

Storyteller

ACTS

THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS

Storyteller
ACTS

THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS

Lifeway Press®
Brentwood, Tennessee

Editorial Team

Cynthia Hopkins
Writer

Jon Rodda
Art Director

Brett McIntosh
Associate Editor

Reid Patton
Senior Editor

Angel Prohaska
Assistant Editor

Tyler Quillet
Managing Editor

Stephanie Cross
Assistant Editor

Joel Polk
Publisher, Small Group Publishing

Katie Vogel
Assistant Editor

John Paul Basham
Director, Adult Ministry Publishing

© 2024 Lifeway Press®

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher.

ISBN: 979-8-3845-0002-5 • Item number: 005848248

Dewey decimal classification: 226.6 • Subject heading: BIBLE / GOSPELS AND ACTS / ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

To order additional copies of this resource, write to Lifeway Resources Customer Service; 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707; fax 615-251-5933; call toll free 800-458-2772; order online at Lifeway.com; or email orderentry@lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States of America

Adult Ministry Publishing • Lifeway Resources • 200 Powell Place • Brentwood, TN 37027-7707

CONTENTS

About Storyteller.....	5
About Acts.....	6
How to Use This Study.....	12
Tips for Leading a Group.....	14
WEEK 1	
Promise.....	17
WEEK 2	
Unity.....	47
WEEK 3	
Purpose.....	77
WEEK 4	
Wisdom.....	107
WEEK 5	
Transformation.....	137
WEEK 6	
Courage.....	167
Photo Credits.....	196

THE STORYTELLER SERIES

God could've chosen to reveal Himself in any way that He desired, yet in His wisdom, He chose to reveal Himself in the context of a story. We come to know and understand this reality as we immerse ourselves in the Scriptures and begin to see the entirety of Scripture as one interconnected story. By becoming familiar with the individual stories of Scripture, we train ourselves to see each as one part of God's big story.

Storyteller is a series of devotional and group Bible study experiences designed to take people through Scripture in a way that is beautiful, intuitive, and interactive. Each volume uses a book of the Bible or a portion of Scripture from within a book to examine a key theme. This theme guides the Bible study experience and gives readers handles to help understand and digest what they're reading.

At the end of each study, you should have a deeper understanding of God, His Word, the big themes of Scripture, the connectedness of God's story, and His work in your life.

Let's enter the story together.

ABOUT ACTS

SUMMARY

The book of Acts begins where Luke's Gospel leaves off and unfolds the exciting story of God's post-resurrection work in the world as His Spirit empowers the earliest church. The book is outlined in Acts 1:8—*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* And that is what happens! The first twelve chapters of Acts relate to us the coming of the Spirit to all believers and the spread of the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. They also relate God's determined purpose to extend the gospel to Gentiles through the Spirit-empowered ministries of men like Peter, Philip, and the newly converted Paul.

TITLE

No early title for Acts has been discovered. Shortly before AD 200, Irenaeus referred to it as “Luke's witness to the apostles.” Shortly after AD 200, Tertullian called it “Luke's commentary.” Sometime before AD 300, the book received its lasting title, “The Acts of the Apostles.”¹

AUTHOR AND DATE

Luke, Paul's physician friend, wrote Acts as a sequel to his first letter to Theophilus—the Gospel of Luke. He had firsthand knowledge of many of the events described in Acts, as he had traveled with Paul on his missionary journeys and remained with him during his Roman confinement. The events Luke records in Acts 1–12 occurred from about AD 30 to AD 46. Acts was most likely written no later than AD 64.

PURPOSE

Acts provides for us an historical account of the first three decades of the early church, biographical information to set Paul within that historical context, and practical encouragement through those examples. Acts teaches us to rely on God's Spirit as we share the gospel, daily engage with other believers, and faithfully endure whatever difficulties come until Jesus returns.

WHY STUDY ACTS?

God's Word lets us know that the Christian life is a life marked by power—power to trust God's promises not yet fulfilled, to obey God's commands in a hostile world, to selflessly serve selfish people, and to proclaim the gospel to an unbelieving generation.

Yet many of us often live powerless lives.

We struggle to keep our eyes on God's promises because our earthly circumstances seem ultimate. We find it difficult to obey His commands because there is often an easier, more socially acceptable path to take. To serve someone who acts selfishly is altogether counterintuitive. And we are often afraid to speak up about Jesus, uncertain what to say and worried what people might think.

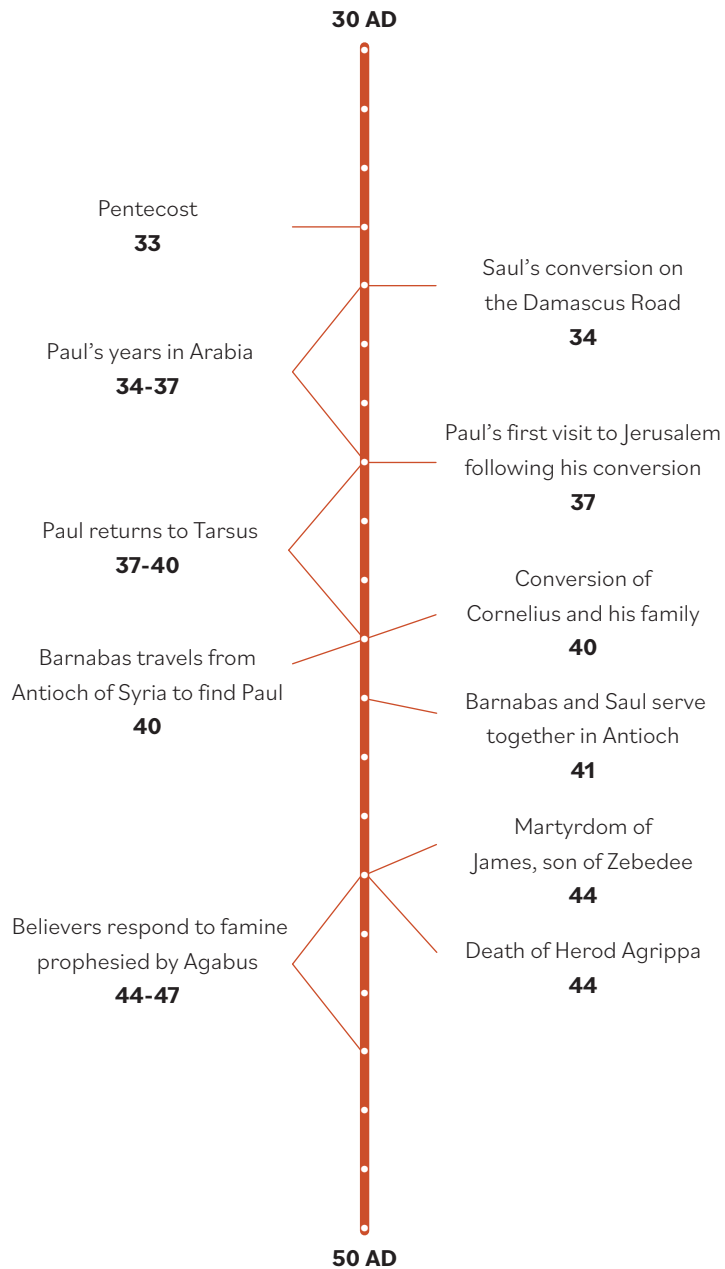
Through the experiences of the first Christians in the earliest church, the book of Acts helps us navigate the tension we feel.

In just three decades after Jesus's death and resurrection, a small group of scared and uncertain believers hiding out in Jerusalem transformed into a vast army of saints who changed the world. They trusted God's promises, obeyed His commands, served people, and spread the gospel far and wide. However, the power to do those things was not their own. God's Spirit was at work in and through them.

Their acts inspire us. They embolden us to step past doubt, fear, and human wisdom and assure us that we are meant to walk in power, too. The same Spirit at work in Acts is at work in us and in the world today.



ACTS 1-12 TIMELINE



OUTLINE OF ACTS 1-12

Acts 1:8 provides the introduction and outline for the book.² Once empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples proclaim the gospel boldly in Jerusalem. As the book progresses, the gospel spreads further into Judea and Samaria and then finally into the outer reaches of the known world through the missionary work of Paul.

I. Empowerment for the Church (1:1-2:47)

A. Waiting for power (1:1-26)

B. The source of power (2:1-13)

C. Pentecostal witness to the dispersion (2:14-47)

II. Early Days of the Church (3:1-12:25)

A. In Jerusalem (3:1-7:60)

B. In Samaria: the Samaritan Pentecost (8:1-25)

C. To the ends of the earth: Philip's witness (8:26-40)

D. Conversion and preparation of Paul (9:1-31)

E. In Judea: Peter in Caesarea (9:32-11:18)

F. To the ends of the earth (11:19-12:25)

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each week follows a repeated rhythm to guide you in your study of Acts and was crafted with lots of white space and photographic imagery to facilitate a time of reflection on Scripture.

The week begins with an introduction to the themes of the week. Throughout each week, you'll find Scripture readings, devotions, and beautiful imagery to guide your time.



WEEK 5 TRANSFORMATION



Each week includes five days of Scripture reading, along with a short devotional thought and three questions to process what you've read.

The Scripture reading is printed out for you with plenty of space for you to take notes, circle, underline, and interact with the passage.



DAY 27 PAUSE & LISTEN

But they were unable to stand up against his wisdom and the Spirit by whom he was speaking.

ACTS 6:10

132 ACTS

133

The sixth day contains no reading beyond a couple of verses to give you time to pause and listen to what God has said through the Scriptures this week. You may be tempted to skip this day altogether, but resist this temptation. Sit and be quiet with God—even if it's only for a few minutes.

The seventh day each week offers a list of open-ended questions that apply to any passage of Scripture. Use this day to reflect on your own or meet with a group to discuss what you've learned. Take intentional time to remember and reflect on what the story of Acts is teaching you.

DAY 7

REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on Acts 1.

What stuck out to you most in this week's reading? What surprised you? Confused you?

What did this week's Scripture teach you about the Holy Spirit?

What did this week's Scripture teach you about humanity and our need for God's Spirit?

What would it look like practically for you to live as someone who believes the promise of the Spirit's power?

What signs of faith and obedience is God asking you to take through these Scriptures?

44 ACTS

PRAY

Pray for a few moments to thank God for the promise of the Spirit. Invite Him to strengthen and empower you for extraordinary service as you commit to daily only on Him.

Prelude 45

Hypocrisy ?

How can I know if someone is a hypocrite?

Matthew 13:24-30
There will always be hypocrites in the church—and it's not your job to root them out. You can't know a person's motives, but you can know that God does, and He will deal with him or her accordingly.

How can I know if I am a hypocrite?

1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 6:4-6, 23:5-7; 5:20
You will be tempted to do hypocritical things, as we all are—and God knows you and knows your heart to please Him. Because He loves you and knows your heart, He gives warning to help you recognize the ways you will appear to other people rather than pleasing Him.

How should I handle it if someone is caught in hypocrisy?

Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1-3; James 5:19-20
You can't know the true condition of any person's heart—and you have a responsibility to confront other believers about known sin.

How should I respond if I am confronted about hypocrisy?

Psalm 141:5; Proverbs 15:21-22, 28:1; James 5:16
Other believers should bring you correction when needed—and you should respond with humility and a desire to change.

If we're all tempted toward hypocrisy, what hope is there for the church?

Proverbs 28:13; Hebrews 12:5-7; 1 John 1:7-10
We will struggle with hypocrisy in the church—and God will use even that for our good and His glory.

36 ACTS

Prelude 37

Throughout each week of study, you will notice callout boxes or supplemental pages provided to give greater context and clarity to the Scripture you're reading. These features will help you connect the story of Acts to the bigger story of Scripture.

How to Use This Study 13

LEADING A GROUP

Each week of study contains a set of questions that can be used for small group meetings. These open-ended questions are meant to guide discussion of the week's Scripture passage. No matter the size of your group, here are some helpful tips for guiding discussion:

PREPARE

REVIEW the Scripture and your answers to the week's questions ahead of time.

PRAY over your group as well as the Scriptures you've been studying. Ask God's Spirit for help to lead the group deeper into God's truth and deeper in relationship with one another.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

We live in a time when our attention is increasingly divided. Try to see your group time as a space and respite from the digital clutter—from scrolling, notifications, likes, and newsfeeds. Commit to one another to give focused time and attention to the discussion at hand and minimize outside distractions. Help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

A good small group experience has the following characteristics:

EVERYONE IS INCLUDED. Your goal is to foster a community where people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually.

EVERYONE PARTICIPATES. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share, or read aloud.

NO ONE DOMINATES. Even though you may be "leading" the group, try to see yourself as a participant steering the conversation rather than a teacher imparting information.

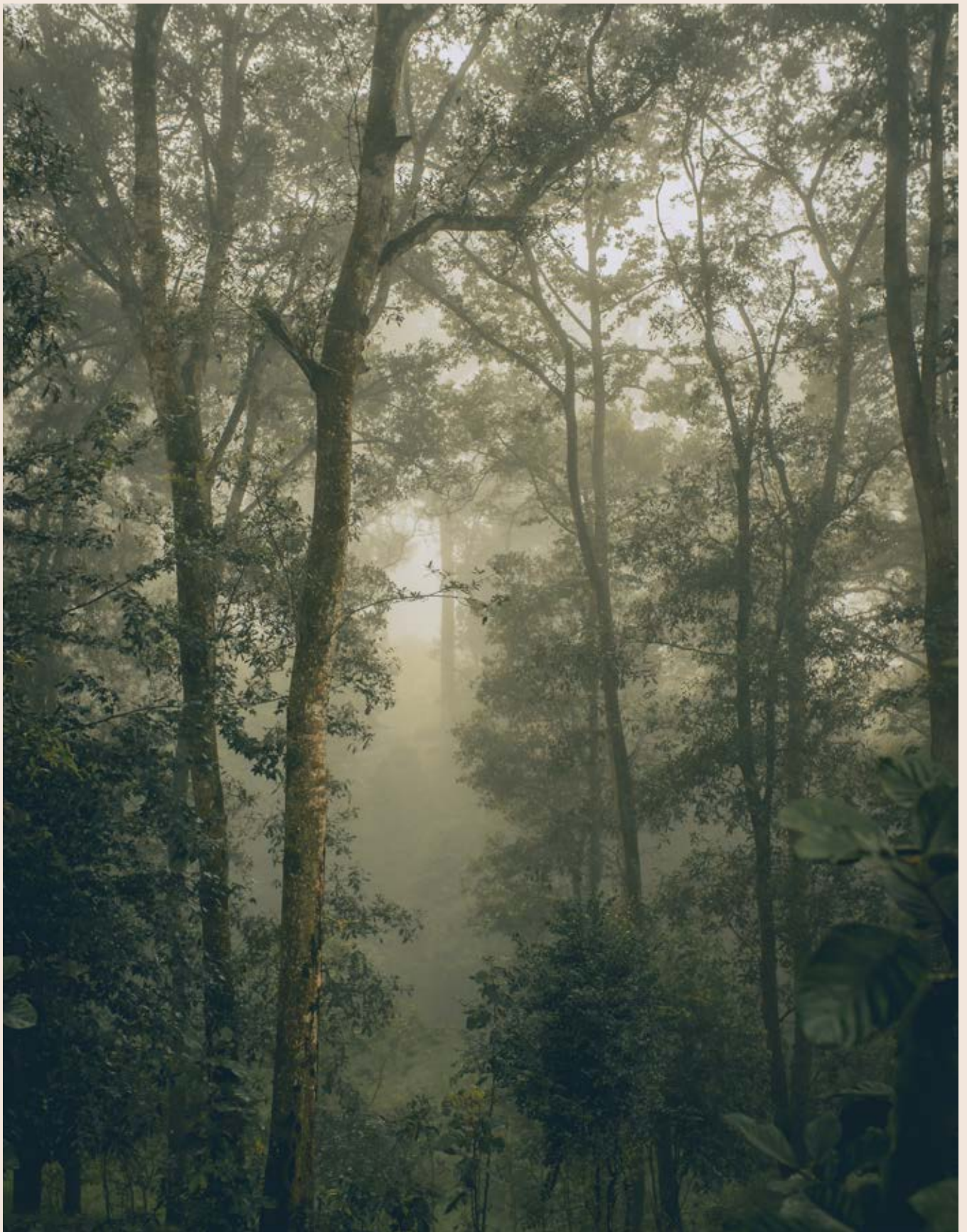
DON'T RUSH. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People may need time, and we should be glad to give it to them. Don't feel like you have to ask all the questions or stay away from questions that aren't included. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and to one another. Take your time.

INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking other people to share when they have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. Conversation stalls when people feel that you don't want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer. Engagement and affirmation keeps the conversation going.

GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL. The questions in this study are meant to steer the conversation back to God, His Word, and the work of the gospel in our lives. Opinions and experiences are valuable and can be helpful, but God is the center of the Bible, the center of our story, and should be the center of our discussion. Trust Him to lead the discussion. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

KEEP CONNECTING

Spiritual growth occurs in the context of community. Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Your group will be more enjoyable the more you get to know one another through time spent outside of an official group meeting. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending. Reserve time each week to touch base with individual group members.



WEEK 1

PROMISE

Believe the promise.

The events the disciples saw and experienced during the years of Jesus's earthly ministry were both glorious and, at times, traumatic.

They heard Him confront and silence authorities, and they saw Him stand silent as He was confronted and accused by authorities. They saw Him raise dead people to life, and they saw Him die a horrific death. They saw Him wrapped in cloths and buried in a tomb, and they saw Him raised to life.

And in the first days and weeks following His resurrection, the small group of believers had time to consider it all. What they had seen and experienced simultaneously inspired them and confused them.

It is in this state of being that Acts begins and pulls us in.

Believers in Christ know what it is like to consider His glory and be inspired to give ourselves wholly to Him. We also know what it is like to ruminate in confusion over the depth of earthly suffering. And Jesus's promise to His disciples in Acts 1 is the same for us today: The Holy Spirit will empower us to step forward in faith.

ACTS 1:1-3

PROLOGUE

1 I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach ²until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

DAY
1

STEP INTO GOD'S WORK

Acts, like Luke's Gospel, is a letter written from one friend to another. When Luke wrote to Theophilus in the Gospel of Luke, he wasn't thinking, *People around the world are going to read my words by candlelight every Christmas Eve for centuries.* When he wrote Acts, he wasn't thinking, *I bet this is going to help form mission statements for churches everywhere!*


If anything, Luke may have wondered if he should attempt to write historical accounts of Jesus and the church to anyone at all. He wasn't one of the twelve disciples. He might have thought he should leave the task up to someone like Peter, James, or John. Luke was a doctor. He had sick people to take care of. And writing such lengthy manuscripts in that day involved a huge investment of time and money.

There were plenty of reasons not to write Acts, but Luke wanted Theophilus—and whoever else might read or hear his manuscripts—to know about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He wanted people to know the incredible ways the Spirit empowers those who, believing in the living Christ, join in His kingdom purposes.

So Luke grabbed a pen and got to work. He stepped into the calling Jesus had placed on his life, which is the calling He has placed on all of our lives: to go and make disciples.

From the first sentence of Acts, we see that the Spirit empowers us to live out that calling. Through the faithful work of writing two letters, God did a greater work than Luke could have imagined. Luke simply served. He committed to tell the truth about Jesus and His church, and look what God did! He inspired and empowered a work that has drawn people around the globe to Jesus and encouraged the church for millennia.

Are you waiting for God to use you? Do you wonder what you're supposed to do? Are you waiting for an invitation to serve the church in a particular way that you feel capable? The message of Acts is that the Spirit comes to those who believe and empowers us to live out the calling we have received. So, don't wait. Step into the faithful work of telling others about Jesus and the power of life in Him—and see what God will do.

A photograph of a forest landscape shrouded in mist. The scene is dominated by evergreen trees, with some deciduous trees visible in the upper portion. The mist is thick and low-lying, creating a sense of depth and atmosphere. A soft, golden light filters through the fog, particularly on the right side, highlighting the texture of the mist and the silhouettes of the trees. The overall mood is serene and ethereal.

The Spirit works among those
who are working.

REFLECTIONS

According to Acts 1:1-3, what was Jesus's purpose following His resurrection and before His ascension? What was Luke's purpose?

What should be the recognizable purpose of every believer in Christ?

Do you ever find yourself wondering what you're supposed to do and waiting for God to use you in service to Him? Why? Name one way you can step into God's work now.

INSIGHTS

We don't know much about Theophilus, to whom Luke addressed his letter. However, book dedications were common among the Greeks. Literary works dedicated to an individual helped ensure that work would be heard publicly.³

ACTS 1:4-5

THE HOLY SPIRIT PROMISED

⁴While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak about; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days."

DAY
2

RELY ON THE SPIRIT

The disciples' heads were still spinning from everything that had just taken place. They were anxious to do something with the passion and excitement welling up inside them, but Jesus told them to wait.

In yesterday's study, we learned that we don't have to wait to join God in His kingdom purposes. So, Jesus's command for the disciples to wait in verse 4 might seem contradictory. It's not.

This moment in Scripture marks an important spiritual shift. A huge change was about to take place. Before the ascension, Jesus related to the disciples as a physical man. If they wanted to be near Jesus, they had to go where He was. But He was about to ascend to heaven to sit down at the right hand of the Father to reign and rule in a way that was no longer locked into a given space or time.

So, the disciples wouldn't be waiting for Jesus to walk through a closed door anymore (John 20:19). He wasn't going to come physically and let them touch His hands and feet to remind them He rose from the dead (John 20:27). He would come in a new way to guide them, comfort them, equip them, empower them, and remind them of truth. They would be baptized with His Spirit, who would indwell them permanently.

That promise is for all believers. Following Jesus requires no pilgrimage to Mecca. There is no place on earth where the power and presence of Christ dwells in a way that surpasses the way He resides in us in our most ordinary moments—at church on a Sunday morning, at work on a Monday, or at a restaurant or ballgame on Saturday. In those ordinary moments, the Spirit energizes and empowers us for extraordinary service.



In ordinary life, the Spirit empowers
you for extraordinary service.

REFLECTIONS

Why did Jesus tell His disciples to wait?

What might have been God's purpose in not immediately sending the Holy Spirit in Jesus's place following His death and resurrection?

How does this command to wait help you understand the role of the Spirit in our lives today?

THE *Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is central to the specific people and events in Acts—the overall story the book tells—and to the ongoing gospel story that continues today. He was active in the beginning. He was active in Jesus’s earthly ministry. He is active in the lives of believers today. And He will be active throughout eternity.

The Spirit is active at creation. GENESIS 1:1-2

The Spirit was active during Jesus's life on earth. LUKE 1:35; MATTHEW 3:16

The Spirit was promised by Jesus. JOHN 14:16-17

The Spirit illuminates the gospel. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:3-6

The Spirit empowers believers with the power and presence of Christ. EPHESIANS 5:18-19

The Spirit testifies to believers that they are God's children. ROMANS 8:12-13

The Spirit seals and guarantees the inheritance of believers. ROMANS 8:14-17

The Spirit will be active throughout eternity. REVELATION 22:17

ACTS 1:6-8

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?”

