. This option brings up broader issues on what is ONLY for them and what is for ALL TIME.
3. The last option, sees these multiple fillings of the Spirit as a necessary requirement NOT for salvation, but for **ministry, mission, for The Call**. Some say that perhaps salvation occurred in John 20. Perhaps. Yet in John 20, the filling is tied to mission. **Either way we have multiple fillings of the Spirit distinct and separate beyond salvation.**

This makes sense when we go throughout the entire Bible. The Holy Spirit only has two functions on His job description: **Salvation and Empowerment**. Salvation includes: **justification, sanctification, glorification** (and for our Calvinist friends here predestination and election). **Empowerment is an special endowment of the Spirit to fulfill The Call**. Look throughout the Scriptures and you will God endowing people **to build the ark of the covenant, to lead His people, for battle, to prophesy, to heal and to share His message.**

God's Empowering Presence must be Pursued, not Presumed

This last point is **the practical result of the previous two. We must PURSUE and never PRESUME God's empowering presence for The Call (2x).** Look at any figure in the Bible. They never ride out their initial encounter with God for the totality of their life. **God's initial touch of them causes them to see the world as God does and THEN they seek the means to fulfill desires in this world. They seek the power of the Holy Spirit to change a city. They seek God's empowering presence for The Call.**

Our text introduces a concept that maybe unfamiliar with many here. It is the ideas of **TARRYING or waiting of God THROUGH PRAYER UNTIL ONE RECEIVES GOD'S ENDOWMENT FROM ON HIGH.**

Acts 1:4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but **WAIT for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.**

Acts 1:5 For John baptized with water, but in a few **days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."**

Unfortunately, today, prayer for God's empowering presence has become out of fashion. We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel **without the Spirit's empowerment.**

I have noticed that **when churches lose focus of fulfilling the Great Commission locally,** they tend to turn to the worlds of **business, psychology and entertainment** for its purpose. The church tries to grow share though better marketing. Discipleship is replaced with classroom and trendy programs. Sunday morning because a show to be scorecard. Entertainment

becomes the measuring stick for what is and what is not a great Sunday morning service. Folks, in this mindset, **God's empowering presence is NOT sought out for because the target has changed. Whether we know it or not, WE HAVE BECOME THE TARGET INSTEAD OF A CITY GOD DESIRES TO REACH. The Call is lost and with it the need for an endowment from only high.**

God's plan for The Call is much different than man's plan. God's plan is to make much of the **a person**, far more of him than of anything else. **People** are God's method. **The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men and women...**What the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, **but men and women whom the Holy Spirit can use—men and women of prayer, mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through people. He does not come on machinery, but on surrounding souls. He does not anoint plans, but people—men and women of prayer.**



God's
empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING

WHY?

1. Identify confusion
2. Quenches the Spirit
3. No other way to fulfill The Call
4. Integrity issue with the Scriptures

God's empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING



CONCERNS

1. Excess
2. Divisive
3. Weird
4. Be someone other than I am

God's empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING



CONCERNS

5. Zealous, but unloving
6. Language confusion
7. Turn off my mind

God's empowering presence

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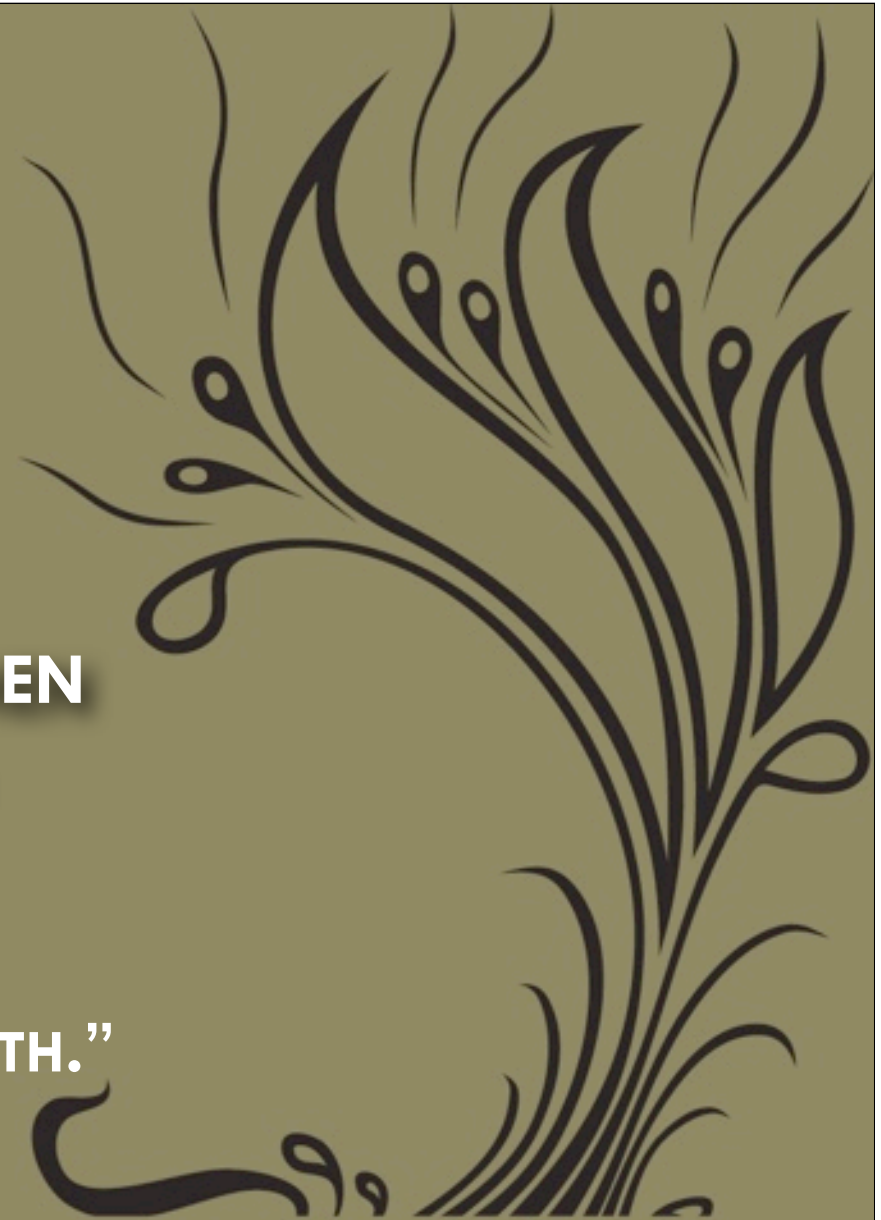
THE CALL

⁷ IN MY FORMER BOOK, THEOPHILUS,
I WROTE ABOUT **ALL THAT JESUS
BEGAN TO DO AND TO TEACH**

⁸ **BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN
THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES ON YOU;
AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES
IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND
SAMARIA, AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.”**

God's empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING



THE CALL

ACCORDING TO ACTS 1:1,8
IS THE WORDS AND WORKS
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THE HOLY SPIRIT.

God's empowering presence ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING



God's
empowering presence
for...