⁷He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

DAY
3

EMBRACE THE MISSION

The disciples had one thing in mind; Jesus had another.

Their question seems reasonable. After all, the disciples wanted God's kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). But Jesus's reply made clear they didn't understand what that actually meant.

Jesus didn't deny the kingdom was coming but warned them that God's schedule wasn't their business. Then, He reiterated what was their business—and ours.

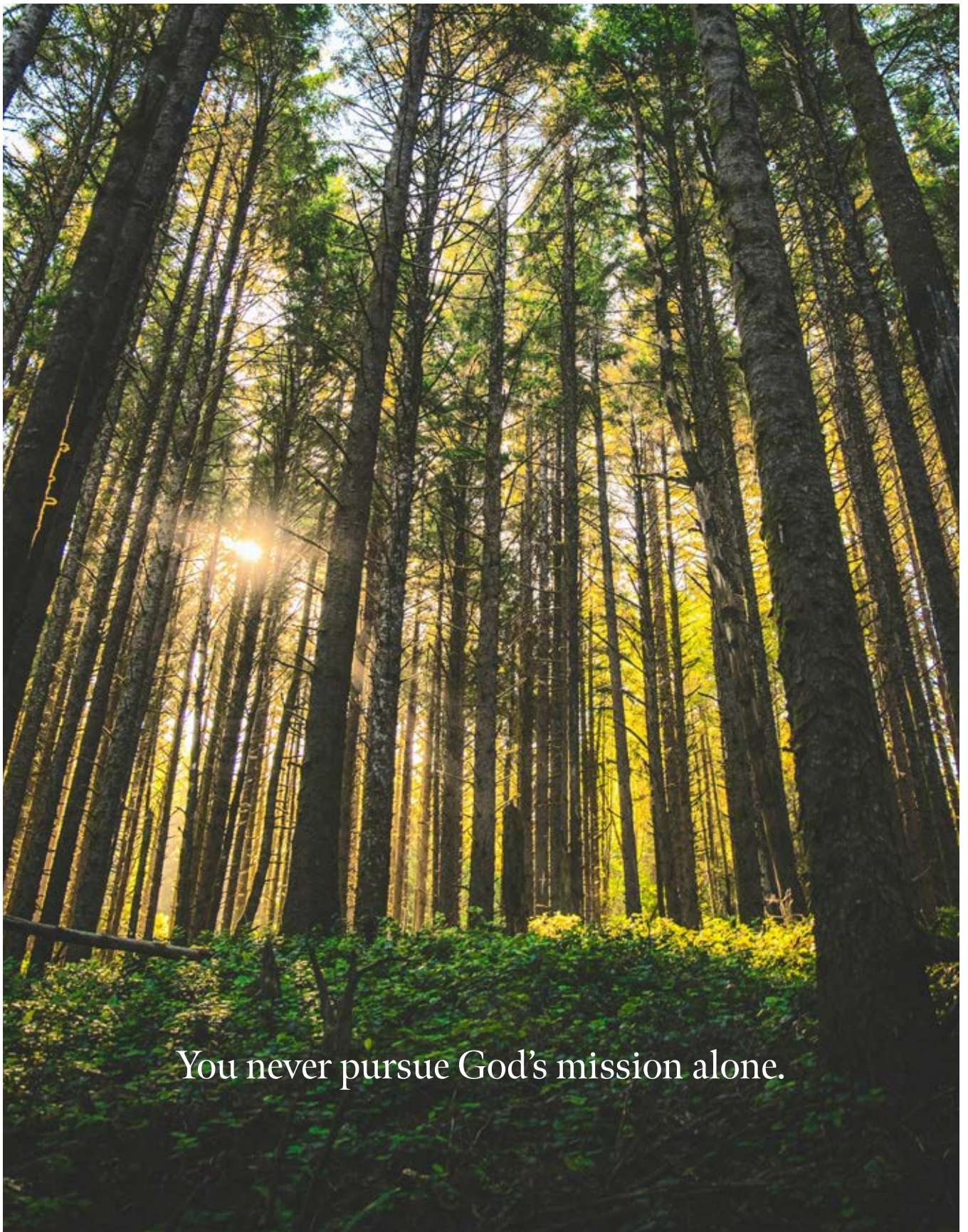
We often have one thing in mind we would like God to do. We want Him to help us with our jobs, relationships, health, or money. And He responds to those requests, but His Word always redirects us to His mission. We are to be His witnesses and to share the testimony of what we have seen and heard in Christ in our everyday lives and around the world.

Acts 1:8 summarizes the whole book, as well as our own roles as kingdom citizens today. From chapters 2–8, the gospel spreads in Jerusalem. In chapters 8–12, the gospel spreads throughout Judea and Samaria. And in chapters 12–28—and until Jesus returns—the gospel spreads to the ends of the earth.

Does “to the ends of the earth” seem intimidating or overwhelming to you? It should, except what comes before it assures us this mission will be completed in Jesus's power, not ours. The presence of the Holy Spirit imparts the nature of God into every believer.

If you are a follower of Jesus, God's power is at work in you!

You never pursue God's mission alone. He is with you. He equips you. He created you and made you for this. In and through your relationships, jobs, gifts, passions, desires, and even struggles, you can know this one thing: God's power is at work in you to carry out His mission.



You never pursue God's mission alone.

REFLECTIONS

Based on these verses, what is God's ongoing strategy for restoring His kingdom?

What is your role in that strategy? What is one thing on your mind right now that may be distracting you from that Spirit-empowered role?

What would change in your life this week if you were to embrace the personal reality of Acts 1:8?

ACTS 1:9-14

THE ASCENSION

⁹After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.”

UNITED IN PRAYER

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem — a Sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴They all were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

DAY
4

PRAY WITH CERTAINTY

It's tough to fault the disciples for standing there dumbfounded, staring into the sky. Jesus, their Savior, Lord, and friend was literally taken up into a cloud right before their eyes. They had seen many incredible things as they'd followed Jesus, but this was perhaps the most unbelievable!

As they tried to process what was happening before them, God met them there. Two angels appeared to give focus in their confusion.

Jesus had told them to wait for His Spirit to come. The angels came to assure them that paralyzed bewilderment isn't what Jesus had in mind. He would return, and His followers should anticipate that day with hope-filled prayer and purpose.

God's message to us is the same. Each time we struggle to comprehend the work He is doing, we should remember that struggle will be temporary.

Each of us faces different situations in life that are confusing and difficult to navigate. But those should not paralyze us in bewilderment, despair, or apathy. The difficulties of those realities are met and rectified in the greater, ultimate reality of Christ.

In all the chaos and confusion, we can look forward and prepare for Jesus to come again. Our waiting is active, not passive.

God invites us to pray in light of the certainty of Christ's return, seeking to align our hearts and desires with His will. In our most perplexing struggles, the Holy Spirit will equip us every step of the way. His presence anchors us and reminds us that chaos is not the end of the story. Our Savior has a bigger plan at work and will come again as Lord over all things.

A photograph of a forest scene during sunrise or sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, partially obscured by trees, creating a bright glow and long, golden rays of light that filter through the misty air. The trees are mostly green, with some showing hints of autumn colors. The ground is covered in fallen leaves and grass. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

Anticipate Christ's return
with prayer and purpose.

REFLECTIONS

Read Matthew 6:10 and Acts 1:6,11. What were the disciples likely praying about in Acts 1:14?

For many of us, prayer is often a last resort. We sometimes think, “When all else fails, pray.” Why is this a wrong approach to prayer?

What are some confusing things going on in your life? How do the angels’ words to the disciples in this passage give you hope in your own struggle?

ACTS 1:15-26

MATTHIAS CHOSEN

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters — the number of people who were together was about a hundred twenty — and said, ¹⁶ “Brothers and sisters, it was necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David foretold about Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ For he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.” ¹⁸ Now this man acquired a field with his unrighteous wages. He fell headfirst, his body burst open and his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹ This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that in their own language that field is called *Hakeldama* (that is, “Field of Blood”).

²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms:

Let his dwelling become desolate;

let no one live in it; and

Let someone else take his position.

²¹ “Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us — ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us — from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

²³ So they proposed two: Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, “You, Lord, know everyone’s hearts; show which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this apostolic ministry that Judas left to go where he belongs.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias and he was added to the eleven apostles.

DAY
5

SEEK GOD'S WILL

The disciples had been through a lot. Their friend Judas had betrayed Jesus. Jesus had died, resurrected, and ascended to heaven. And now Judas was gone, too.

There was so much to process and grieve.

At the same time, life in the Spirit necessitates forward motion. So, after spending devoted time in prayer, Peter called everyone's attention to what God's Word said they should do next.

To even bring up Judas's name was painful. But it was necessary in recognizing what they needed to move forward. Peter quoted Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 to remind his friends that everything that had taken place was prophesied and ordained by God. He was neither stunned nor caught off guard. Though their circumstances had changed, God had not.

There were two good candidates among them who could fill Judas's place in accordance with the Scriptures. Though trusting anyone would be difficult after such a betrayal, they needed to choose.

The disciples were uncertain about many things, but they knew God was not. So they prayed that God would show them who should take Judas's place, and then used a method of discernment ordained throughout the Old Testament to discern His will.

The Spirit-empowered life is not a life void of grief or uncertainty. In those times, it is difficult to know how to move forward in faith. But God is always faithful. He is always worthy of our trust. Every time we seek Him in His Word and in prayer, His Spirit leads us to know and do His will.

A photograph of a forest path. The path is a narrow, dirt trail that winds through a dense forest of tall, slender trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a dappled light effect on the path and the surrounding foliage. The trees are mostly evergreens, and the ground is covered in moss and ferns. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

The Spirit will lead you to
know and do God's will.

REFLECTIONS

Were these believers active or passive as they waited for God to move? How so?

What are some principles you can take from this passage about how to move forward in uncertainty?

What decision do you need to move forward with in faith? How can you seek God in that decision?

INSIGHTS

It might seem strange that these believers made their decision by way of rolling two stones, but they were acting within an established biblical tradition (Proverbs 16:33). The disciples had prayed and sought God in His Word. The sum of their actions showed that they trusted God's knowledge over their own. By way of sovereign selection, God chose Matthias to become the twelfth apostle.⁴

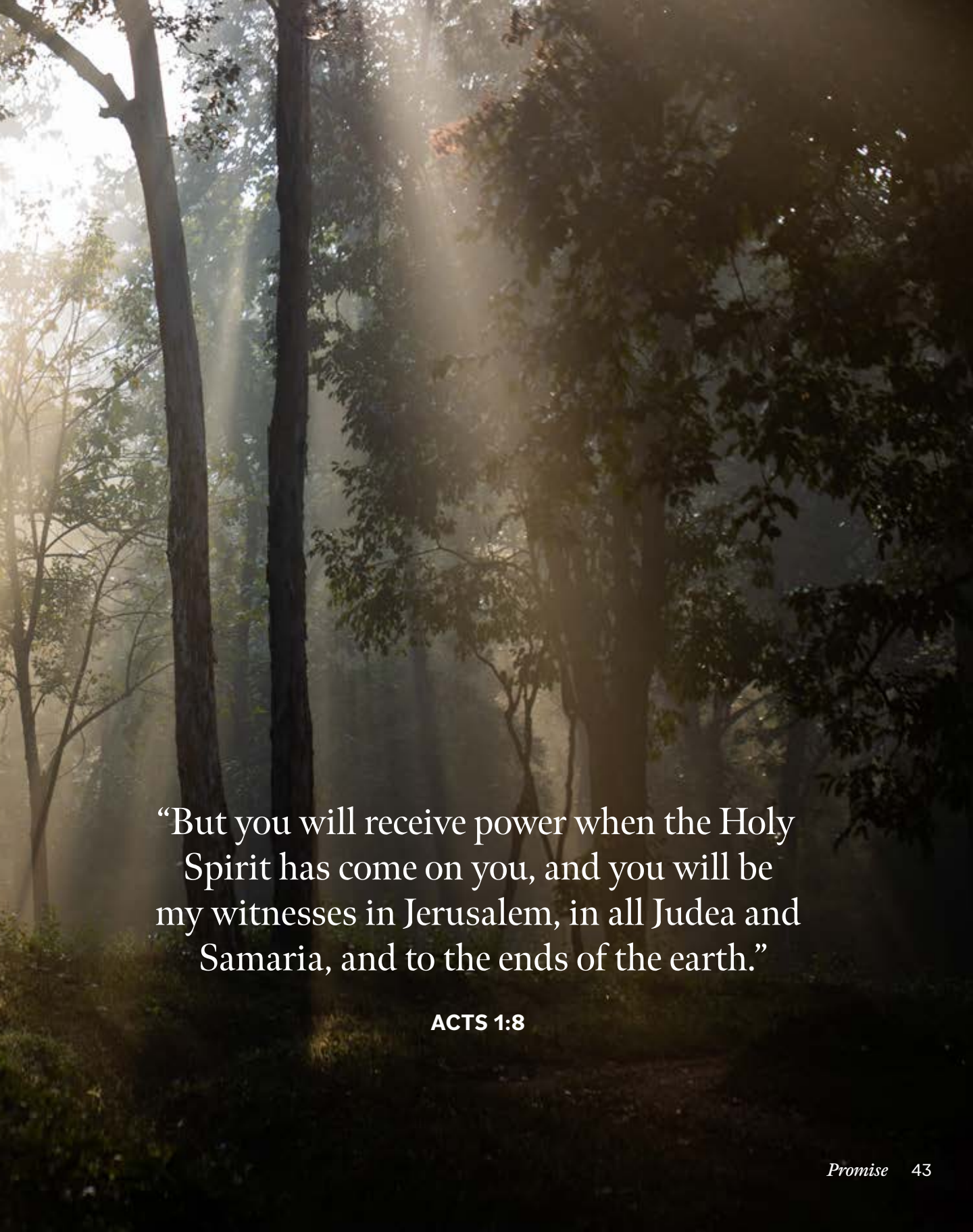


DAY

6

PAUSE & LISTEN

Spend some time reflecting over the week's reading.



“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

ACTS 1:8

DAY
7

REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on Acts 1.

What stuck out to you most in this week's reading? What surprised you? Confused you?

What did this week's Scripture teach you about the Holy Spirit?

What did this week's Scripture teach you about humanity and our need for God's Spirit?

What would it look like practically for you to live as someone who believes the promise of the Spirit's power?

What steps of faith and obedience is God asking you to take through these Scriptures?

PRAY

Pause for a few moments to thank God for the promise of His Spirit. Invite Him to energize and empower you for extraordinary service as you commit to daily rely on Him.



WEEK 2

UNITY

Receive unifying power.

Each week, groups of believers gather together all over the world to study the Scriptures and receive encouragement for daily living. But what happens on Sundays doesn't always translate to the other days of the week.

Knowing what you need to do and doing what needs to be done are two different things. Acts 2 illuminates the difference.

The early believers gathered to study the Scriptures, pray, and organize themselves for future ministry. They had some idea about what needed to be done but hadn't yet begun to do those things. Jesus had told them to wait.

Church life was about to change in remarkable ways. The unity among them would have a whole new power—every single day of the week. Together, they would impact the nations.

That's what happens when God's Spirit takes over.

ACTS 2:1-13

PENTECOST

2 When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying. ³ They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them. ⁴ Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were Jews staying in Jerusalem, devout people from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When this sound occurred, a crowd came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ They were astounded and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ How is it that each of us can hear them in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts), ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs — we hear them declaring the magnificent acts of God in our own tongues.” ¹² They were all astounded and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But some sneered and said, “They’re drunk on new wine.”

ASTOUNDING AND PERPLEXING

Pentecost had always been a day of celebration for God's people, but this time, God showed up in a way no one focused on religious tradition could expect or explain.

The only ones who expected it were Jesus's followers. In fact, they had been waiting.

The promised Holy Spirit arrived in the house where they were gathered, and His presence was unmistakable. A loud noise that sounded like a violent rushing wind filled the whole house. Tongues that looked like flames of fire rested on each person. The manifest presence of God's Spirit was palpable.

And the reality of the Spirit in them would extend far beyond those four walls.

As the believers were filled with the Spirit, they experienced another supernatural effect. They began to speak in the languages of people from every nation that were in Jerusalem for Pentecost. These uneducated Galileans, now filled with God's Spirit and acting in accordance with His leadership and power, spoke in numerous different languages the very same message. They declared the magnificent acts of God.

Not everyone believed this was significant. Some rolled their eyes and explained it away as drunkenness. But it was significant—eternally so (2:41). And it *is* significant, even today. The Spirit works in ways that cannot be explained apart from His power and presence.

Sometimes God does things for a specific time and place and people. This outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was certainly one of those events. At the same time, the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of every believer in Christ is an ongoing reality. He is active in ways most people can't expect or explain.

An aerial photograph of a narrow, rocky stream flowing through a dense forest. The water is dark blue and turbulent as it flows over numerous large, smooth, brownish-grey rocks. The surrounding forest is lush and green, with various shades of foliage. The stream is bordered by a rocky bank on the right side, which is also covered in green vegetation. The overall scene is a natural, serene landscape.

The Spirit works in ways that can't be explained
apart from His power and presence.

REFLECTIONS

How did the Spirit's presence unify all the believers?

What do verses 12-13 teach you about how people might respond to the Spirit's activity in your life?

Can everything in your life be explained apart from the supernatural power and presence of the Spirit of God? Why does this matter?

CONNECTING THE STORY

For centuries, Pentecost had been celebrated fifty days after Passover to recognize the end of the grain harvest. Also called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10,16; 2 Chronicles 8:13), the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), and the day of firstfruits (Numbers 28:26; see Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:17), it was a time to thank God for the completion of the harvest season and to offer special sacrifices at the sanctuary. On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, there were over two hundred thousand Jews in town from all over Palestine and the Mediterranean world.

ACTS 2:14-21

PETER'S SERMON

¹⁴ Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, "Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it's only nine in the morning. ¹⁶ On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

- ¹⁷ **And it will be** in the last days, says God,
that I will **pour out my Spirit on all people;**
then your sons and your daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
and your old men will dream dreams.
- ¹⁸ I will even pour out my Spirit
on my servants in those days, both men and women
and they will prophesy.
- ¹⁹ I will display wonders in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below:
blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.
- ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes.
- ²¹ Then everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.

DAY
9

IMPACTING ALL PEOPLE

While it's true that most people don't expect and can't explain the Spirit's work, believers in Christ can and should. As people were reacting in confusion, the twelve disciples stood up and Peter got everyone's attention. What the people had seen and heard wasn't as important as what they were about to hear.

It wasn't drunkenness they were witnessing—it was the fulfillment of prophecy. They were now living in the last days. It was the beginning of the end (See pp. 58–59).

Joel's prophecy contained multitudes. There was good news and bad news. Both the good and the bad would impact all people.

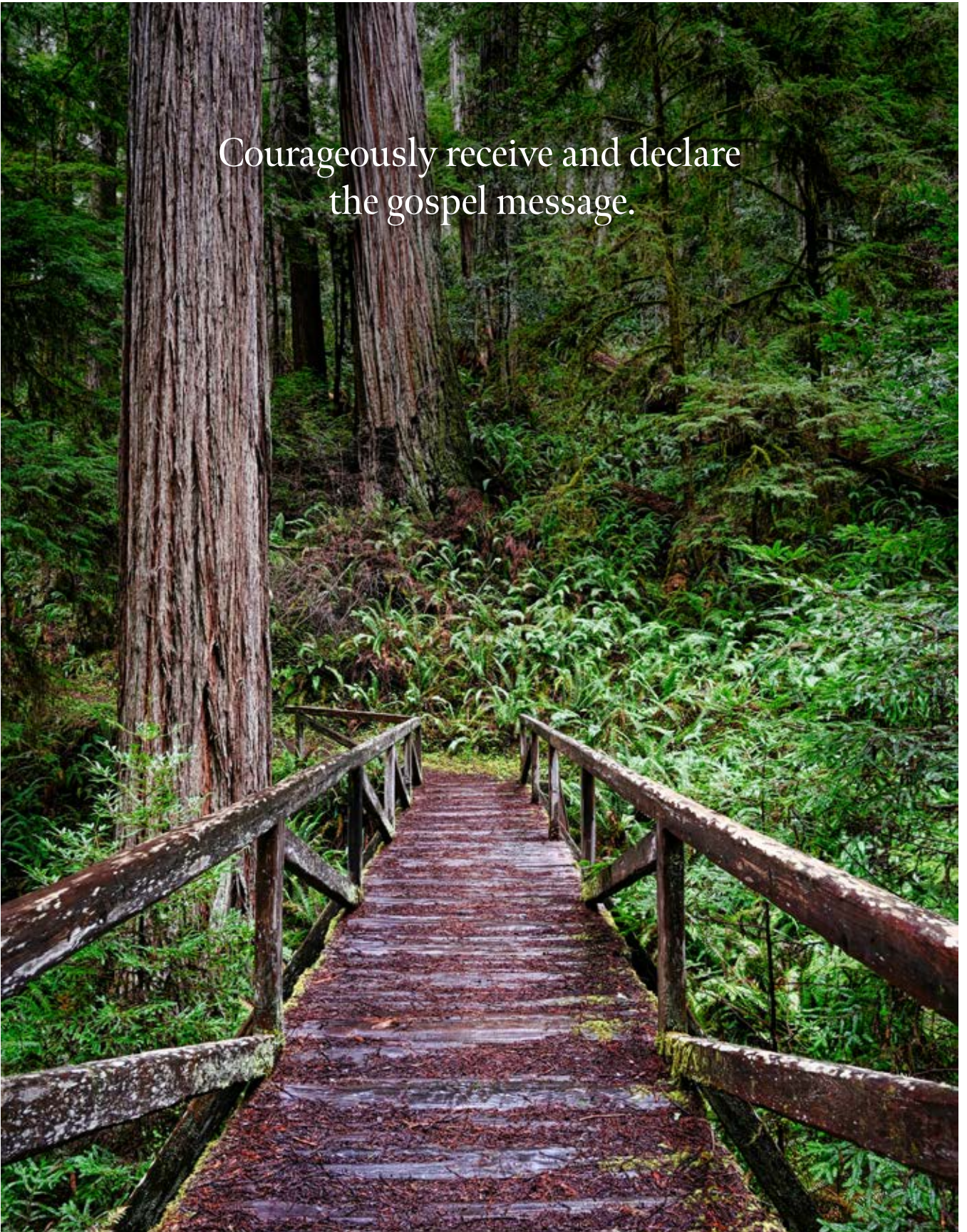
God pours out His Holy Spirit on all who believe in Jesus Christ. That's good news! The primary effect of His power is bold speech. If we seek God daily and invite His Spirit to move in and through us, we will courageously receive and declare the gospel message in every circumstance.

Alongside those bold declarations of the gospel, though, is devastation and tragedy. There are earthquakes, floods, wars, famine, and pandemic. There is violence and betrayal. Marriages, families, and friendships end in ruin.

Both the good and the bad will continue to coexist. But God uses even the bad news for His good purposes. As such, believers should not only expect and explain the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we consider it absolutely essential.

In the midst of the darkness, God fills us with His Spirit. In these last days, we will boldly declare the gospel message with power and passion—and in the most terrifying circumstances, many will call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

Courageously receive and declare
the gospel message.



REFLECTIONS

What point did Peter want the people to understand about their current events?


When you think of the last days, is your perspective generally good or bad? How does today's passage challenge your thinking?

Do you courageously receive and declare the gospel message? What role does your relationship with the indwelling Holy Spirit have in that?

INSIGHTS

In his sermon at Pentecost, Peter recited Joel 2:28-32. The prophecy was at least partially fulfilled before their very eyes that day of Pentecost.

THE LAST DAYS



Like the early believers we read about in Acts, we are living in the last days. This period of time began with Christ's first coming and will not end until Jesus returns. As we wait for that day, God has not left us ill-equipped or unprepared.

PROVISION

HEBREWS 1:1-2

God has spoken to us by His Son.

1 PETER 1:20

Jesus has been revealed.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:11

We have received examples of faithlessness and consequence.

1 JOHN 2:18

Antichrists serve as a sign.

WARNING

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5

Hard times will come. Avoid people whose lives deny the gospel's power.

2 PETER 3:3-13

Scoffers will tempt you to think Jesus is not returning. Wait patiently in faith.

LUKE 21:9-11

Wars, political upheavals, and cataclysmic events will take place. Don't be alarmed.

MATTHEW 24:9-14

Many will fall away. Endure to the end.

ACTS 2:22-33

²²“Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know. ²³Though he was delivered up according to God’s determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him. ²⁴God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death. ²⁵For David says of him:

I saw the Lord ever before me;

because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

²⁶ **Therefore my heart is glad**

and my tongue rejoices.

Moreover, my flesh will rest in hope,

²⁷ **because you will not abandon me in Hades**

or allow your holy one to see decay.

²⁸ **You have revealed the paths of life to me;**

you will fill me with gladness

in your presence.

²⁹“Brothers and sisters, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: He is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn an oath to him to seat one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Seeing what was to come, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah: **He was not abandoned in Hades, and his flesh did not experience decay.**

³²“God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this. ³³Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you both see and hear.

DAY
10

REVEALING THE PATH OF LIFE

Most of us don't like to be misunderstood. Sometimes, that happens because people just don't know us very well. Other times, people do know us but misinterpret our motives and actions. Whatever the case, when there are assumptions, accusations, or rumors, we often jump to defend ourselves.

When people started accusing Jesus's followers of drunkenness, though, Peter didn't jump to defend himself. This same man who had vehemently denied Christ in a fearful attempt at self-preservation (Luke 22:55-60) now jumped to defend Jesus.

Peter had changed. He was now thinking, speaking, and acting under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

He went straight to the Scriptures and explained that Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies they had been anticipating for so long. Peter's sermon was bold and courageous (vv. 22-24). He didn't dance around the truth (v. 23). He made a personal connection (vv. 22-23,32-33). He made a historical connection (vv. 25-31,34-35). His sermon was Christ-centered, not self-centered.

For Peter, this time was different. This time can be different for you, too.

If you let Him, the Spirit will compel you to care that people know and love Jesus more than you care that people know and love you.

The Spirit in you will lead you to be more interested in revealing the path of life than perpetuating a persona that keeps you safe from accusation.

He will fill you with the desire to pass on to others "as most important what you also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).



The Spirit compels you to care that
people know and love Jesus more
than they know and love you.

REFLECTIONS

What were the conflicting opinions about Jesus that Peter confronted with this testimony?

How do you typically respond to being misunderstood? How do you respond to people who misunderstand Jesus?

How does Peter's approach to addressing misunderstandings about himself and Jesus encourage or challenge you?

CONNECTING THE STORY

Peter used Psalm 16:8-11 to establish Christ is indeed the expected Messiah, as His resurrection proves (Acts 2:25-31).

ACTS 2:36-41

³⁶“Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

CALL TO REPENTANCE

³⁷When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰With many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, “Be saved from this corrupt generation!” ⁴¹So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

CONVICTING AND SAVING

If Peter had made a study guide for his sermon on the day of Pentecost, he would have easily identified the big idea in verse 36: The crucified Jesus is Savior and Lord.

As with all good sermons, the big idea led to the question, “What’s next?” That’s what the crowd of listeners desperately wanted to know. The Holy Spirit had convicted their hearts. They knew the truth: It was their sin that caused Jesus to go to the cross. But the Spirit never reveals truth to us apart from grace.

So, when the truth about sin came, the grace about forgiveness came, too.

Peter had come to the application part of his sermon: God pours out His grace on the lives of all who turn from their sin and turn to Jesus Christ in faith.

By the end of the day, three thousand people agreed to take that next step. They accepted the truth of the gospel and received its grace. They were forgiven, saved, and Spirit-filled. Christian community always begins with repentance—turning away from our sins and putting our trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

The application of the gospel is not an easy how-to that fills in a blank on a piece of paper you slide into your Bible until next week. The message of truth and grace in Christ isn’t one we receive and then walk away from thinking, “That was a good message,” as we go on with our day. It is a message that brings unity and transformation—as individuals and as a body of believers. We cannot truly understand the message of the gospel and walk away from it unchanged.

A photograph of a redwood forest. In the foreground, there is a wooden deck with a bench. The deck is made of dark, weathered wood and has a low wooden railing. The bench is also made of dark wood and is positioned on the left side of the deck. The forest floor is covered with green ferns and other vegetation. In the background, there are several large, tall redwood trees with thick, textured bark. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting a forest setting. The text "Christian community always begins with repentance." is overlaid on the bottom right of the image in a white, serif font.

Christian community always
begins with repentance.

REFLECTIONS

How many people were baptized in Acts 2? What individual decision did each of those people make to begin that revival?

Why is repentance required for revival to take place? What is the Spirit's role in that?

When you seek to apply the message of the gospel to your life and community of faith, do you lean more heavily on truth or grace? Why are both necessary?

ACTS 2:42-47

A GENEROUS AND GROWING CHURCH

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. ⁴⁴Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. ⁴⁵They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

FILLED WITH AWE

If we're honest, reading Acts 2:42-47 might cause some internal tension. The growth and practice of the early believers can be equal parts appealing and awkward.

These Christians were *together*. They were joyful. They loved each other in practical ways every single day. And every single day, new people were joining them.

Are you feeling uncomfortable yet? Relationships aren't easy—which might explain why our experience in church life today is often far less involved than what we read in Acts 2. It's important to remember, then, that the type of unity we read about in verses 42-47 came as a result of repentance.

In other words, we can manufacture numerical growth in a variety of ways, but the awe-filled, authentic community and commitment experienced by the earliest believers only comes alongside an ongoing understanding and attitude of humility and need before God. Without that, we'll never recognize that we need each other like these first believers did.

When we are motivated by our need and an understanding that only the gospel meets that need, we will see each other as a close-knit family, bonded together in Christ. Love and holiness will not be mutually exclusive; rather, we will want to learn and grow together in the fullness of grace and truth. As we continue to recognize our daily need before God, we will engage with other believers in increasingly meaningful ways.

God will use our devotion to one another to move among us in extraordinary ways.

Biblical community is not a hobby. It's not a fad or an "I'll check it out and see how I like it" type of approach. It's an all-in, open-heart, open-hand commitment to God and His people.

A low-angle photograph of a dense forest of tall, slender trees, likely redwoods or sequoias, reaching towards a bright blue sky. The trees are densely packed, with their trunks forming a vertical grid. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating dappled light on the forest floor. In the foreground, a dirt path winds through lush green ferns. The overall atmosphere is serene and majestic.

Engage with other believers in meaningful ways.

REFLECTIONS

What characteristics of the early believers stand out to you in this passage?

Which of those characteristics are most appealing to you? Did any make you uncomfortable? Why?

Notice the four primary ways the early church practiced devotion to God and each other described in verse 42. Could we live out these values on our own? Why are they vital to the community of faith?

A vertical photograph of a dense forest. The trees are tall and thin, with a sunburst effect on the right side. The foreground is filled with green foliage and moss.

DAY
13

PAUSE & LISTEN

Spend some time reflecting over the week's reading.

A photograph of a dense forest with tall, thin trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a warm, golden glow. The forest floor is covered in green ferns and moss. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Now all the believers were together
and held all things in common.

ACTS 2:44

DAY
14

REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on Acts 2.

What stuck out to you most in this week's reading? What surprised you? Confused you?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about God and His character?

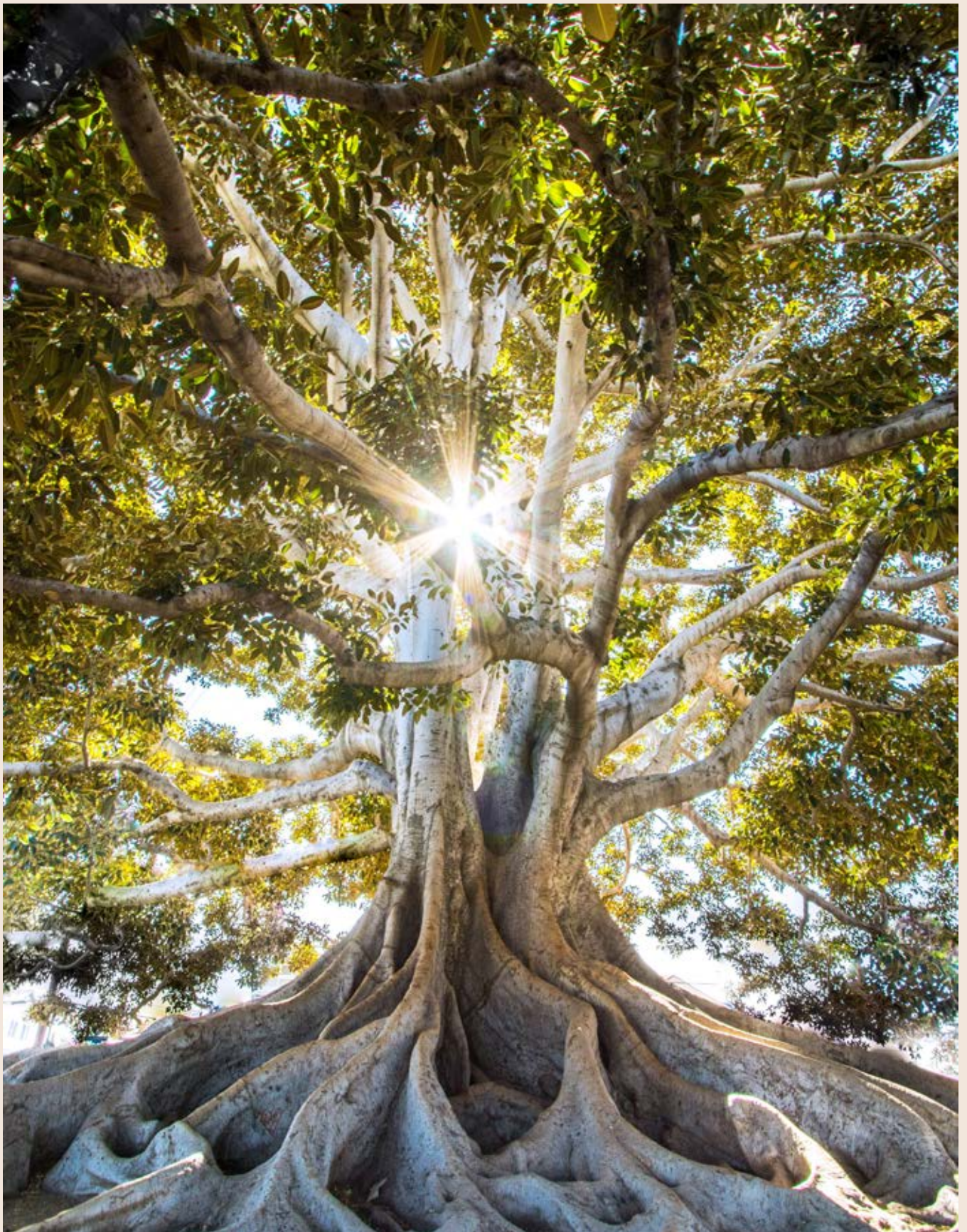
What does this week's Scripture teach you about humanity and our need for grace?

What would it look like practically for you to live in the unifying power of the Spirit?

What steps of faith and obedience are God asking you to take through these Scriptures?

PRAY

Thank God for the unity of His Spirit that you share with other believers in these last days. Ask Him to give you eagerness to commit to learn with other believers so you can grow in your faith together and unbelievers can come to know and trust Jesus as a result.



WEEK 3

PURPOSE

Join in His purposes.

It's hard to keep everyone on the same page in a family of four, much less a megachurch growing by the thousands!

But that's exactly what happened. Acts 1 begins with 120 believers, and by Acts 5, there are well over 5,000 people in the community of faith (Acts 4:4; 5:14), all united in purpose (4:32). In a matter of months, the early church grew by over 4,000 percent—and remained unified!

That's what happens when we allow the indwelling Spirit to lead us.

It wasn't the amazing personalities and stellar leadership of the twelve that brought everyone together in one heart and mind. It wasn't an exciting program that caused the masses to want to get on board.

The Spirit of God, dwelling within every believer in Christ, encouraged them in one direction—to willingly, in His leadership and power, seize every opportunity to proclaim faith in His name.

ACTS 3:3-8

³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for money. ⁴ Peter, along with John, looked straight at him and said, “Look at us.” ⁵ So he turned to them, expecting to get something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, “I don’t have silver or gold, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!” ⁷ Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ So he jumped up and started to walk, and he entered the temple with them — walking, leaping, and praising God. ⁹ All the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and they recognized that he was the one who used to sit and beg at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. So they were filled with awe and astonishment at what had happened to him.

ACTS 4:5-12

PETER AND JOHN FACE THE JEWISH LEADERSHIP

⁵ The next day, their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem ⁶ with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all the members of the high-priestly family. ⁷ After they had Peter and John stand before them, they began to question them: “By what power or in what name have you done this?”

⁸ Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders: ⁹ If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man, by what means he was healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead — by him this man is standing here before you healthy. ¹¹ This Jesus is

**the stone rejected by you builders,
which has become the cornerstone.**

¹² There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

DAY
15

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Sometimes, the circumstances of life feel overwhelming. We see the many needs around us and feel helpless, knowing there is nothing we can physically do to make it better.

In Acts 3, Jesus's disciples were certainly feeling some of that. The Spirit had moved in them, through them, and around them, but so many needs would continue to confront them each and every day. But Peter didn't let what he *couldn't* do paralyze him in helplessness. Instead, he focused on what he could do.

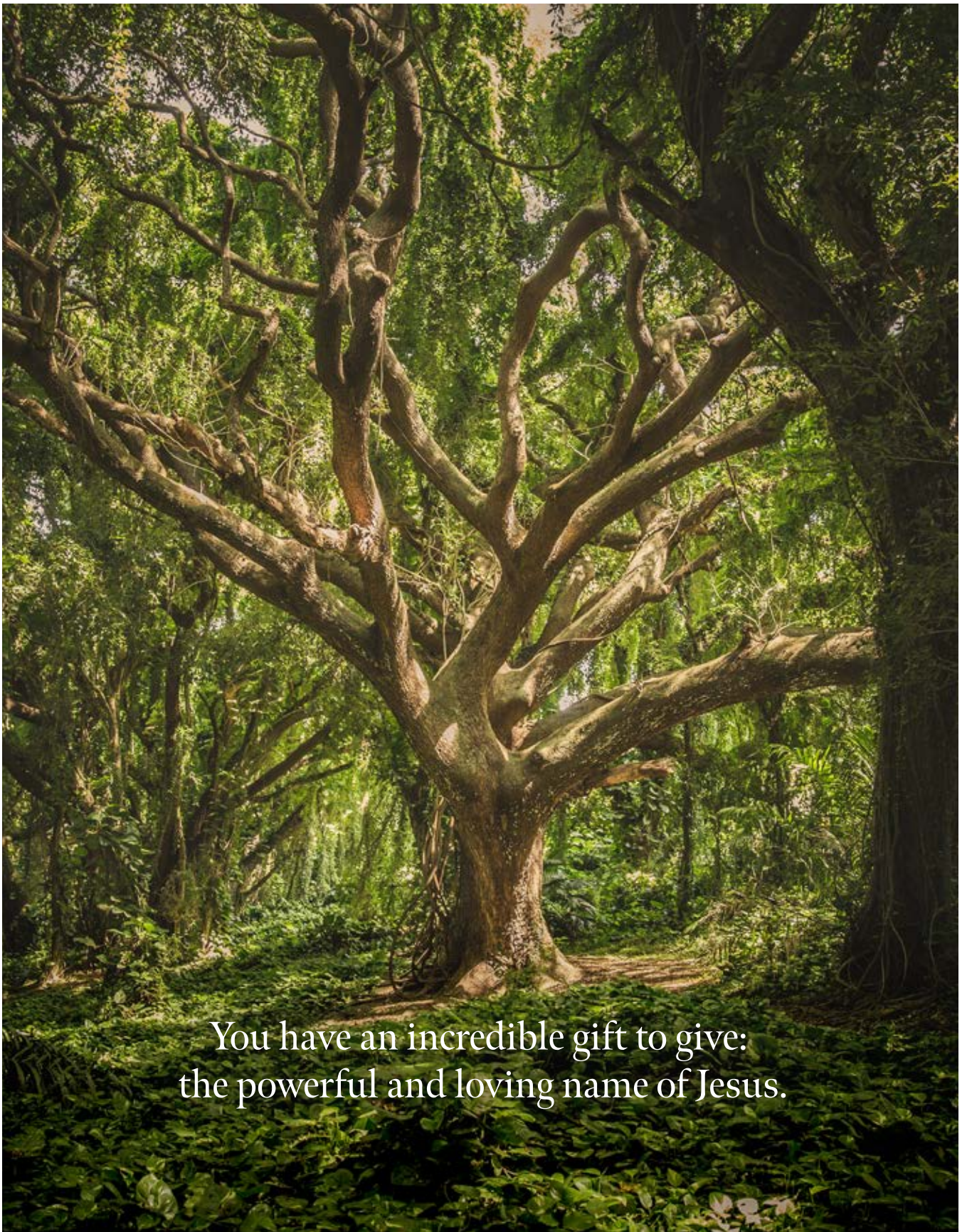
The Holy Spirit was alive and at work inside of Peter, and that was a far greater gift than any amount of money he might have been able to give this man in need. The Spirit at work inside of Peter was also a far greater gift than any earthly authority he could offer the religious leaders who questioned him.

The Spirit at work inside of Peter pointed everyone to the name of Jesus Christ.

We all know what it is like to wonder what we can do about the needs other people have—whether those needs are physical, emotional, or intellectual. But we are far from helpless!

We have an incredible gift to give: the powerful and loving name of Jesus. His is the only name that can make a hard heart soft, settle every doubt, and redeem even the darkest circumstances.

Don't let what you can't do about the needs around you paralyze you in helplessness. Instead, do what you can: Share the name of Jesus with the confidence that there is salvation in no one else.



You have an incredible gift to give:
the powerful and loving name of Jesus.

REFLECTIONS

Consider Peter's actions in Acts 3:4-7 and Acts 4:8-12. What enabled Peter to respond with such boldness in both situations?

Based on these passages, what did Peter understand his purpose to be?

Who in your life is in a difficult situation? Based on today's passage, what can you do about it?

INSIGHTS

In Deuteronomy 33:29, the Israelites were reminded of the value of being God's people: "How happy you are, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is the shield that protects you, the sword you boast in." Understanding who we are in Christ gives us confidence in what we have to give the world in need.

ACTS 4:18-20

¹⁸ So they called for them and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹ Peter and John answered them, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; ²⁰ for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

WHAT YOU CAN'T DO

What the Christians could do had the religious authorities telling them what they couldn't do—that is, speak or teach anything in the name of Jesus ever again.

Respectfully, Peter and John disagreed.

But their response to the order of censorship wasn't a first-century movement in human rights. Yes, they had performed a miracle in the name of Jesus and everyone in Jerusalem knew about it (vv. 13-17), but they weren't trying to gain a name for themselves. They didn't want to “stick it to the man,” prove a point, or even carry on without earthly consequence.

Their one and only aim was to trust and obey God. And they would do that even in the face of adversity.

These Spirit-filled believers simply couldn't stop speaking about what they had seen and heard. The gift of the gospel they had received was a gift they were determined to share.

To be clear, part of Peter and John's obedience to God was to obey human authorities—and this is also true for us (1 Peter 2:13-17). But our obedience to those authorities has limits. We can't obey human authority when it conflicts with God's authority.

And according to God's authority, we must proclaim the truth of the gospel. It is a natural overflow of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Ours is not a power to be used against others; it is a quiet confidence to humbly stand firm, even in the face of conflict.

Proclaiming the truth of the gospel is a natural outflow of being filled with the Holy Spirit and being fully convinced of the life-changing message of the gospel. As the apostle Paul put it, “I am compelled to preach—and woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).



Don't stop speaking about
what you have seen and heard.

REFLECTIONS

Why couldn't Peter and John stop telling people about Jesus?

Read Acts 4:13-14. What does the fact that Peter and John were ordinary people communicate about the work of the Spirit?

How does the faithfulness of Peter and John's otherwise ordinary lives encourage you?

INSIGHTS

When you love and fear the Lord, obedience to Him will become a delight and will overwhelm any earthly fears you might possess. Even in the face of opposition, you can be encouraged and strengthened in your faith as you obey God (see Psalm 118:5-9; Proverbs 29:25; Matthew 10:28; 2 Timothy 4:5-8,16-18).

ACTS 4:23-31

PRAYER FOR BOLDNESS

²³ After they were released, they went to their own people and reported everything the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together to God and said, “Master, you are the one who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David your servant:

**Why do the Gentiles rage
and the peoples plot futile things?**

²⁶ **The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers assemble together
against the Lord and against his Messiah.**

²⁷ “For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your will had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly.

WHAT YOU ASK

Peter and John didn't get released because they had convinced the religious authorities they were right about Jesus. They were let go because those leaders couldn't argue with the testimony of the people on the streets. Everyone was awestruck that Peter had healed the man they had known for years, and they were giving glory to God.

So, Peter and John left prison, but their troubles were far from over—and they knew it. They were being threatened even more to stop talking about Jesus.