THE CALL

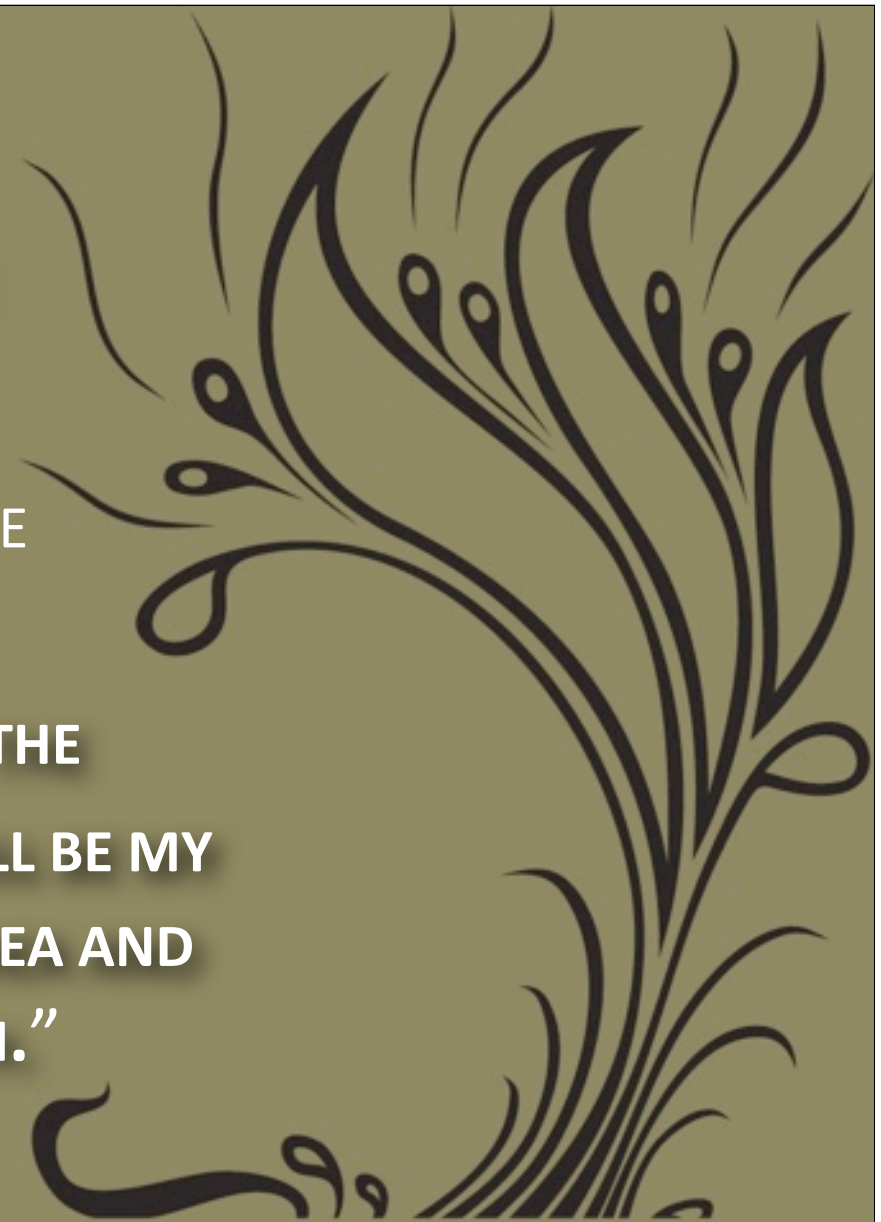


⁶ SO WHEN THEY MET TOGETHER, THEY ASKED HIM, “LORD, ARE YOU AT THIS TIME GOING TO RESTORE THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL?” ⁷ HE SAID TO THEM: “IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW THE TIMES OR DATES THE FATHER HAS SET BY HIS OWN AUTHORITY.

⁸ **BUT** YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES ON YOU; AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.”

God's empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING



God's
empowering presence
is apart from...

SALVATION



MULTIPLE FILLINGS OF THE SPIRIT ON THE DISCIPLES:

²² AND WITH THAT HE BREATHED ON THEM
AND SAID, **“RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

JOHN 20:21-22

1.

⁴ **ALL OF THEM WERE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**
AND BEGAN TO SPEAK IN OTHER TONGUES AS THE
SPIRIT ENABLED THEM.

ACTS 2:4

2.

³¹ AFTER THEY PRAYED, THE PLACE WHERE THEY WERE MEETING
WAS SHAKEN. **AND THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**
AND SPOKE THE WORD OF GOD BOLDLY.

ACTS 4:31

3.