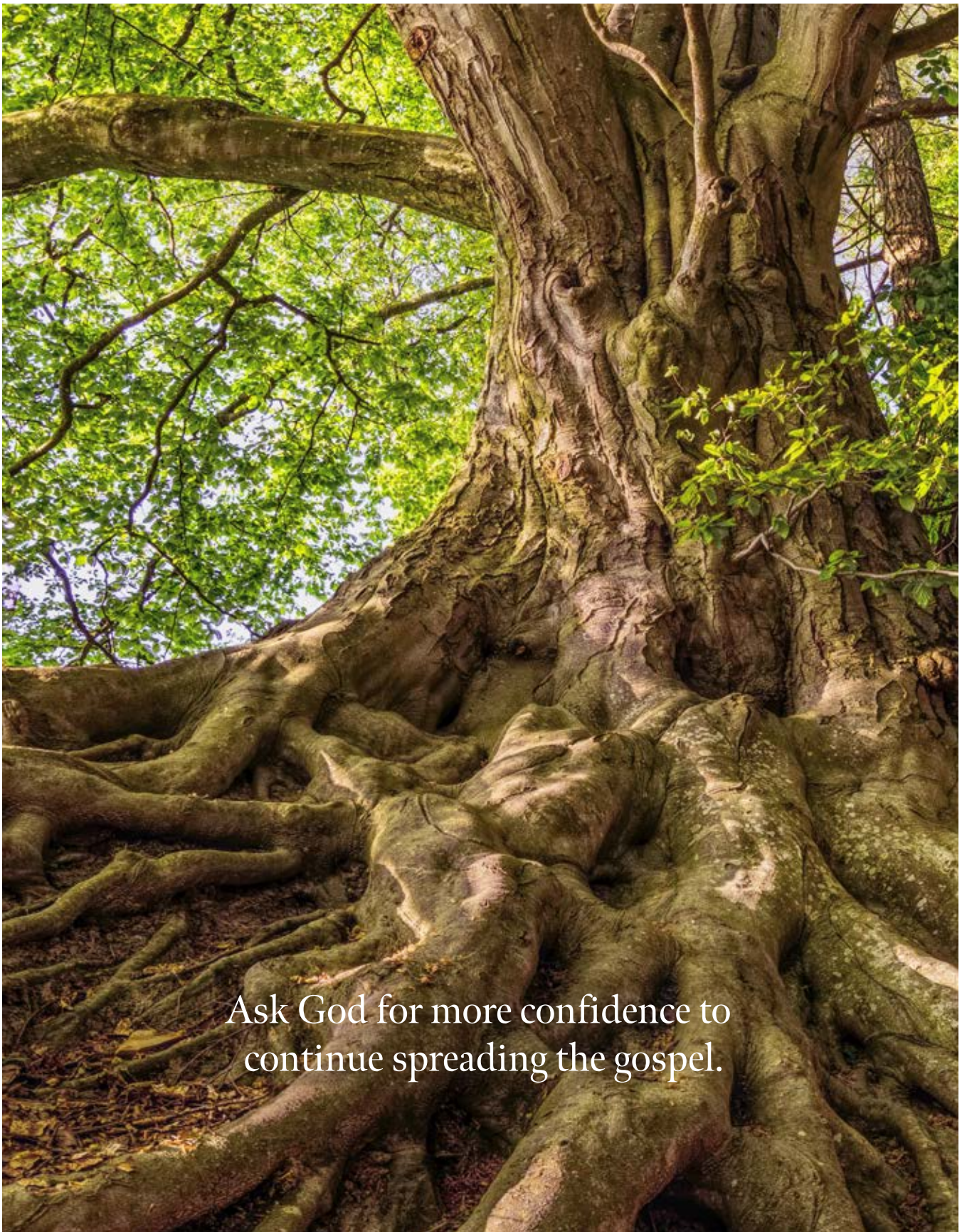
Those threats were real. But Peter and John didn't take off to secure an elite attorney—or any legal counsel at all. They didn't gather a crowd to make a public statement about the threats. Instead, they found their friends and had a prayer meeting.

It wasn't that these early believers had no fear—they knew what was at stake. But instead of becoming paralyzed by fear, they pressed into God with their fear. They acknowledged the certainty of who God is in the very uncertain reality they were facing.

It's interesting that the prayer list at the meeting that night didn't include what ours might—protection from the authorities or even comfort after such a terrifying experience. Instead, they asked God to equip them to continue to follow Him. They wanted to keep preaching the gospel. They wanted to perform signs and wonders in Jesus's name. They wanted *everyone* to know the certainty of who Jesus is and what He had done for them.

So, they asked God for *more* confidence and trusted the Spirit to continue His work of spreading the gospel. And God did what they asked.

God is faithful. And His faithfulness means that He will continue to fill us with the power and direction of His Spirit as we join Him in the work of sharing the good news of Jesus—in each and every circumstance.



Ask God for more confidence to
continue spreading the gospel.

REFLECTIONS

What reasons are found in verses 24-28 to explain the believers' confidence to ask what they did in verses 29-30?

In what situation or relationship do you need more confidence to join God at work in spreading the gospel?

What are some of the reasons you can be confident in God to help you in that situation or relationship?

ACTS 4:32

ALL THINGS IN COMMON

³² Now the entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common.

ACTS 5:1-11

LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

5 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property. ² However, he kept back part of the proceeds with his wife's knowledge, and brought a portion of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.

³ "Ananias," Peter asked, "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴ Wasn't it yours while you possessed it? And after it was sold, wasn't it at your disposal? Why is it that you planned this thing in your heart? You have not lied to people but to God." ⁵ When he heard these words, Ananias dropped dead, and a great fear came on all who heard. ⁶ The young men got up, wrapped his body, carried him out, and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ "Tell me," Peter asked her, "did you sell the land for this price?"

"Yes," she said, "for that price."

⁹ Then Peter said to her, "Why did you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

¹⁰ Instantly she dropped dead at his feet. When the young men came in, they found her dead, carried her out, and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Then great fear came on the whole church and on all who heard these things.

WHAT YOU GIVE

Our natural inclination is to look out for ourselves. That's one reason why Acts 4:32 is so compelling. After Peter and John were threatened by the authorities, you might expect the believers to start thinking about self-preservation. But that's not what happened. Continuing under the power and leadership of the Spirit who dwelt in them, they became even more united.

The entire group was in sync. They gave everything they had for the glory of God. There was a synergy of heart, mind, and purpose.

Then, Satan launched an internal attack.

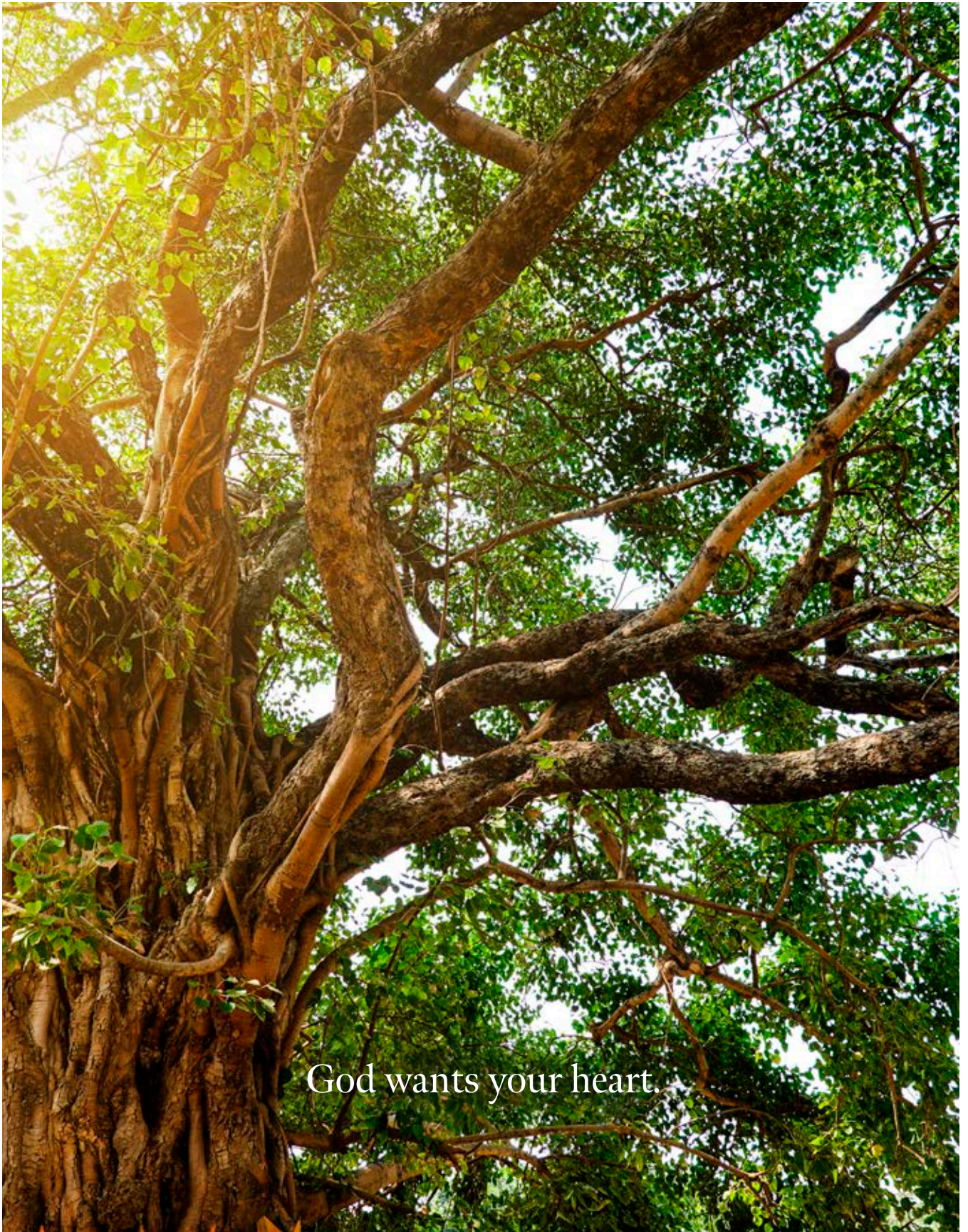
Wanting to be part of the group without giving themselves authentically to the group, Ananias and Sapphira stepped out from under the Spirit's authority. Ananias and Sapphira lied. They pretended to be something they were not.

That's what hypocrisy does—and its effects are destructive to the body of Christ and the work of the Spirit among us.

God has called us to the same purpose of heart and mind. When we engage with each other outside of that purpose—putting our best face on instead of being transparent about our struggles, acting more spiritual or generous than we are, or secretly seeking personal recognition to puff ourselves up—God knows, and it matters.

God wants your heart. And when God has your heart, you relate to other believers in sincerity and authenticity.

God is not interested in merely a big donation or your status among people. If you have a little bit to give Him, give it joyfully! If you share a testimony with someone else, share it gladly. But know that it is not the sum of your gifts or spiritual reputation that God is after. He wants your heart.



God wants your heart.

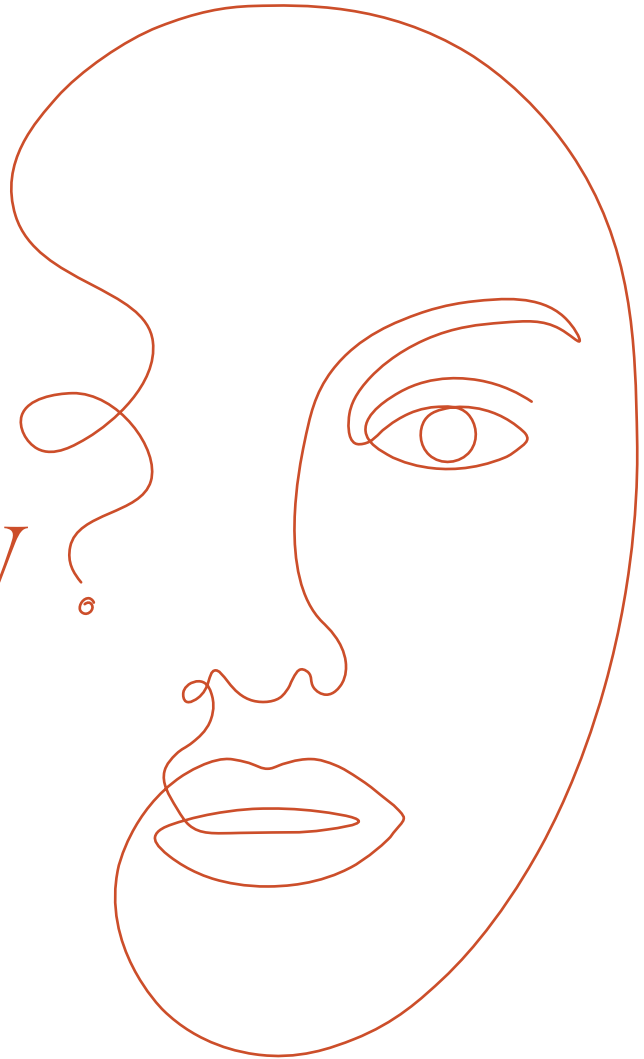
REFLECTIONS

How does Acts 5:1-11 help explain what is meant by “one heart and mind” in Acts 4:32?

What makes it hard for you to reveal your true self before God and other people?
Why does your authenticity matter?

Ananias and Sapphira decided to lie, but the motives of our hearts are not always so easily discerned. How can you know if you’re giving God your heart or keeping pieces of it for yourself?
What are some steps you can take to ensure your motives are pure?

Hypocrisy ?



None of us wants to be a hypocrite, but we know some measure of hypocrisy exists within us all. And unbelievers judge hypocrisy in the church as reason to stay away from the church altogether. Consequently, Acts 5 is a difficult passage that confronts us with some hard questions.

How can I know if someone is a hypocrite?

Matthew 13:24-30

There will always be hypocrites in the church—and it's not your job to root them out. You can't know a person's motives, but you can know that God does, and He will deal with him or her accordingly.

How can I know if I am a hypocrite?

1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 6:1-4; 23:5-7,12

You will be tempted to do hypocritical things, as we all are—and God loves you and knows your heart to please Him. Because He loves you and knows your heart, He gives warning to help you recognize the ways you seek approval from other people rather than pleasing Him.

How should I handle it if someone is caught in hypocrisy?

Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1-3; James 5:19-20

You can't know the true condition of any person's heart—and you have a responsibility to confront other believers about known sins.

How should I respond if I am confronted about hypocrisy?

Psalms 141:5; Proverbs 15:31-33; 29:1; James 5:16

Other believers should bring you correction when needed—and you should respond with humility and a desire to change.

If we're all tempted toward hypocrisy, what hope is there for the church?

Proverbs 28:13; Hebrews 12:5-7; 1 John 1:7-10

We will struggle with hypocrisy in the church—and God will use even that for our good and His glory.

ACTS 5:12-16

APOSTOLIC SIGNS AND WONDERS

¹² Many signs and wonders were being done among the people through the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³ No one else dared to join them, but the people spoke well of them. ¹⁴ Believers were added to the Lord in increasing numbers — multitudes of both men and women. ¹⁵ As a result, they would carry the sick out into the streets and lay them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶ In addition, a multitude came together from the towns surrounding Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

WHAT YOU EXPERIENCE

Word about Ananias and Sapphira's deaths had to have spread quickly. The world was watching these Christians closely, after all. And so far, they had been nothing but extraordinary.

So, when two of the group dropped dead because of their deceit, you might expect the church to shrink or, at the very least, stop growing so quickly. But that's not what happened.

Following that fearful event, the church experienced even more signs, wonders, and growth. God used Ananias and Sapphira's deaths for His glory and the good of His church.

Throughout church history, there have been peaks and valleys—moments that may make us wonder, “How can the church go on? How can we make an impact when people see this?” But God remains faithful to His people and equips His followers, no matter what.

Whatever our earthly circumstances—whether facing trouble from authorities, sin, or tragic events—God remains true to who He is. He is unchanging, and He continues to draw people to Himself.

God will carry out His purposes in the world and in His church. He will equip us to make disciples, and His Spirit will bring near people who are far from Him. God is still alive and at work, living inside of you!

So, you can learn from the peaks and valleys. You can draw near to God in every situation to gain a deeper understanding of His holiness and sin's consequences. And you can continue to experience the power of His Spirit working in, through, and around you.

A close-up photograph of a small green plant with thick, rounded leaves growing from a concrete planter filled with dark, smooth river stones. The plant is the central focus, with its vibrant green leaves contrasting against the dark, textured stones and the light-colored concrete. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the leaves and the smooth surface of the stones.

God will carry out His purposes in
the world, His church, and your life.

REFLECTIONS

Describe the events that followed the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira.

When have you walked through a valley in your faith? How did God bring you through that time?


When trouble comes, how can you remind yourself of God's unchanging work in your life and in the world?

DAY
20

PAUSE & LISTEN

Spend some time reflecting over the week's reading.



A photograph of sunlight filtering through the branches of a tree. The sun is positioned on the left side, creating a bright starburst effect. The light rays are visible as they pass through the leaves and branches, creating a warm, golden atmosphere. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and yellow, suggesting a dense forest or garden.

When they had prayed, the place
where they were assembled was
shaken, and they were all filled
with the Holy Spirit and began to
speak the word of God boldly.

ACTS 4:31

DAY
21

REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on Acts 3-5.

What stuck out to you most in this week's reading? What surprised you? Confused you?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about God and His character?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about humanity and our need for grace?

What would it look like practically for you to live according to the purposes of the Holy Spirit?

What steps of faith and obedience is God asking you to take through these Scriptures?

PRAY

Thank God for equipping and empowering you with His Spirit to carry out His kingdom purposes. Ask Him to remind you each day what those purposes are and to rely on Him as you seek to boldly follow His leadership.



WEEK 4

WISDOM

Walk in His wisdom.

We know we need wisdom. But most days, the thought, “I need wisdom,” never fully forms in our minds. In many situations, we believe we already have all the sense we need to make the right decision.

There are many decisions we believe we already possess the sense to make.

But is the good sense we glean from intuition, experience, rules, and norms the same as godly wisdom?

Many people behave as though it is, but Scripture cautions us. Proverbs 14:12 explains, “There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death.”

That’s true for all of us—even followers of Jesus Christ. Our practice of wisdom falls short because it is influenced by our sin nature. In our very best moment on our very best day, human wisdom is like foolishness. God is not impressed or in any way instructed by our insights.

But He does equip us.

The Spirit of God wants to fill you with His wisdom (see Ephesians 1:17).

ACTS 6:1-7

SEVEN CHOSEN TO SERVE

6 In those days, as the disciples were increasing in number, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution.² The Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, “It would not be right for us to give up preaching the word of God to wait on tables.³ Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty.⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”⁵ This proposal pleased the whole company. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert from Antioch.⁶ They had them stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

DAY
22

TO SERVE WELL

It is not surprising that some believers felt overlooked and began to complain, but that didn't mean the group was no longer walking in the power of the promised Spirit with unity and purpose.

The church was growing at a rate that brought unique challenges to structure and leadership, and they knew they needed wisdom to meet those challenges.

There were two groups of widows among them: Hebraic Jews and Hellenistic Jews. The Hellenists were being overlooked, and it was likely unintentional.

The Hebraic widows formed the critical mass. The Hellenistic widows were the minority. They had lived elsewhere before moving back to Jerusalem, so there were language and cultural barriers that likely added to the difficulty of knowing and meeting their needs.

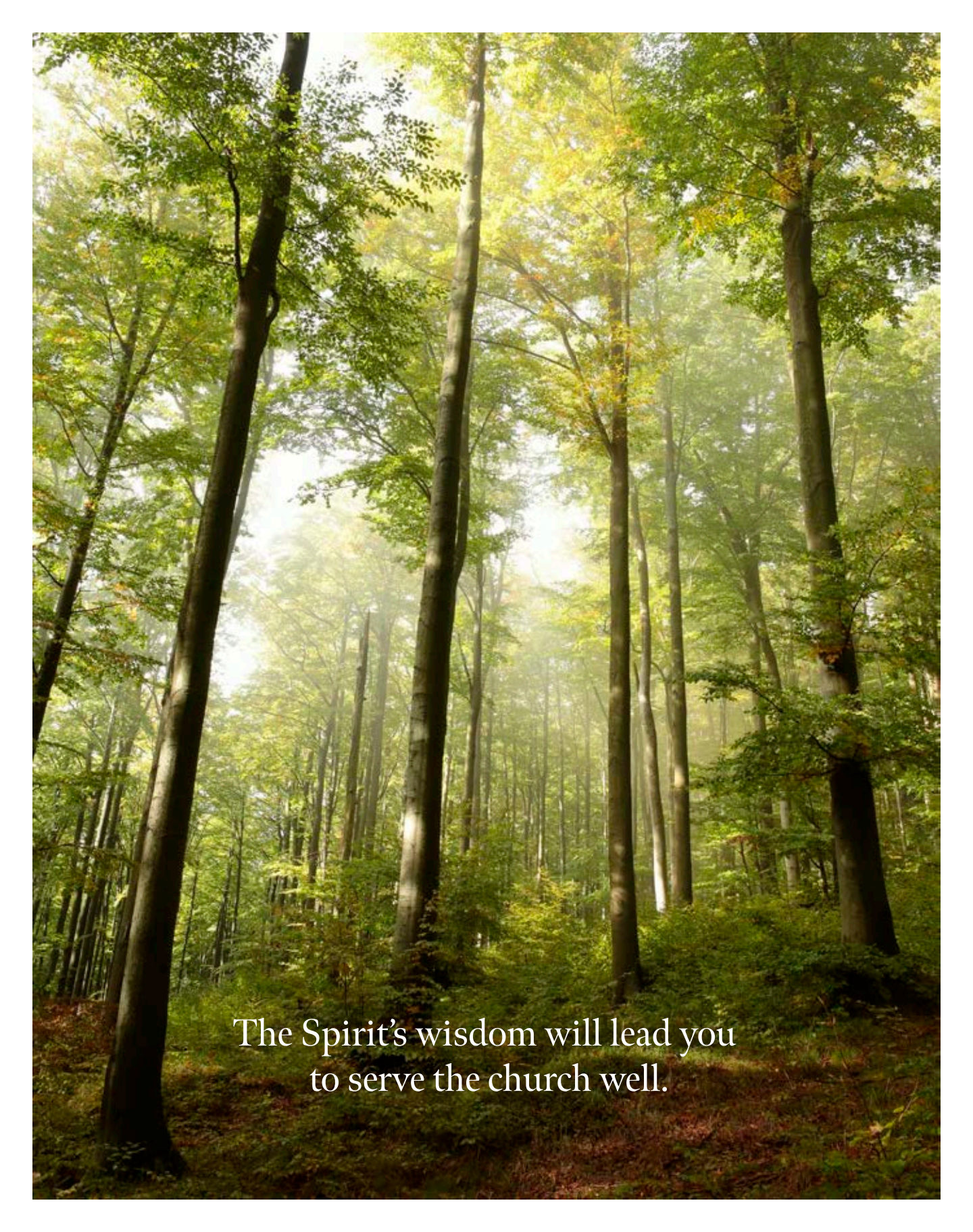
The apostles responded in the same spirit of unity and purpose that had directed them since Pentecost. They acknowledged the complaints as a valid concern. They also acknowledged the tension the church was experiencing as a result.

They knew they needed to preach the gospel, and they also knew there was a real issue related to serving the needs of the vulnerable among them.

So, they chose seven men who had demonstrated wisdom in the Spirit to serve the widows well. The tasks delegated to these men were not taken lightly. The church had a prayer service to commission the men for the ministry they would begin.

Luke states the effects as the natural outcome of the Spirit's wisdom at work: The preaching of God's Word thrived, and more people were saved!

Following the Spirit's wisdom allows the church to fulfill its purpose. Choosing godly men and women to address internal needs enables us to grow in unity and continue focusing outwardly as we should.

A photograph of a dense forest with tall, slender trees. The ground is covered in fallen leaves and ferns. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a misty atmosphere. The text is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

The Spirit's wisdom will lead you
to serve the church well.

REFLECTIONS

What role did the Spirit play in Acts 6:1-7?

What is the result of preaching the gospel without meeting physical or emotional needs?
On the other hand, what is the result of meeting needs without the clear preaching of the gospel?

What do you understand to be your role in serving the church? Based on this passage, how can you fill that role well?

INSIGHTS

All the men chosen had Greek names, which suggests that the church chose seven Hellenists to serve the Hellenistic widows. This would have helped ensure that these widows had advocates who would not allow them to be overlooked in the daily distribution.

ACTS 6:8-10

STEPHEN ACCUSED OF BLASPHEMY

⁸ Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Opposition arose, however, from some members of the Freedmen's Synagogue, composed of both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, and they began to argue with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they were unable to stand up against his wisdom and the Spirit by whom he was speaking.

ACTS 7:54-60

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

⁵⁴ When they heard these things, they were enraged and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven. He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ He said, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

⁵⁷ They yelled at the top of their voices, covered their ears, and together rushed against him. ⁵⁸ They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. And the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ While they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" ⁶⁰ He knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And after saying this, he fell asleep.

DAY
23

TO TAKE YOUR STAND

One of the seven men chosen to serve was Stephen, because he was full of the Spirit and wisdom. And the wisdom of the Spirit showed up in Stephen in extraordinary ways.

Stephen was so empowered to do the work of ministry that people took notice. Soon, opposition came, but even that wasn't outside of God's authority. Those who argued with Stephen were unable to stand up against the wisdom of the Spirit within him.

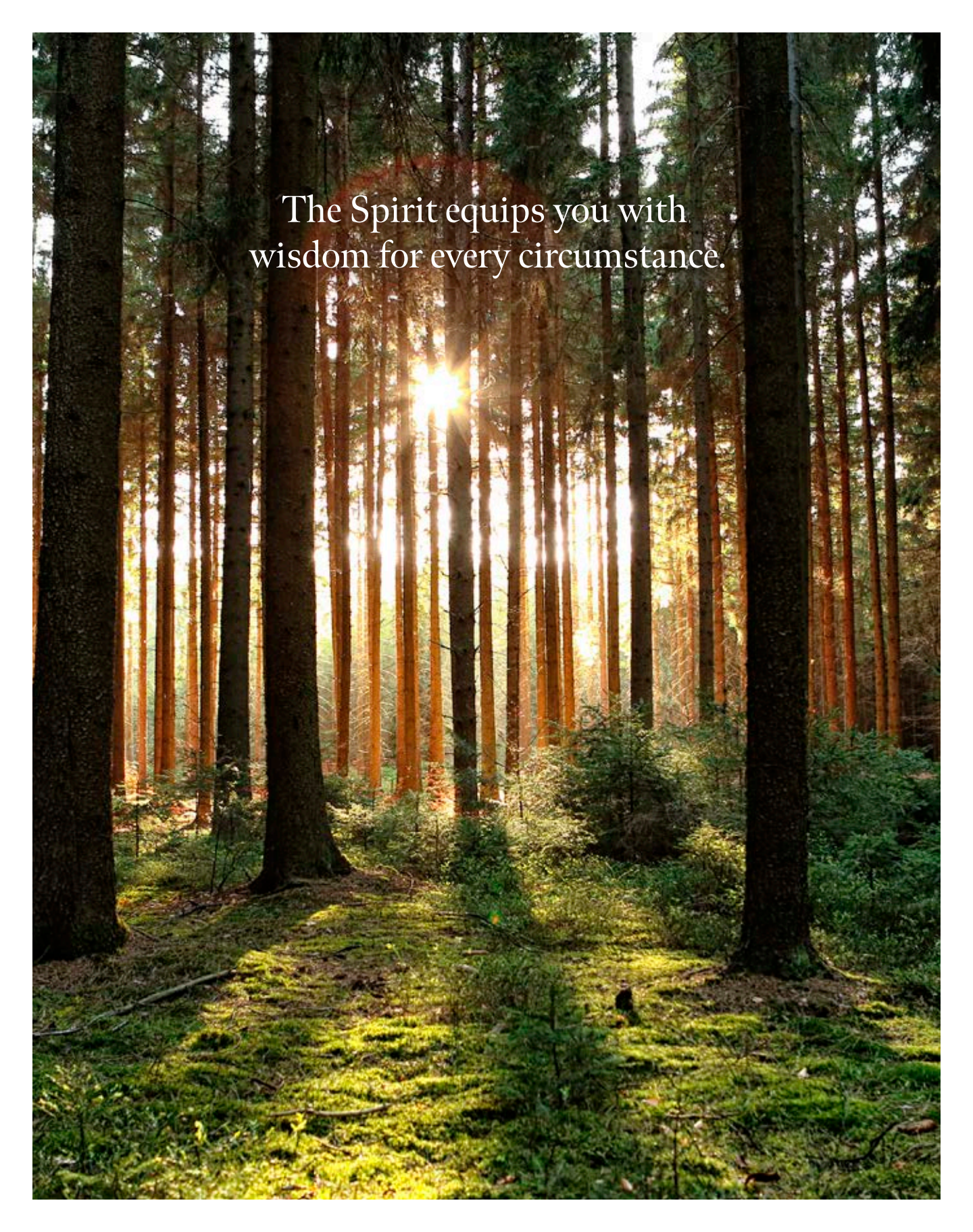
The discomfort of Stephen's Spirit-empowered wisdom quickly turned to rage in those who lacked that wisdom.

As awful as the scene was, Stephen was not afraid. He did not back down but confidently took his stand. He had been commissioned for service to the Lord, the Spirit was at work in that service, and Jesus was glorified.

As the enraged crowd picked up rocks to hurl at Stephen's head, he saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. As he endured unspeakable persecution, Stephen saw Jesus and stood in His presence.

The wisdom Stephen demonstrated as he forgave his murderers made an indelible mark on at least one of those present: a young man named Saul, who would be instrumental in the conversion of untold billions (Acts 22:19-20).

Though we may not see the effects in our lifetime, the Spirit is always at work. And He does not equip us for great things while abandoning us in the hard things. We don't have to be afraid. In His Word and by His Spirit, God has equipped us with wisdom for every circumstance. Those who serve Him in that wisdom fulfill their purpose in this generation.

A photograph of a forest with sunlight filtering through tall trees onto a mossy forest floor. The sun is positioned in the center, creating a bright glow and casting long shadows. The trees are tall and thin, with dark trunks and green foliage. The ground is covered in a thick layer of green moss and small plants.

The Spirit equips you with
wisdom for every circumstance.

REFLECTIONS

Reread Stephen's last statements before he died (vv. 56,59-60). What about his attitude and outlook stands out to you most?

Why do you think Luke included Saul's presence in this passage? What did Saul's presence imply about Stephen's faithfulness and courage?

Stephen was obviously prepared for this day. How do you become equipped to take your stand in service to the Lord, no matter what?

ACTS 8:1-8

SAUL THE PERSECUTOR

8 Saul agreed with putting him to death.
On that day a severe persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the land of Judea and Samaria. ² Devout men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him. ³ Saul, however, was ravaging the church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.

PHILIP IN SAMARIA

⁴ So those who were scattered went on their way preaching the word. ⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. ⁶ The crowds were all paying attention to what Philip said, as they listened and saw the signs he was performing. ⁷ For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

DAY
24

TO KEEP GOING

Stick together. Use caution. Keep your head down. Rely on your sense of self-preservation. That's the kind of self-talk we might expect in a situation like Acts 8:1-3.

But that's not what happened.

In fact, we don't read anything of that attitude or message in the verses that follow Stephen's death. What we read instead is that these first Christians kept right on preaching.

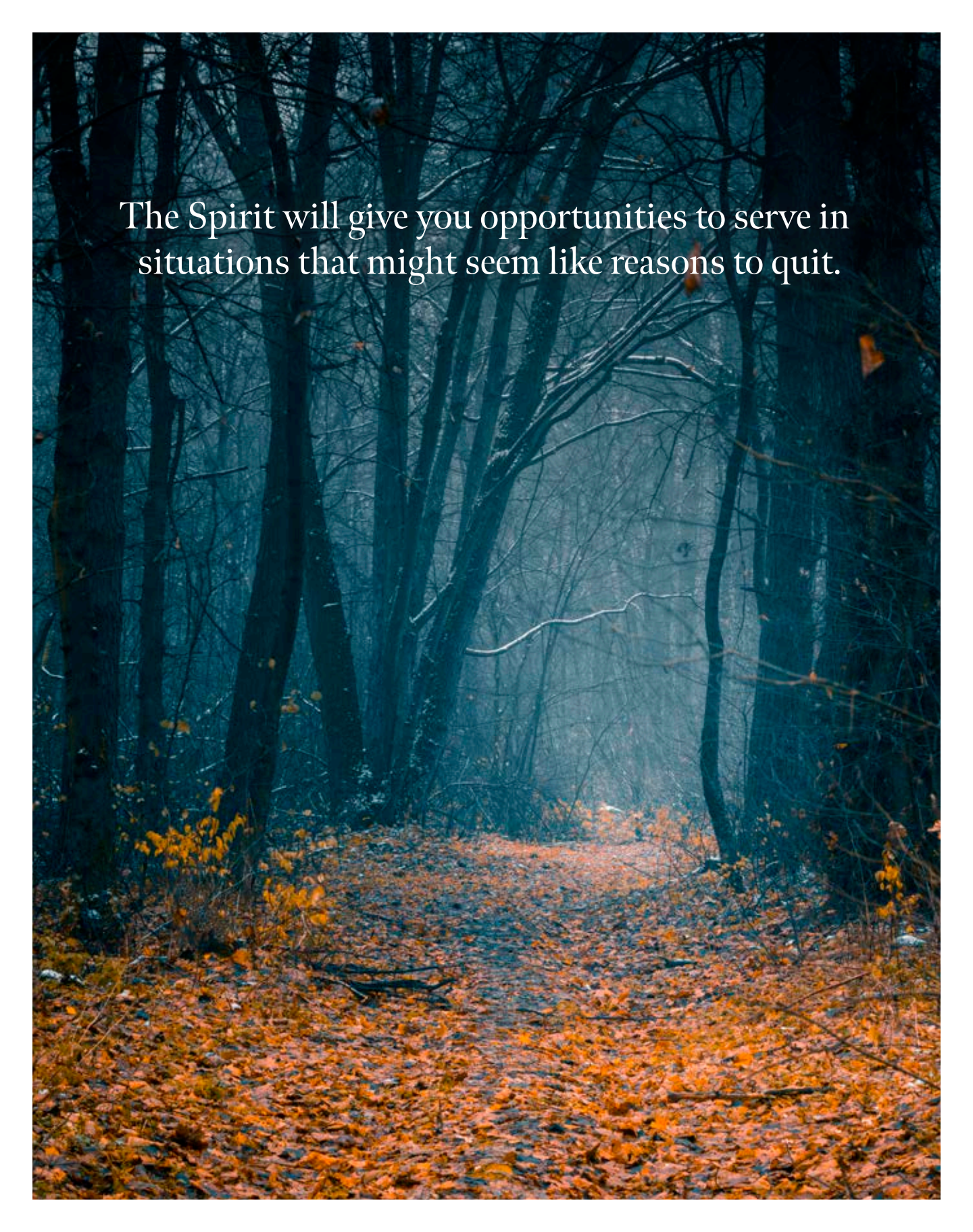
They had heard the shocking news of Stephen's murder. Some of them had even witnessed it. At the same time, they had to come to terms with the reality that they were in danger themselves—even inside their own homes. Saul made it his mission to punish every person who dared proclaim the name of Jesus. At will, he walked straight into their homes and dragged them off to prison.

But persecution didn't change the unity, purpose, and wisdom of God's Spirit within them. Nothing can, and that fact helps us better understand Philip's story.

Like Stephen, Philip was one of the seven men chosen to care for widows in Acts 6. But when persecution broke out and the believers were scattered, Philip headed for Samaria to preach there.

There was longheld hatred between Jews and Samaritans, yet in the wisdom of the Spirit, Philip found an opportunity in what could have been an excuse to quit. And God moved in Samaria—where *Samaritans* lived. Verse 8 tells us that as a result, there was joy in that city. It was absolutely extraordinary.

Even though they were scattered, unable to stay together, these Christians didn't choose to keep their heads down and lean into self-preservation. They fixed their eyes on Jesus, and the gospel message continued to spread.

A photograph of a forest path covered in fallen orange and yellow leaves. The path leads into a misty, blue-toned forest with tall, thin trees. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

The Spirit will give you opportunities to serve in situations that might seem like reasons to quit.

REFLECTIONS

What is surprising about the fact that the scattered believers who were facing intense persecution “went on their way preaching the word” (v. 4)?

Read Acts 1:8. What is the connection between Jesus’s command and the events of Acts 8:1-4?

God used persecution to grow the church. When have you seen God divinely use the circumstances in your life to bring glory to Himself? What was your role in that process?

ACTS 8:14-23

SIMON'S SIN

¹⁴ When the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵ After they went down there, they prayed for them so that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit because he had not yet come down on any of them. ¹⁶ (They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) ¹⁷ Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸ When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give me this power also so that anyone I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit."

²⁰ But Peter told him, "May your silver be destroyed with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have no part or share in this matter, because your heart is not right before God. ²² Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your heart's intent may be forgiven. ²³ For I see you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by wickedness."

DAY
25

TO CONFRONT WRONG MOTIVES

So many incredible things were happening.

Despite intense persecution, the Spirit kept moving. People were being healed of illness and demon possession. The church was continuing to grow. And now, maybe most incredible of all, even Samaritans were getting baptized.

By all accounts, the momentum of the church was unstoppable—so much so that the disciples might have become swept up in that fact.

After all, it happened to at least one of the people they had baptized. Simon was amazed by the supernatural power being demonstrated by God's Spirit through His followers. But amazement isn't the same as faith. And Simon serves as a warning for us.

Power apart from wisdom is dangerous.

That was the problem: Simon wanted to possess the Spirit's power without the Spirit's wisdom. And the deceptiveness of his heart revealed itself.

Peter was led by the wisdom of the Spirit, though. As such, he wasn't caught up in amazement in the same way as Simon the magician. Peter wasn't interested in monetizing the Spirit's power, nor would he let Simon think such an idea was legitimate in any way. Peter didn't roll his eyes, shrug his shoulders, or simply hope crazy Simon would go away.

Peter confronted the man and told him to repent of his wickedness.

It is a temptation for all of us to separate the Spirit's power from His wisdom. We can easily get caught up in amazement about what God can do through us, ignoring the wisdom of His work within us. And when we do that, we must repent. The Spirit centers our hearts on pursuing a relationship with Jesus Himself—not on what we can get from Him.

A photograph of a massive, ancient tree trunk in a misty forest. The tree's bark is dark, textured, and deeply furrowed. Its roots are thick and gnarled, spreading out across the forest floor, which is covered in fallen brown leaves. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees, shrouded in a soft, white mist that filters the light, creating a serene and ethereal atmosphere.

The Spirit's power does not exist
apart from His wisdom.

REFLECTIONS

Contrast Simon's human wisdom with the wisdom of the Spirit in Peter.

Give an example of a way this same contrast might play out in church life today.

When are you tempted to be amazed over what God might do through you instead of the work He wants to do in you? What does today's passage teach you about that?

ACTS 8:26-31,35-39

THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN OFFICIAL

²⁶ An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip: “Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is the desert road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went. There was an Ethiopian man, a eunuch and high official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to worship in Jerusalem ²⁸ and was sitting in his chariot on his way home, reading the prophet Isaiah aloud.

²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, “Go and join that chariot.”

³⁰ When Philip ran up to it, he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you’re reading?”

³¹ “How can I,” he said, “unless someone guides me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³⁵ Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning with that Scripture.

³⁶ As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, “Look, there’s water. What would keep me from being baptized?” ³⁸ So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer but went on his way rejoicing.

DAY
26

TO WALK THROUGH OPEN DOORS

It seems that Philip landed in a good spot in Samaria. The ministry was growing as he served the Lord and preached to big crowds (8:5-8). Everyone listened to what he said, and God was doing miraculous things through him. It was a citywide movement toward Christ.

And it was in this context that God's Spirit called Philip to leave the city and travel a lonely, desert road. Yet, when the Spirit told him to leave the place it seemed he had really found his niche, Philip didn't hesitate. He didn't make a list of pros and cons or question the wisdom in leaving.

Philip simply got up and went.

He had very few details. There was no itinerary or set of objectives given. The Spirit was leading one step at a time, and Philip willingly obeyed.

Along the way, he came across an Ethiopian official. Ethiopia was considered the end of the earth by the Greeks and Romans. It was an unlikely encounter—except for the fact that God planned it.

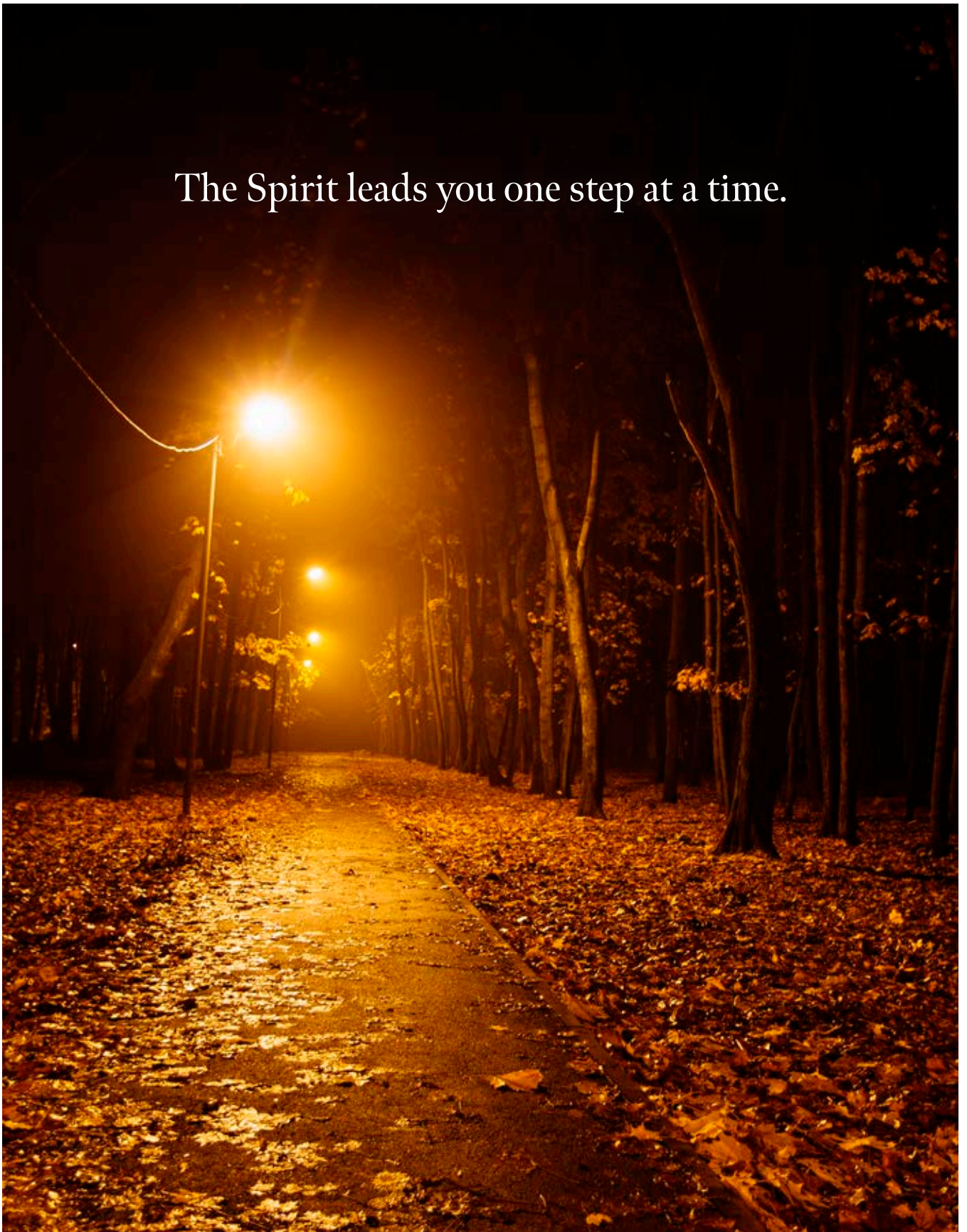
Sometimes, the Spirit leads us to walk through doors we don't expect.

In Philip's case, he heard the Ethiopian official reading from the passage we know today as Isaiah 53—which includes prophecy about the death of Jesus. It was an open door for a Spirit-led gospel conversation that resulted in the man professing faith in Jesus Christ through baptism.

In that moment, the Spirit supernaturally carried Philip away to another ministry opportunity. And the Ethiopian went on his way, forever changed. He was full of joy and new life in Christ!

When we follow the Spirit's leadership and wisdom, He provides unexpected and surprising opportunities for us to share the gospel message. Are you making yourself willing and available to walk through those open doors?

The Spirit leads you one step at a time.



REFLECTIONS

What actions did Philip take in verses 27, 30, 35, and 38? What principles about life in the Spirit do you gain from his example?

Is there something, someone, or somewhere that God is calling you to? What might be holding you back from following the Holy Spirit?

What keeps you from being more like Philip, quickly responding to the calls God places on your life each day?

WISDOM

VS

foolishness

Throughout Scripture, wisdom is contrasted with foolishness. We either walk in the wisdom of God or the foolishness of this world—there is no alternate choice. And by His Spirit, God has provided the way for us to choose wisdom. The Spirit helps us understand God’s ways more fully and walk in them. Any other path is foolishness.

God generously gives wisdom for daily living to all who ask.

Those who don't are cursed.