God's empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING



Job Description of the Holy Spirit

SALVATION

- Justification
- Sanctification
- Glorification

EMPOWERMENT

- For The Call

God's empowering presence ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING



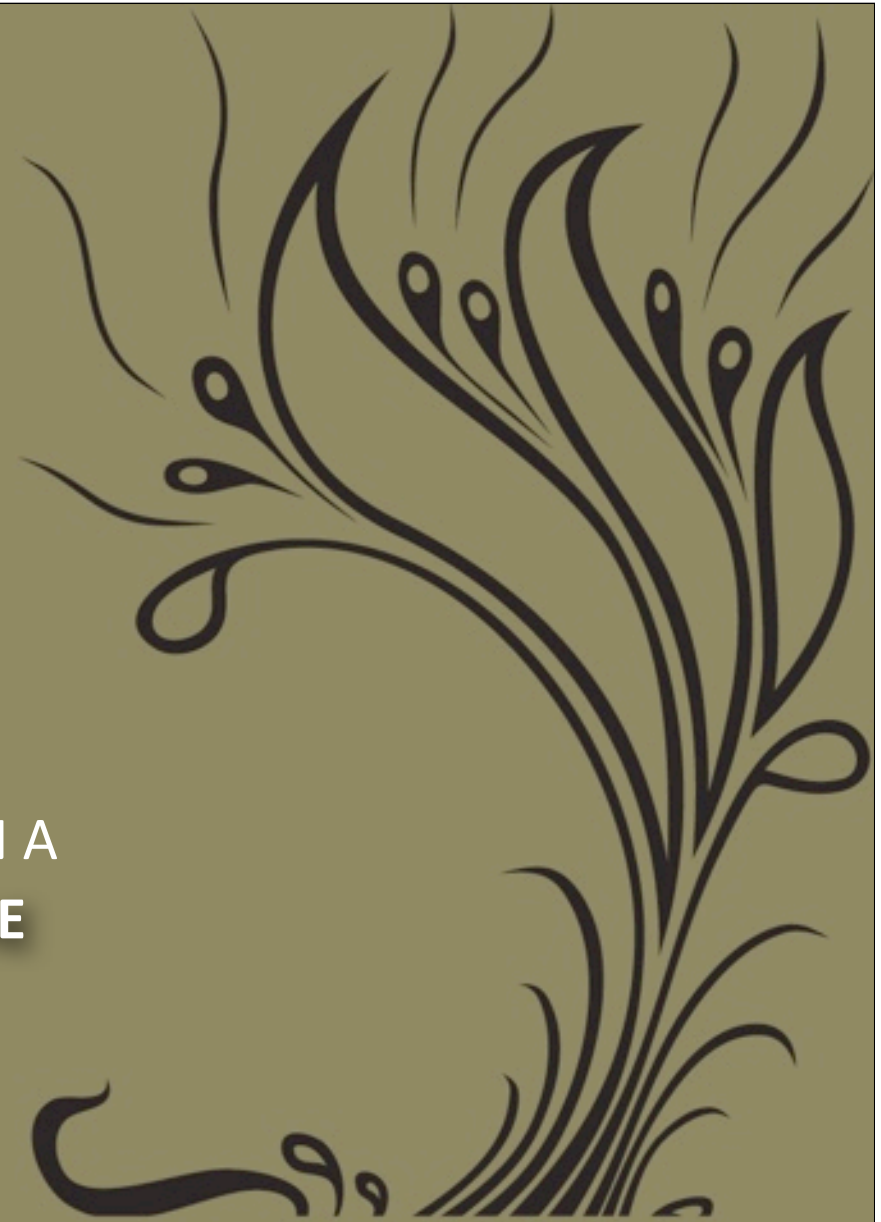
God's
empowering presence
must be...

PURSUED



⁴ ON ONE OCCASION, WHILE HE WAS EATING WITH THEM, HE GAVE THEM THIS COMMAND: “DO NOT LEAVE JERUSALEM, BUT **WAIT FOR THE GIFT MY FATHER PROMISED,** WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD ME SPEAK ABOUT.

⁵ FOR JOHN BAPTIZED WITH WATER, BUT IN A FEW DAYS YOU WILL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE **HOLY SPIRIT.”**



God's empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING



God's
empowering presence

ALWAYS PURSUING, NEVER PRESUMING