JAMES 1:5; JEREMIAH 17:5

Life in the Spirit brings spiritual understanding.

Life apart from the Spirit lacks spiritual understanding.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-16

**The Spirit compels those He indwells to readily receive instruction
and correction for continual growth in wisdom.**

**Others think they are right in their own eyes, reject godly instruction
and correction, and stay on the path that leads to death.**

PROVERBS 12:1,15; 14:12

**The gift of wisdom brings a greater return than
any amount of earthly wealth.**

To choose earthly riches instead is foolishness.

PROVERBS 3:13-18; LUKE 12:13-21

We daily choose whether to walk in wisdom or foolishness.

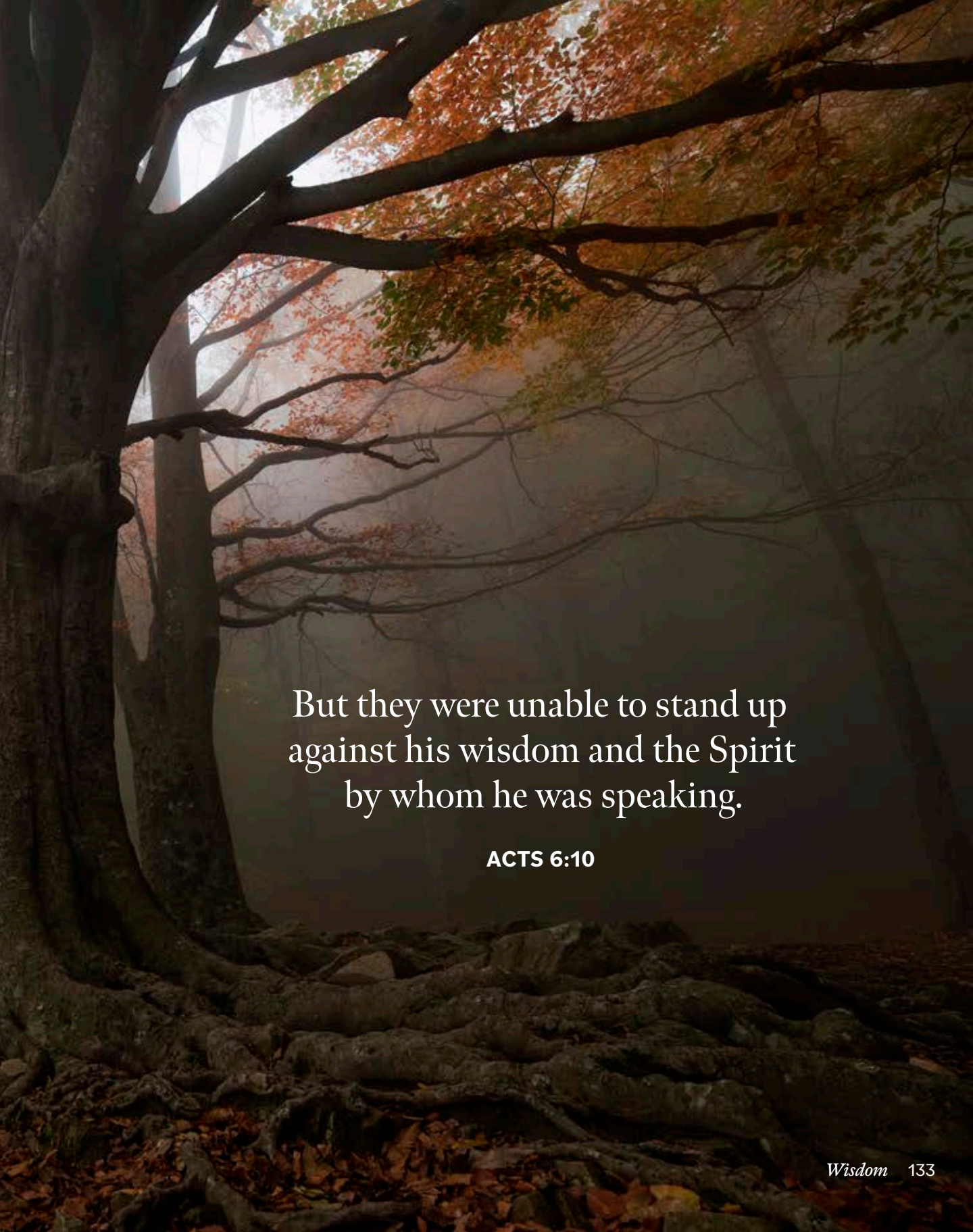
That choice is often subtle, and it has powerful effect.



DAY
27

PAUSE & LISTEN

Spend some time reflecting over the week's reading.



But they were unable to stand up
against his wisdom and the Spirit
by whom he was speaking.

ACTS 6:10

DAY
28

REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on Acts 6–8.

What stuck out to you most in this week's reading? What surprised you? Confused you?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about God and His character?

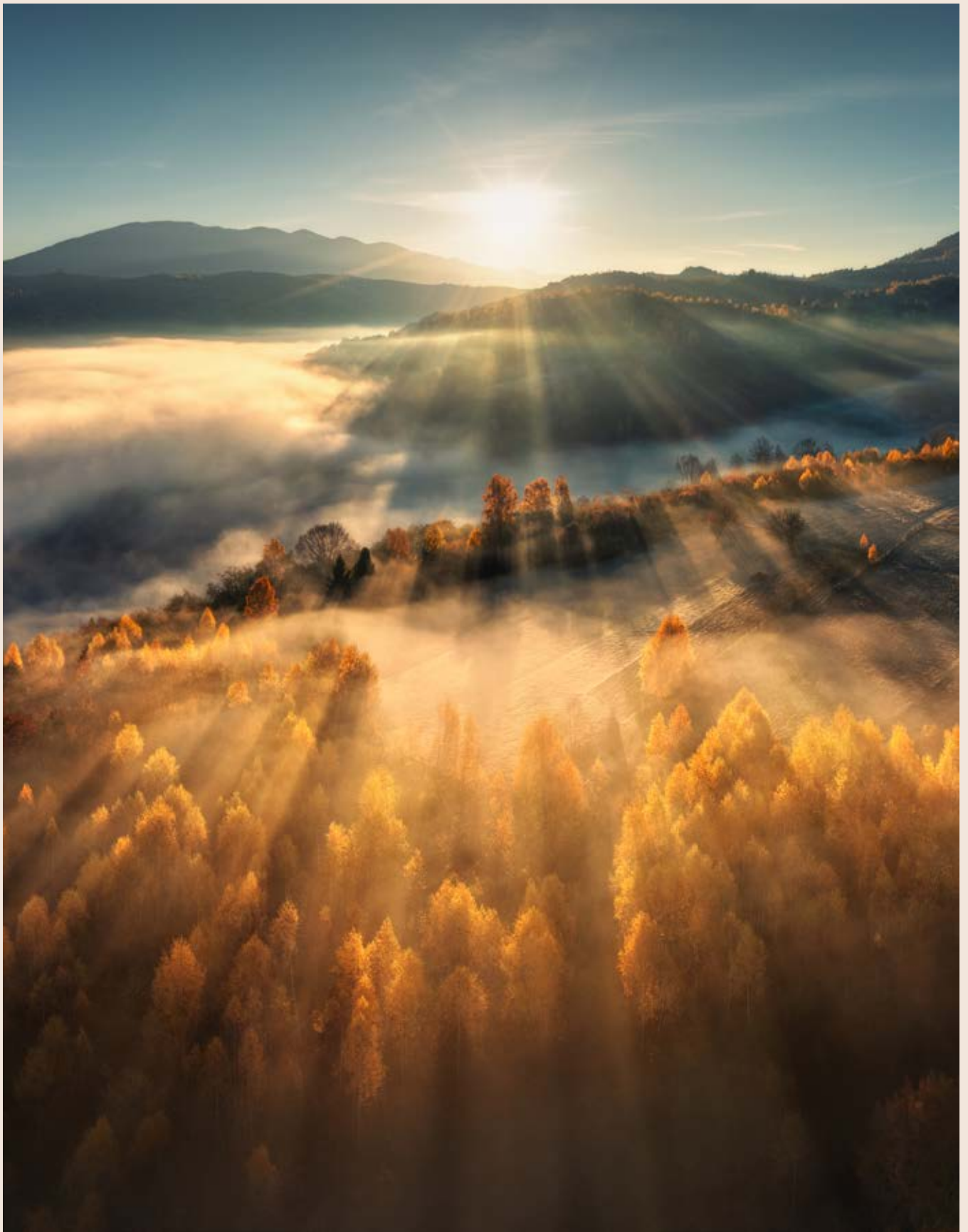
What does this week's Scripture teach you about humanity and our need for grace?

What is a situation in which you need to seek and live by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit?

What steps of faith and obedience is God asking you to take through these Scriptures?

PRAY

Take some time to consider your daily need to be filled with the Spirit's wisdom. Confess your tendency to lean into human wisdom instead. Invite God to give you His wisdom to serve well, take your stand, persevere, confront wrong motives, and walk through open doors.



WEEK 5

TRANSFORMATION

Invite spiritual transformation.

Our previous weeks of study raise an important question: If the promise of God's Spirit is to give us unity, purpose, and wisdom, then why do many believers lack those qualities?

It's true, the Spirit empowers us. But that outcome is not instantaneous or automatic. The Spirit-filled life is one of ongoing transformation.

Paul expressed it this way: *We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).*

We are being transformed into Christ's image with ever-increasing glory, which is great—and it is also hard. That's because the means God often uses to do that work in us is difficulty.

In our passages of study this week, we'll see one man struck blind and another walking into what he believed could be a life-threatening situation. We'll see men traveling thirty-one miles to try to find someone they'd never met and convince him to travel that same journey with them in reverse—to talk to a man he'd never met. We'll see someone wrestling with a message from God that came by way of a nightmarish vision.

In and through those struggles, spiritual transformation was taking place. As each of these individuals made themselves willing and available, God's Spirit grew them in unity, purpose, and wisdom.

ACTS 9:1-9

THE DAMASCUS ROAD

9 Now Saul was still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest ² and requested letters from him to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he traveled and was nearing Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. ⁴ Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

⁵ “Who are you, Lord?” Saul said.

“I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶ “But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the sound but seeing no one. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. So they took him by the hand and led him into Damascus.

⁹ He was unable to see for three days and did not eat or drink.

DAY
29

DECEIT INTO TRUTH

Is there an issue about which you can't fathom how people hold an alternate view than you? When it comes to moral, ethical, political, philosophical, and spiritual matters—or any issue that involves worldview—we don't want to be wrong. And we will expend much passion and energy to prove ourselves right. Hop over to your favorite social media platform for a quick scroll, and you'll see how strong that particular tendency is.

Saul persecuted Christians for that kind of reason. He actively opposed Christ's followers in the name of *holiness*. He believed he was upholding God's law as he brought punishment to those he viewed as breaking it. There was no shame in his hatred for people who followed Jesus.

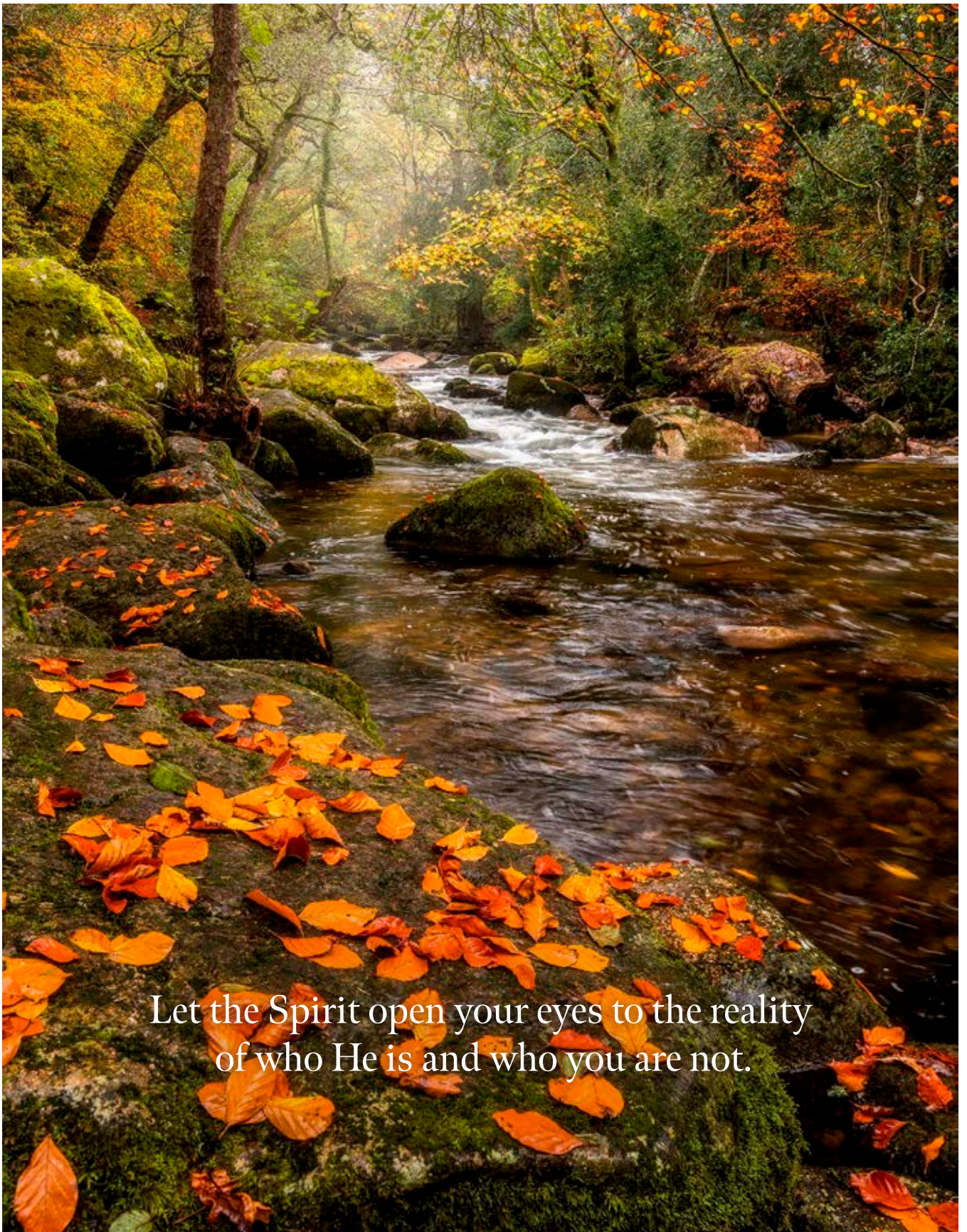
But Saul was wrong.

He was deceived. That is, until Jesus showed up to throw his worldview to the ground. God appeared in a way that would bring Saul face-to-face with the truth of the gospel: The grace of Christ trumps everything else.

We should not make the mistake of thinking Saul's behavior was an outlier. His is a lesson for us all. We can be passionate about our own understanding of holiness and miss holiness altogether. We can be entirely certain—and entirely wrong in that certainty. That's the bad news.

The good news is that God disciplines us. His Spirit humbles us so that transformation can take place. As we read His Word, He confronts whatever false beliefs we hold. As we invite Him to search our hearts and show us His ways, He opens our eyes to the reality of who He is and who we are not.

For those who depend on themselves, truth is always squashed by deceit (see Jeremiah 17:9). For those who depend on God's Spirit, truth always wins (see Romans 12:2).



Let the Spirit open your eyes to the reality
of who He is and who you are not.

REFLECTIONS

Why did Saul think he was right to persecute Christians?

How does the desire to be right distract you from the truth of who God is and who you are?

What does Acts 9:1-9 teach you about God's intention to transform deceit in your life into truth?
How can you engage with Him in that process?

ACTS 9:10-11,17-21

SAUL'S BAPTISM

¹⁰ There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias."

"Here I am, Lord," he replied.

¹¹ "Get up and go to the street called Straight," the Lord said to him, "to the house of Judas, and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, since he is praying there."

¹⁷ Ananias went and entered the house. He placed his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road you were traveling, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸ At once something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. ¹⁹ And after taking some food, he regained his strength.

SAUL PROCLAIMING THE MESSIAH

Saul was with the disciples in Damascus for some time. ²⁰ Immediately he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues: "He is the Son of God."

²¹ All who heard him were astounded and said, "Isn't this the man in Jerusalem who was causing havoc for those who called on this name and came here for the purpose of taking them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

DAY
30

BLINDNESS INTO SIGHT

Blind, humbled, and broken. This man who had epitomized religious elitism found himself helpless to do anything “good” in the ways he had previously defined that word.

At the same time, Saul’s brokenness and humility were a picture of the transformation that happens when Jesus enters a person’s life. Goodness isn’t about achieving a standard of perfection, it is about trusting that Jesus met that standard of perfection on our behalf (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

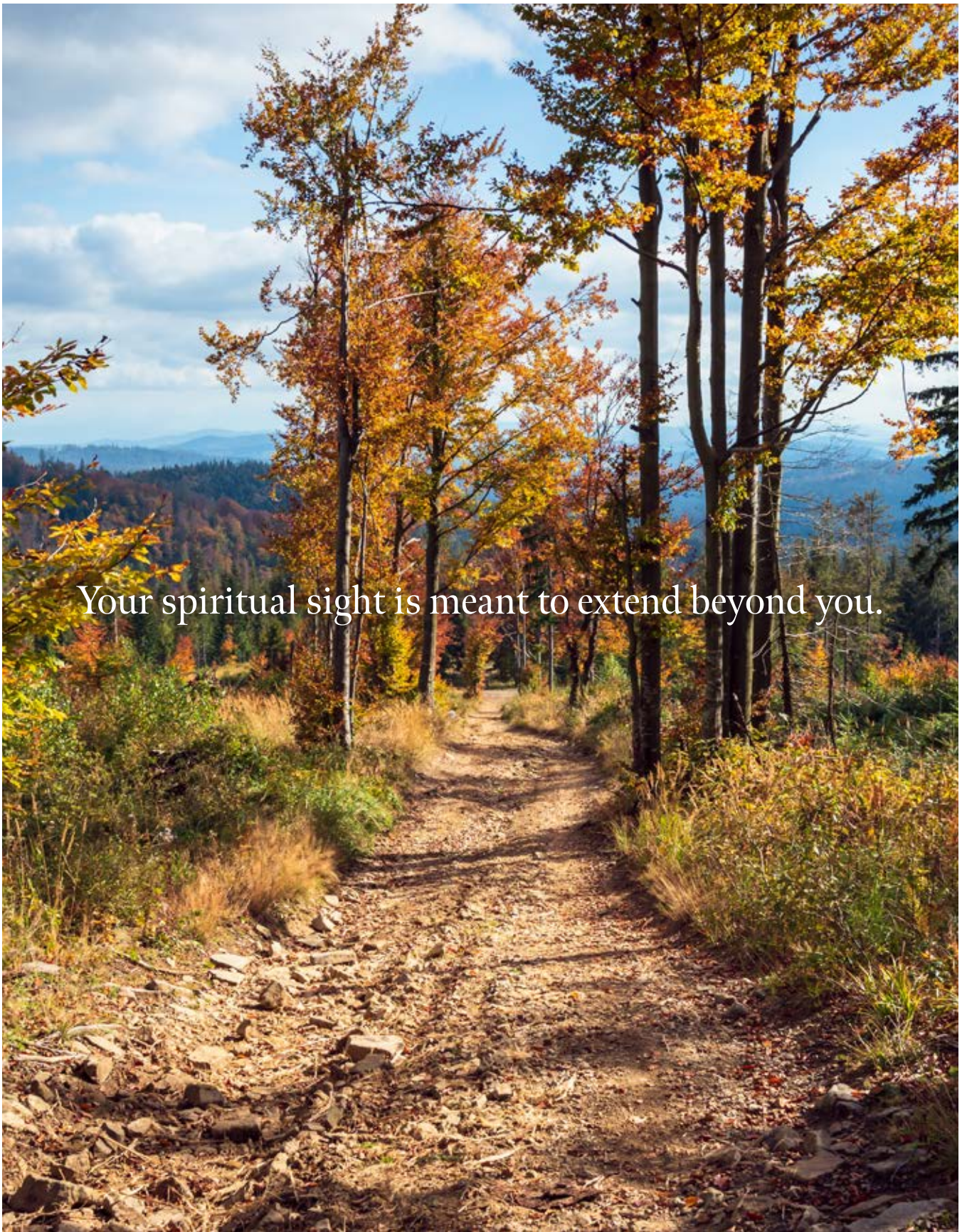
It was in this way that Saul’s life had been turned upside down, and he would never be the same again.

That’s what Ananias saw when he walked into the house—a changed man. Though he had been uncertain that Saul could be redeemed (Acts 9:13-14), what Ananias saw moved him to compassion. Saul was no longer Ananias’s enemy—he was his brother, ready to partner with him with clear vision in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had transformed Saul and forgiven him of his sins. The Holy Spirit didn’t need Ananias’s help to fill Saul and prepare him for the gospel work ahead.

But there is more than one type of spiritual blindness that God aims to correct. As such, Ananias played a significant role in helping the effects of spiritual sight extend beyond Saul to the whole community of faith.

There are no evils to which God’s grace cannot apply. There is no person God cannot use to spread His message of goodness and grace in Jesus to the world. God can turn any life upside down. His transforming work is beyond anything we can imagine, and it changes us forever.



Your spiritual sight is meant to extend beyond you.

REFLECTIONS

What plans did the Lord have for Saul? How might this have differed from Ananias's expectations?

How would you describe Saul's spiritual blindness before his conversion? Can believers experience a form of spiritual blindness? How so?

Consider how God used Ananias to open the eyes of the whole community of faith. When has God used others' spiritual sight to help remove your blind spots?

INSIGHTS

This Ananias was a different man than the Ananias who lied in Acts 5. He was later given tribute for his role in Saul's life (Acts 22:12-13).

ACTS 10:9-23

PETER'S VISION

⁹The next day, as they were traveling and nearing the city, Peter went up to pray on the roof about noon. ¹⁰He became hungry and wanted to eat, but while they were preparing something, he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw heaven opened and an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners to the earth. ¹²In it were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth, and the birds of the sky. ¹³A voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat."

¹⁴"No, Lord!" Peter said. "For I have never eaten anything impure and ritually unclean."

¹⁵Again, a second time, the voice said to him, "What God has made clean, do not call impure." ¹⁶This happened three times, and suddenly the object was taken up into heaven.

PETER VISITS CORNELIUS

¹⁷While Peter was deeply perplexed about what the vision he had seen might mean, right away the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions to Simon's house, stood at the gate. ¹⁸They called out, asking if Simon, who was also named Peter, was lodging there.

¹⁹While Peter was thinking about the vision, the Spirit told him, "Three men are here looking for you. ²⁰Get up, go downstairs, and go with them with no doubts at all, because I have sent them."

²¹Then Peter went down to the men and said, "Here I am, the one you're looking for. What is the reason you're here?"

²²They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who has a good reputation with the whole Jewish nation, was divinely directed by a holy angel to call you to his house and to hear a message from you." ²³Peter then invited them in and gave them lodging.

DAY
31

CONFUSION INTO CLARITY

The church continued to grow in strength, peace, courage, and number throughout all Judea, Galilee, and even Samaria (Acts 9:31). And there was still so much more to come! However, for the gospel to extend to the ends of the earth (1:8), Jewish believers needed to let go of some preconceived ideas and grasp a radical truth: Jesus's blood sacrifice and the power of His Spirit were as much of a gift of grace for the Gentiles as they were for the Jews.

God cleared up the confusion by way of a dream and an invitation.

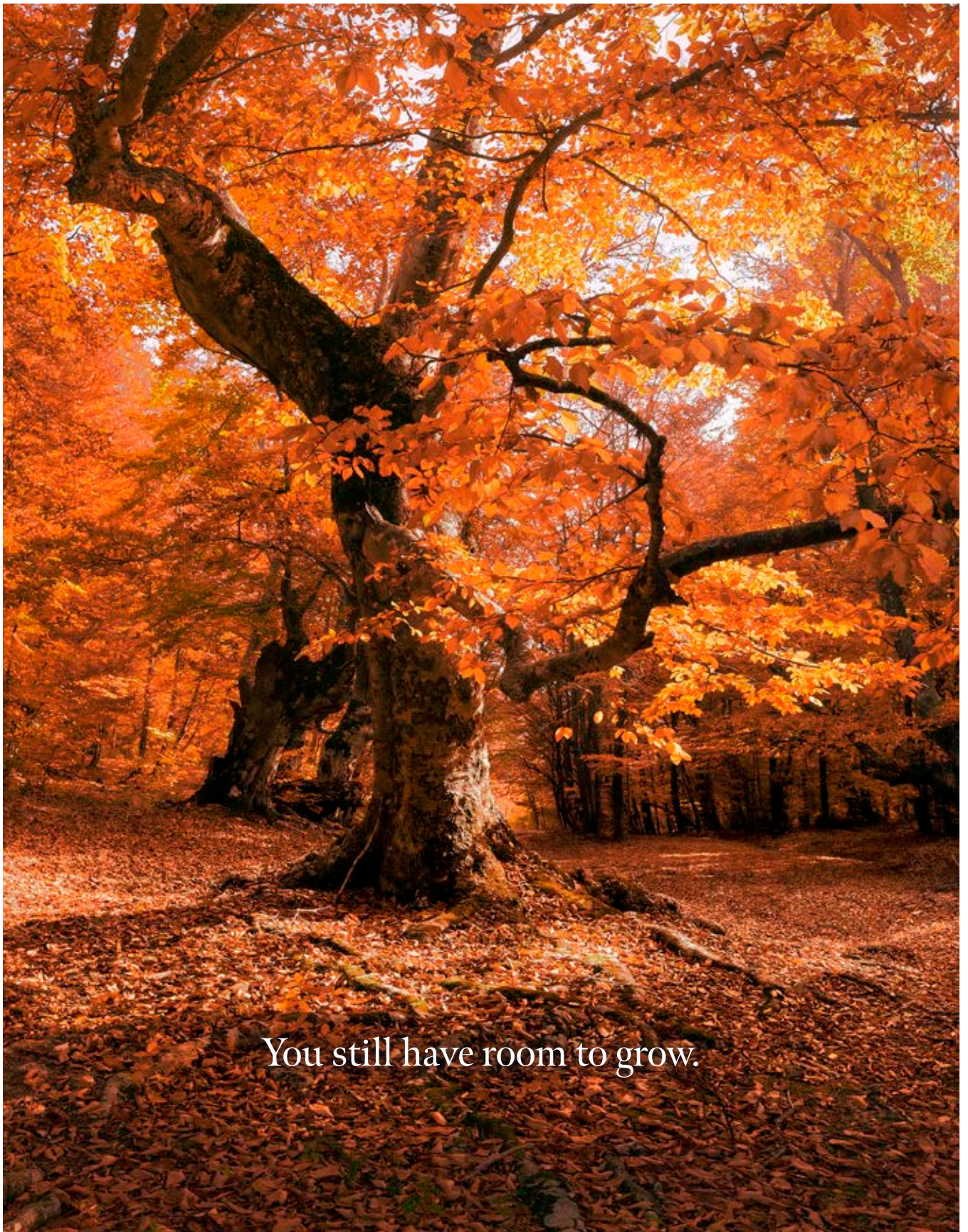
At the same time that God chose Saul to take the name of Jesus to the Gentiles (9:15), God was working in Peter's life and in the life of a Roman officer named Cornelius.

Cornelius wasn't a Jew, and God was drawing him to faith. He had been praying to God and giving money to God's people in God's name. Cornelius was a true seeker, and God wanted a relationship with him, so He sent an angel in a vision, instructing him to go find Peter.

As that was happening, God gave Peter a vision as well. At first, Peter received it as something to reject as unholy. That's because he still had a law-based view of "clean" and "unclean." But, like all of us, Peter had room to grow, and God was showing him the greater reality of the gospel.

When the dream ended with the men Cornelius sent standing outside at the gate, calling out for Peter, he didn't say, "No, Lord!" again. He followed the Spirit's lead and left the very next day to go meet Cornelius.

This was a learning moment that would break down barriers and continue the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth—and it happened because two men had a willingness to listen to God as He continued to teach them.



You still have room to grow.

REFLECTIONS

What was Peter's reaction to the vision God gave him? Why?

Considering that Peter was the disciple who had preached at Pentecost, leading thousands to Christ, does it seem strange to you that he had such a spiritual blind spot? Why or why not?

Is there a situation in your life where you are saying, "No, Lord"? Why? How does Peter's story in Acts 10 challenge your perspective on that situation?

CONNECTING THE STORY

Peter was not confused about Levitical law. Scripture was clear on what Peter should and shouldn't eat (Leviticus 11; Ezekiel 4:14). What he was confused about was how Jesus's death and resurrection impacted those laws and traditions that governed God's people. To give clarity, Jesus spoke to Peter three times in this vision—a number which would have stood out personally to Peter. He had previously denied Jesus three times (Luke 22:56-62), and Jesus had restored Peter by asking him three times about his love (John 21).

ACTS 10:34-43

GOOD NEWS FOR GENTILES

³⁴ Peter began to speak: “Now I truly understand that God doesn’t show favoritism, ³⁵ but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ He sent the message to the Israelites, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ — he is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know the events that took place throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John preached: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all who were under the tyranny of the devil, because God was with him. ³⁹ We ourselves are witnesses of everything he did in both the Judean country and in Jerusalem, and yet they killed him by hanging him on a tree. ⁴⁰ God raised up this man on the third day and caused him to be seen, ⁴¹ not by all the people, but by us whom God appointed as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.”

DAY
32

PARTIALITY INTO PROCLAMATION

Teacher's pet. Last one chosen for the kickball game at recess. Turning down one lunch invitation in favor of another. We have all experienced favoritism, and we have all shown favoritism. And favoritism affects faithfulness.

Peter was no different. As he preached the gospel, he had been showing partiality to his own people.

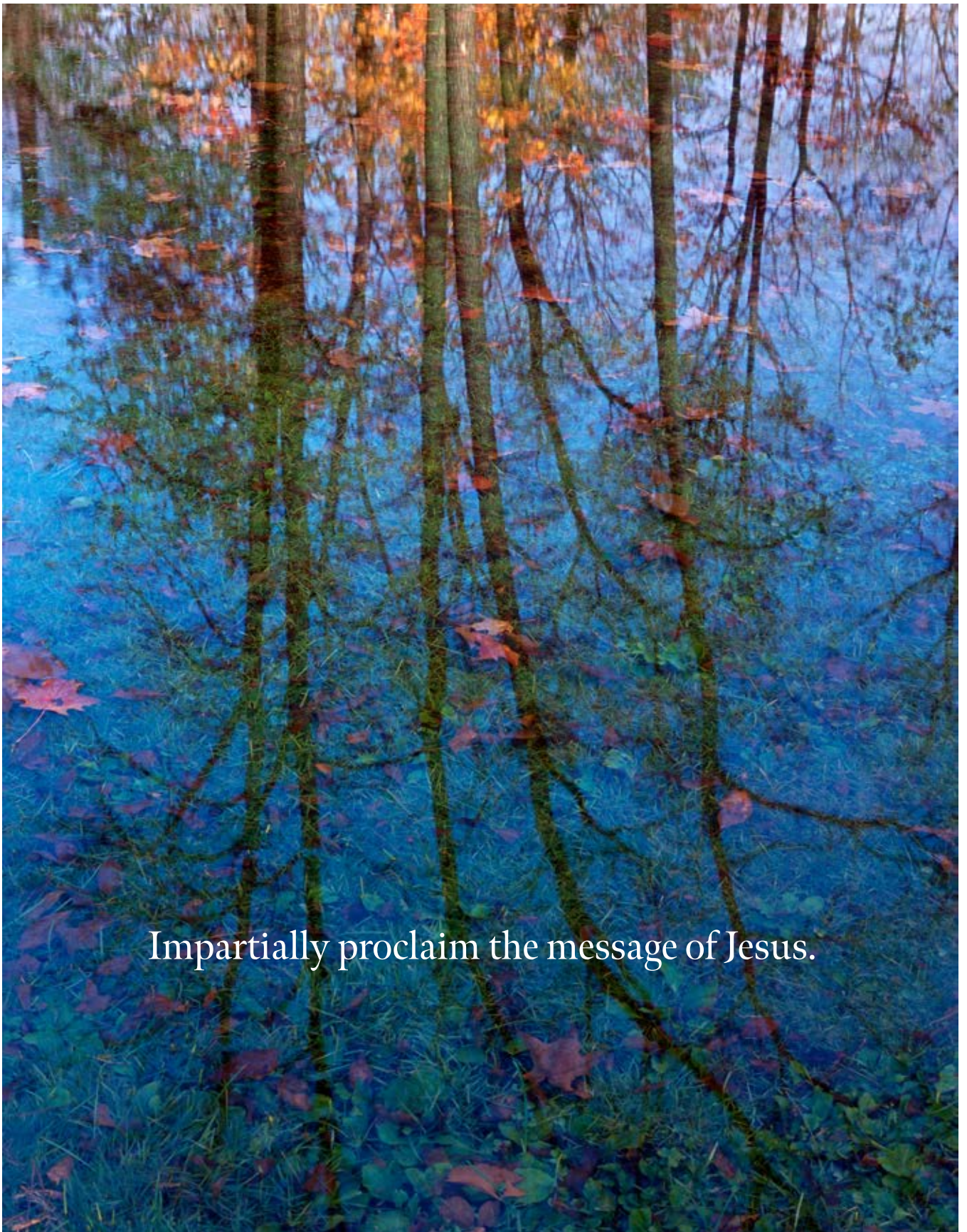
But God shows no partiality. As God did His transforming work in Peter to bring him to a place of true and deep understanding, Peter acknowledged he had been believing an incomplete gospel.

He didn't hold an internal debate with the Holy Spirit. He didn't judge Cornelius and his family based on external factors. He didn't withhold the gospel message from these seekers until he got other apostles' opinions. He didn't try to save face. As soon as Peter understood what God was showing him, he began to speak.

The truth is, God accepts any man or woman, from any background, who fears Him and does what is right—turning in faith to Jesus as Savior and Lord.

So, Peter didn't hold back the message from Cornelius and his family. It didn't matter that Cornelius was a Roman soldier. It didn't matter whether Cornelius decided to convert to Judaism, following all the old ways and adhering strictly to the law. All that mattered is what Cornelius and his family believed about Jesus.

God wants us to understand what Peter learned in Acts 10: We diminish Jesus's blood sacrifice when we demand that those who receive it emulate or embrace our personal preferences or traditional views. God sets no such standard, and there is only one message to proclaim: Everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins.



Impartially proclaim the message of Jesus.

REFLECTIONS

How have you viewed God as a Father who shows favoritism? What experiences have you had that contributed to that lie?

When has God shown you something in reality that you had only known in theory?

Who in your life needs to hear the good news that God doesn't show partiality?

ACTS 10:44-48

GENTILE CONVERSION AND BAPTISM

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and declaring the greatness of God.

Then Peter responded, ⁴⁷“Can anyone withhold water and prevent these people from being baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

DEATH INTO LIFE

It is entirely possible to engage with God in His work without any real expectation that God will work.

Maybe we gladly show up to church on a Sunday morning not once considering that God will speak to us. Maybe we lead a Bible study group having had no thought that someone might come to faith. Maybe we pray for God to bring needed provision and then find ourselves completely surprised when that provision comes.

Peter and his friends left Joppa ready to engage in kingdom work. They likely prayed along the way to Caesarea for God to do that work. But in these verses, Peter and the other Jews responded to God's work with surprise.

Peter and his friends knew that God transforms sinners from death to new life. They knew God was sending them to engage in His work in Caesarea. And when it became indisputable that the Spirit was, indeed, doing a work there, Peter and his friends were amazed.

They had built a barrier that God had already torn down, and He gave them a front row view to make sure they knew it. People were being changed by the Holy Spirit without going through Jewish rituals. They came to faith. They were transformed by God. They were brought from death to life!

Are you walking out your faith with the expectation that God will do the works He has promised in His Word? Or are you building a barrier God has torn down?

God is not waiting for people to check a list of boxes before they are saved. He works through every opportunity we take to share the gospel and show His redemptive love. And He has promised that all who turn to Jesus in faith will be transformed. Expect it!



Expect God to transform lives.

REFLECTIONS

What did Peter and his friends from Joppa learn about God? About Gentiles? About themselves?

Do you regularly expect God to transform lives? Why or why not?

How has God enriched your life and others' lives through a willingness to leave your comfort zone and reach out to those who are different than you?

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

Every single one of us are spiritually

blind until we come into a relationship with Jesus.

And even after we have come into relationship with Jesus,

we need our spiritual eyes continually opened. Throughout history,

God's Spirit has been working to open blind eyes. His ongoing work of

transformation takes place in dark, confusing, hopeless, and unexpected places.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

ACTS 9:1-19

As a way of revealing the truth of the gospel to Saul, God blinded him and then restored his sight.

ISAIAH 42:7,16

God promised the Messiah would bring light into the darkness and give spiritual eyesight.

CLARITY IN THE CONFUSION

ACTS 10:9-16

God gave Peter a shocking vision that served to point him to reasons for gospel inclusion, not exclusion.

1 KINGS 19:10-18

God spoke to Elijah in a whisper to point him to reasons for hope, not despair.

HOPE IN THE HOPELESSNESS

ACTS 10:22

God directed Cornelius to call Peter to his house to hear the gospel message.

1 KINGS 17:8-24

God directed Elijah to go to the widow of Zarephath to receive earthly provision and to reveal God's eternal provision.

JOY IN THE UNEXPECTED

ACTS 10:44-48

God amazed Jewish Christians by demonstrating that the fullness of His salvation is for all people.

RUTH 4:13-17

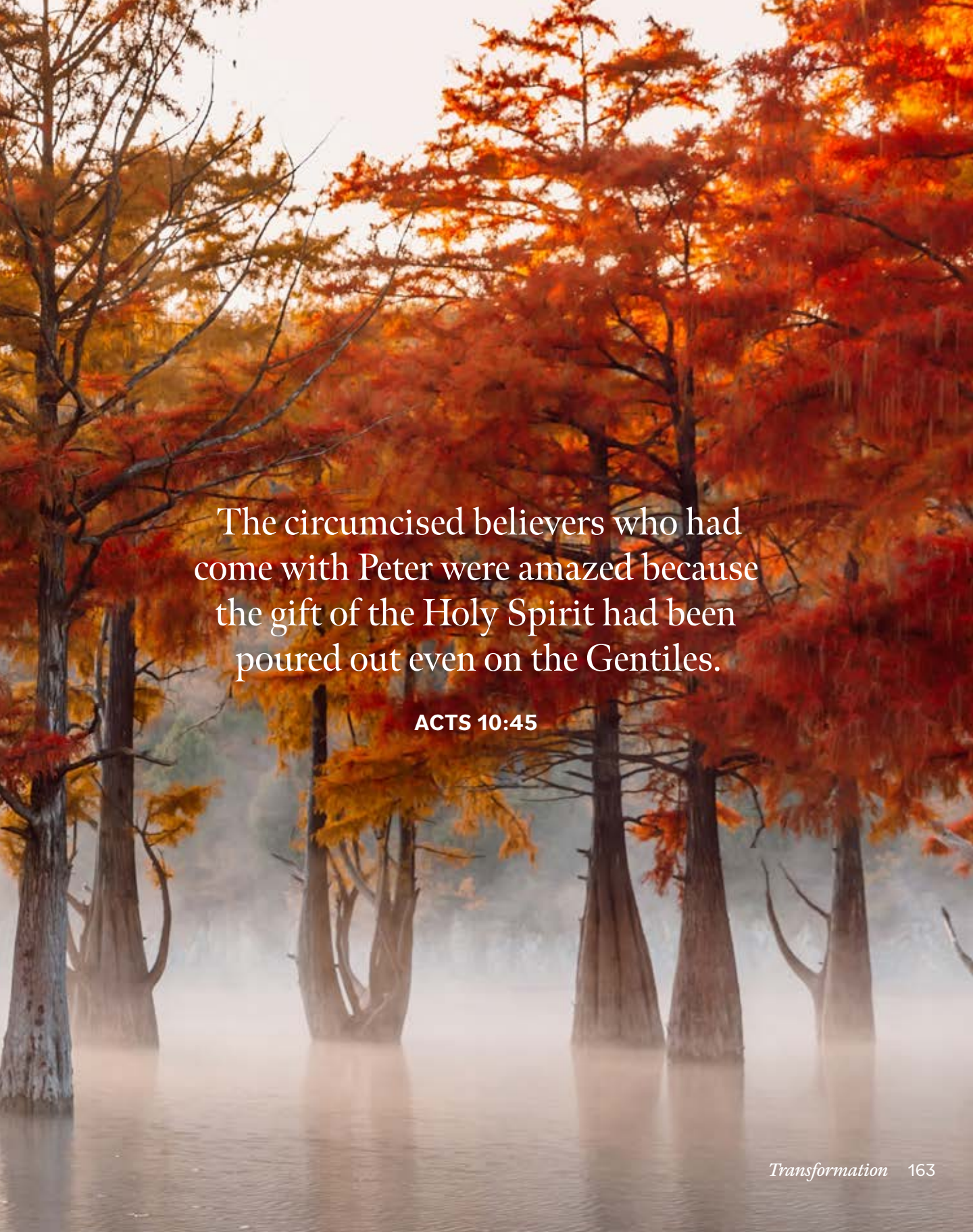
God amazed Naomi and all of Bethlehem by including Ruth the Moabitess in His plans for redemption.

DAY
34

PAUSE & LISTEN

Spend some time reflecting over the week's reading.



A misty swamp with cypress trees and vibrant autumn foliage. The trees have thick, buttressed trunks and are partially submerged in water. The leaves are in various stages of autumn, showing shades of orange, red, and yellow. The background is a soft, hazy mist, creating a serene and atmospheric scene.

The circumcised believers who had
come with Peter were amazed because
the gift of the Holy Spirit had been
poured out even on the Gentiles.

ACTS 10:45

DAY
35

REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on Acts chapters 9-10.

What stuck out to you most in this week's reading? What surprised you? Confused you?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about God and His character?

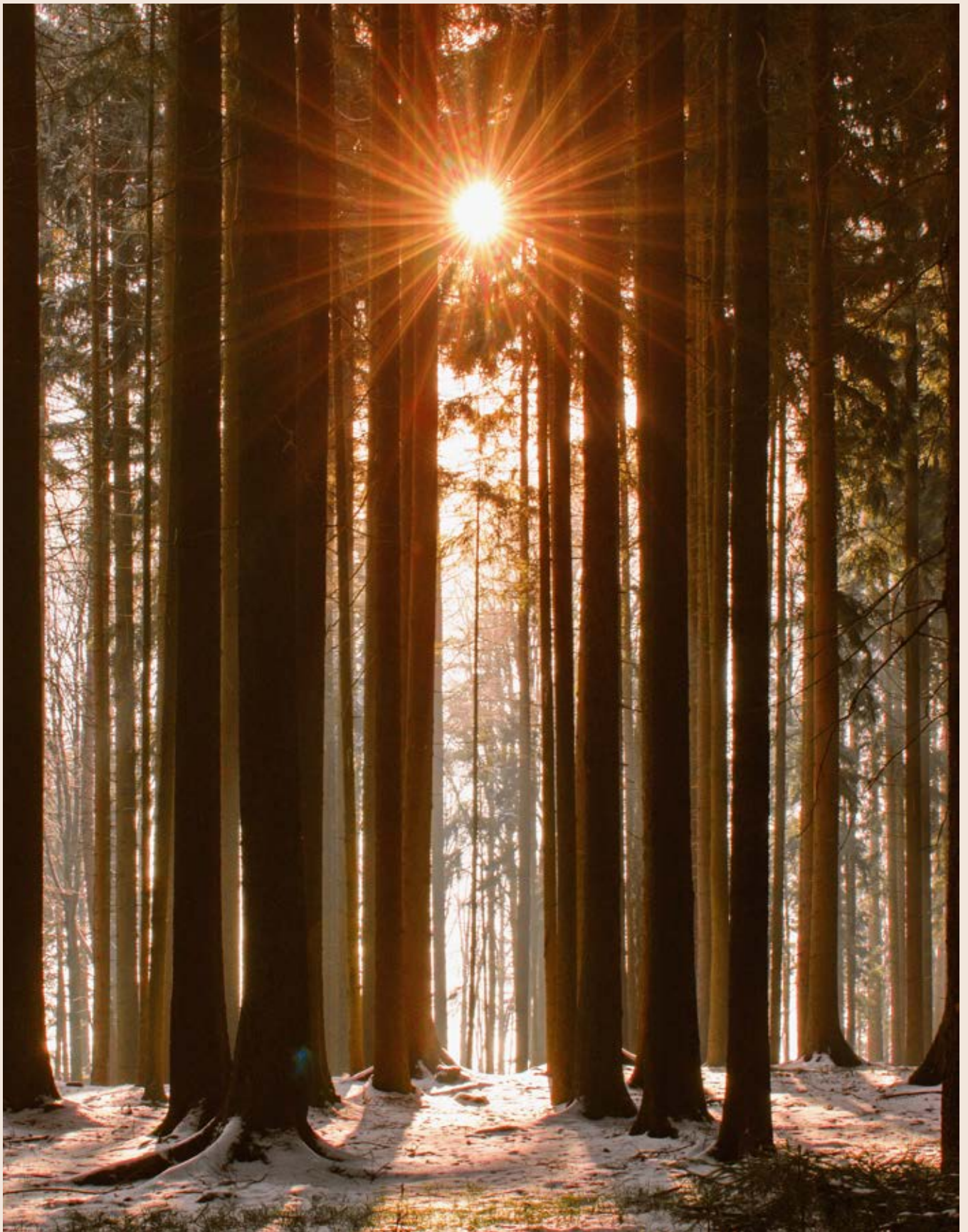
What does this week's Scripture teach you about humanity and our need for grace?

What is an area of your life in which the Spirit has been transforming you lately?
What transformation do you want the Spirit to accomplish in you?

What steps of faith and obedience is God asking you to take through these Scriptures?

PRAY

Thank God for the transformation His Spirit has accomplished in your life. Invite Him to continue the transformational work of turning your deceit into truth, your blindness into sight, your confusion into clarity, your partiality into proclamation, and what is dead in you back to life.



WEEK 6

COURAGE

Be empowered with courage.

Throughout the book of Acts, we read story after story of faithful people doing hard things, and it challenges our spiritual senses.

They preached the gospel to cynics, sold their possessions, and freely shared with each other (Acts 2:14-45). They welcomed new members every day (2:47), embraced their God-given roles with no pretense (3:6), and answered threats of persecution with prayer and proclamation (4:18-31). They didn't ignore sin but revered God (5:3,11). They sought to understand and meet needs within their group (6:1-5). When their enemies were enraged, they fixed their eyes on Jesus (7:54-60). They went where God led them and led Gentiles to faith (8:26-40; 10-11). They extended grace to the man who had been their greatest enemy (9:17,27). And they continued to do all of these things even when facing prison (12).

In other words, these Spirit-filled believers were *marked* by courage. They didn't do one or two courageous things; they faced each and every day empowered by the courage of God's Spirit within them.

And so can we. As New Testament believers, we walk in the fulfillment of what Old Testament saints could only imagine. God told Joshua, "*Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go*" (Joshua 1:9). How much more for those who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them every day? We don't simply take God at His word on the matter, we take the courage of His Spirit who lives in us.

ACTS 11:1-5,11-18

GENTILE SALVATION DEFENDED

11 The apostles and the brothers and sisters who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ²When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, ³saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

⁴Peter began to explain to them step by step, ⁵“I was in the town of Joppa praying, and I saw, in a trance, an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners from heaven, and it came to me.

¹¹At that very moment, three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were. ¹²The Spirit told me to accompany them with no doubts at all. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we went into the man’s house. ¹³He reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, who is also named Peter. ¹⁴He will speak a message to you by which you and all your household will be saved.’

¹⁵“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came down on them, just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷If, then, God gave them the same gift that he also gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I possibly hinder God?”

¹⁸When they heard this they became silent. And they glorified God, saying, “So then, God has given repentance resulting in life even to the Gentiles.”

DAY
36

IN CONFRONTATION

It was one thing for Peter to show up in Caesarea to share a meal with Cornelius in his home. It was another thing entirely for Peter to show up in Jerusalem to explain that story to church members who weren't on board with that decision.

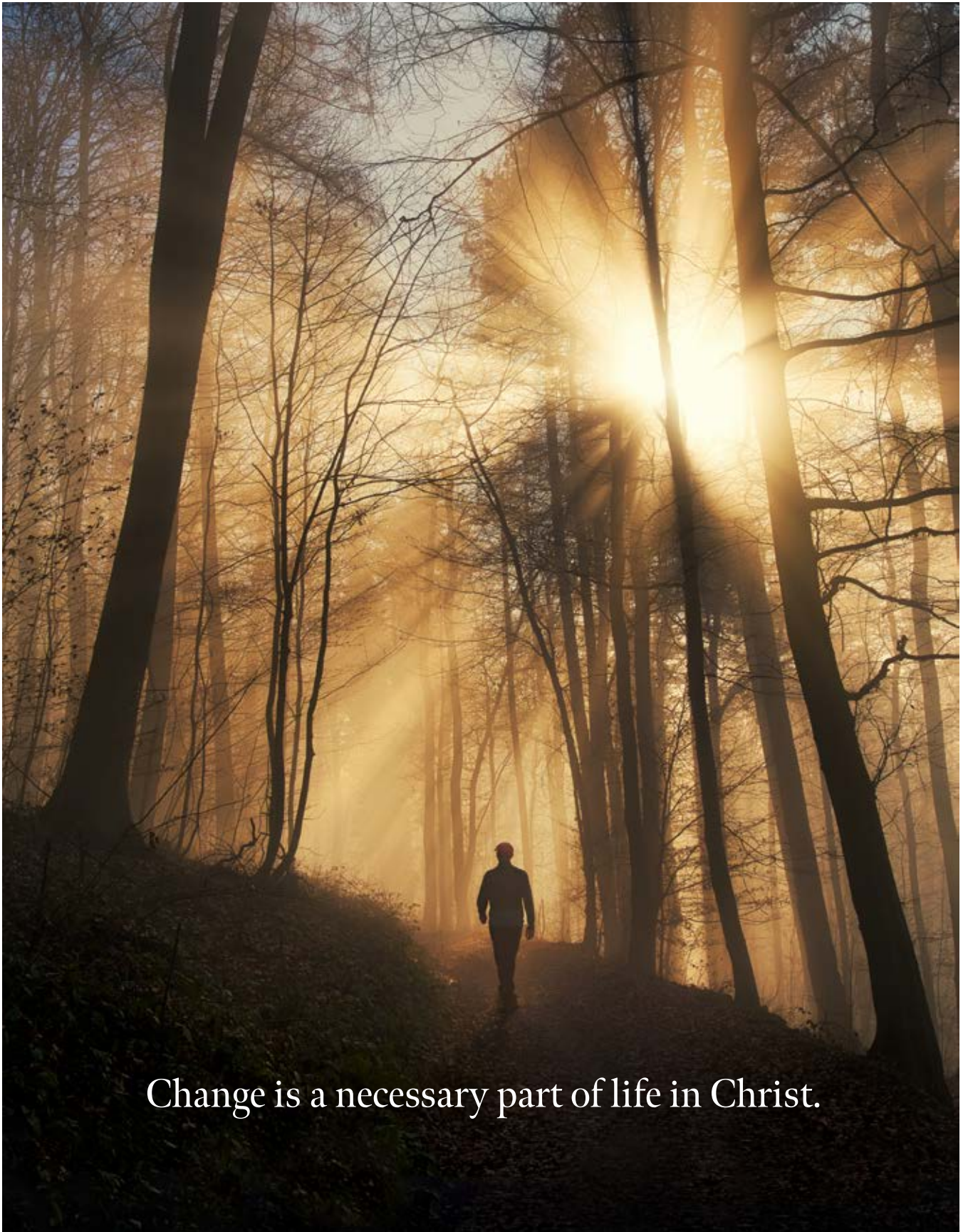
It seems strange. After all, Cornelius and his family had been *saved*. The extraordinary words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 were becoming reality. Gentiles coming to faith meant that the Holy Spirit was empowering the church's witness to the ends of the earth!

But the gospel reaching to the ends of the earth meant that some aspects of church culture, tradition, and individual preferences had to be set aside. And that's hard. It was true for the early church, and it is true for us today.

We settle into a routine of doing church a certain way. Over time, we begin to resist any change to that comfortable routine. We back down from obeying the fullness of the gospel message, or we opt to stick with the status quo.

Peter followed the Spirit's lead and didn't back down from obeying God. And he knew other believers needed to come alongside him in that decision. So, he patiently persuaded them with a careful explanation of Scripture and personal testimony—which turned criticism to silence to an outpouring of praise and glory to God.

Change is hard. It provokes our sensibilities in uncomfortable ways, but it is also a necessary part of life in Christ. The gospel challenges and confronts church culture and personal preferences, *and* the Spirit gives us courage to embrace the change that brings.



Change is a necessary part of life in Christ.

REFLECTIONS

Peter was the leader of the church. Why would he kindly defend and explain himself to these critics?

What is a situation in which you might be criticized for obeying God? How does Acts 11 encourage you in that?

Peter acknowledged that in withholding the gospel from Cornelius's family, he would have "hindered God" (v. 17). What tradition or personal preference of yours might also hinder God? How so?

INSIGHTS

When previously confronted by critics, Peter had not pointed those offended to the truth of the gospel message—he had reacted violently (John 18:10) and denied even knowing Jesus (John 18:15-18,25-27). Now filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter courageously extended grace to his critics by explaining everything to them.

ACTS 11:19-26

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

¹⁹ Now those who had been scattered as a result of the persecution that started because of Stephen made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² News about them reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to travel as far as Antioch. ²³ When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged all of them to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts, ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And large numbers of people were added to the Lord.

²⁵ Then he went to Tarsus to search for Saul, ²⁶ and when he found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught large numbers. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

DAY
37

IN CHANGE

Philip had shared the gospel with an Ethiopian eunuch who trusted in Christ and was baptized. Peter had shared the gospel with a Roman centurion named Cornelius and his family who also trusted in Christ and were baptized. Still, as the church celebrated the spread of the gospel among Gentiles, most continued to share the good news of Jesus only with Jews.

Change is hard. Yet when those changes involve God's kingdom purposes, the Spirit is ready, willing, and able to give us courage to move forward.

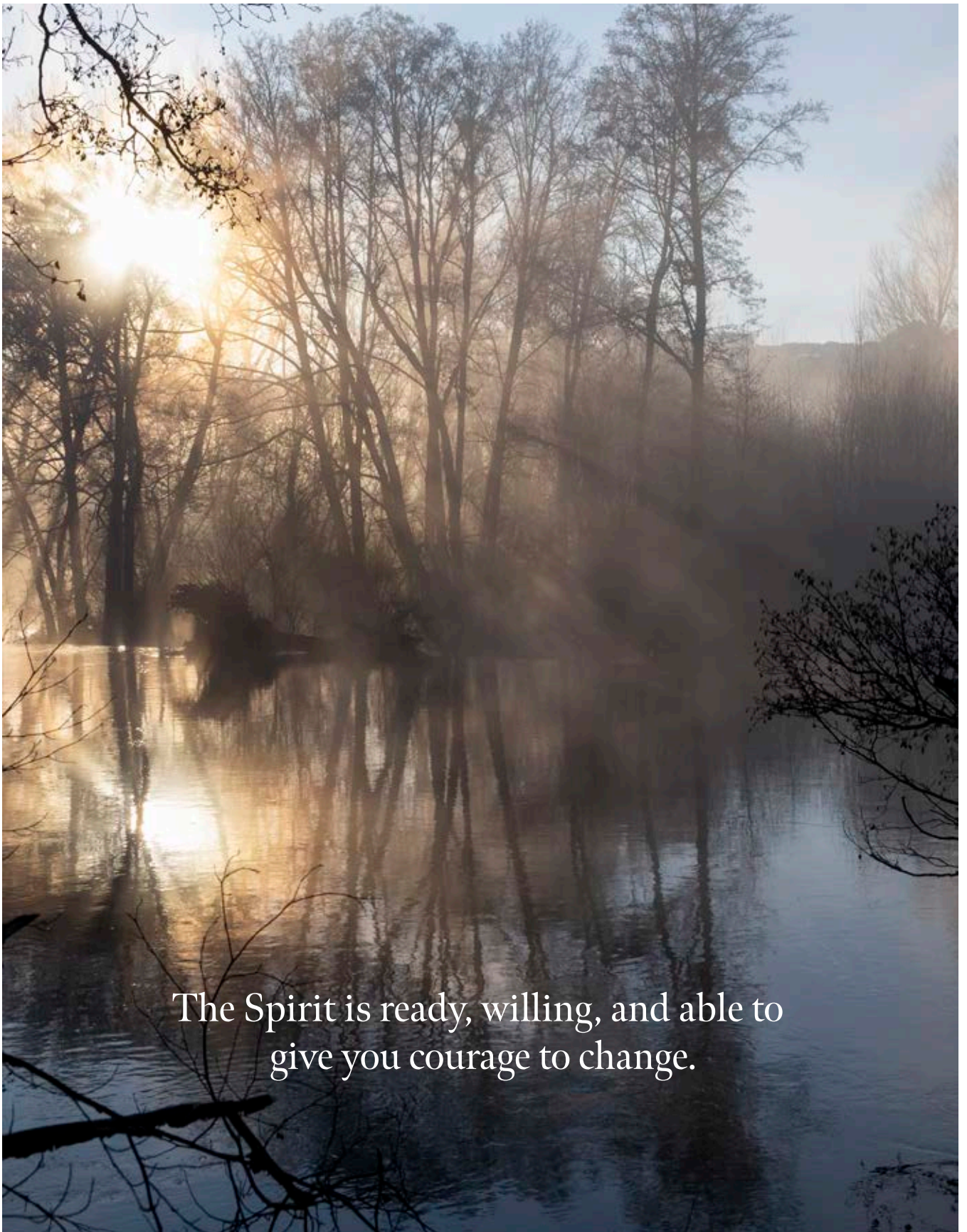
The church in Antioch proved it. The beginnings of that exceptional community of faith are given little attention. All we know is that some, whose names are lost to history, went to Antioch and started sharing the good news of Jesus with the Greeks. In doing so, they made a tremendous impact for the kingdom of Christ.

That we don't know their names instructs us. Ministry is not about us—it's about the Spirit at work in us, through us, and among us.

The work the Spirit was doing in, through, and among those in Antioch was so significant that word got back to Jerusalem. Soon, Barnabas arrived and then Saul. The new believers at Antioch were encouraged, and growth was infectious—not only in numbers but also in their faith as they learned together.

It was during this year-long season of encouragement and growth in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. These Gentiles were so identified with their Savior and His work that people called them "little Christs"—all because some "nobodies" let the Spirit give them courage to embrace change.

That's what happens. When we allow the Spirit to change us and give us courage to relate to others in light of those changes, a chain reaction takes place. Encouragement leads to growth and growth leads to multiplication in the body of Christ.



The Spirit is ready, willing, and able to
give you courage to change.

REFLECTIONS

What encouragement do you find in that history has not remembered the names of the people who started the church at Antioch?

What would it look like for you to be courageous in God's Word even when it goes against the crowd?

What change is spiritual growth now requiring of you?

ACTS 11:27–12:5

FAMINE RELIEF

²⁷In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them, named Agabus, stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine throughout the Roman world. This took place during the reign of Claudius.

²⁹Each of the disciples, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers and sisters who lived in Judea. ³⁰They did this, sending it to the elders by means of Barnabas and Saul.

JAMES MARTYRED AND PETER JAILED

12 About that time King Herod violently attacked some who belonged to the church, ²and he executed James, John's brother, with the sword. ³When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter too, during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴After the arrest, he put him in prison and assigned four squads of four soldiers each to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. ⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was praying fervently to God for him.

IN CALAMITY

The earliest days of church history were marked by rapid growth—but it wasn't easy.

The Christians who lived in those days were having a *time*. They'd been persecuted and scattered and then they got word a famine was coming. To add insult to injury, King Herod decided to pick up where Saul had left off. As Christianity's new self-appointed chief persecutor, he executed James and then threw Peter in prison.

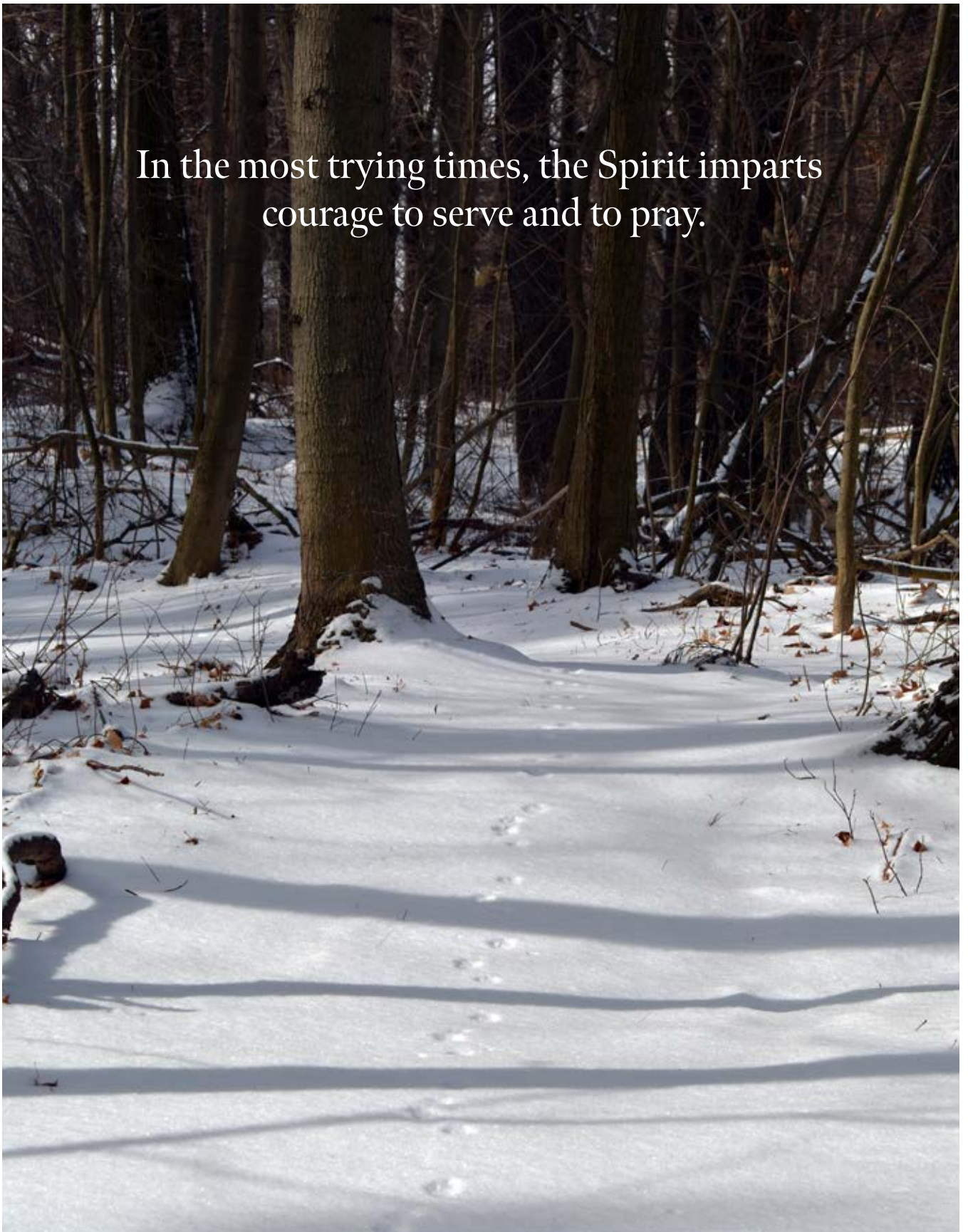
Hearing news of famine could have easily caused believers to turn their focus inward to how they would personally survive. Add the martyrdom of one of their most beloved leaders and the imprisonment of another, and we would certainly understand it if the early Christians became overwhelmed to the point of despair. But that's not what happened.

Instead, the reaction to the coming famine was the corporate effort of every believer determining to serve those around him or her. To the extent any of them had means, they gave. And they reacted to James's execution and Peter's imprisonment with a fervent prayer response, believing together for God to help as only He could.

In what was certainly the most desperate time of their lives, the body of Christ did not strategize a solution around politics, human interest, or the combined efforts of the most gifted personalities among them. There were no boycotts or demonstrations in the streets. They simply came together in unity to serve one another and pray.

Their reality can be ours today. In our most trying or difficult circumstances, the Spirit wants to direct our hearts toward the truth of the gospel. If we will turn to Him, He will help us fix our eyes on Jesus. He will shift our hearts and minds from a focus of self-preservation to a focus of service to and prayer for others. He will fill us with courage to rest singularly in Him.

In the most trying times, the Spirit imparts
courage to serve and to pray.



REFLECTIONS

How do the disciples' responses to the calamities they faced challenge you (11:29; 12:5)?

Why might God have allowed such desperate situations in the lives of the early believers?

Why might God allow a desperate situation in your life? (See 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 1 Peter 1:6-7.)

CONNECTING THE STORY

James and Peter were not the first to experience the wrath of Herodian power. Herod Agrippa I was the nephew of Antipas who had murdered John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12), and the grandson of Herod the Great who massacred all baby boys born in and around Bethlehem after Jesus's birth (Matthew 2).

Prayer

When facing circumstances that involve confrontation, change, calamity, confusion, or corruption, where do you turn for help? We see in this week's reading prayer was the first resort in the lives of the first Christians. Prayer is also identified throughout the New Testament as a vital part of the Spirit-led life. Learning to see this helps us understand the extraordinary deeds we read about in Acts, and to understand the indwelling Spirit better.

When you don't know what to pray . . .

The Spirit intercedes, helping and teaching you in ways you cannot perceive on your own.

ACTS 11:12-16; ROMANS 8:26-27

When you are uncertain if a message is from the Lord . . .

The Spirit will remind you what God has taught you

ACTS 11:12,16; JOHN 14:26; 16:13

and will bear witness to the truth of His Word.

ACTS 11:15; JOHN 15:26

When you're in an impossible situation . . .

The Spirit moves with great power and produces unimaginable results.

ACTS 2:4; 12:3-10; JAMES 5:13-18; ROMANS 8:2-4

When your faith is wavering . . .

The Spirit is faithful to answer and transform you.

ACTS 12:12-16; 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18; MARK 9:21-25

ACTS 12:6-17

PETER RESCUED

⁶When Herod was about to bring him out for trial, that very night Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while the sentries in front of the door guarded the prison. ⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. Striking Peter on the side, he woke him up and said, "Quick, get up!" And the chains fell off his wrists. ⁸"Get dressed," the angel told him, "and put on your sandals." And he did. "Wrap your cloak around you," he told him, "and follow me." ⁹So he went out and followed, and he did not know that what the angel did was really happening, but he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰After they passed the first and second guards, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened to them by itself. They went outside and passed one street, and suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's grasp and from all that the Jewish people expected." ¹²As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was called Mark, where many had assembled and were praying. ¹³He knocked at the door of the outer gate, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴She recognized Peter's voice, and because of her joy, she did not open the gate but ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the outer gate.

¹⁵"You're out of your mind!" they told her. But she kept insisting that it was true, and they said, "It's his angel." ¹⁶Peter, however, kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were amazed.

¹⁷Motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. "Tell these things to James and the brothers," he said, and he left and went to another place.

IN CONFUSION

Most of us would struggle to sleep well the night before an event that would decide our fate. Yet, the night before his sentencing, chained between two soldiers in prison, Peter slept.

He didn't know what would happen when he faced Herod. He did know what had just happened to James in a similar situation (Acts 12:2). But no matter the outcome, Peter trusted God.

He was ready for Herod's worst. So, when light appeared in his cell, an angel nudged his side, and chains fell off his wrists, Peter thought he was dreaming.

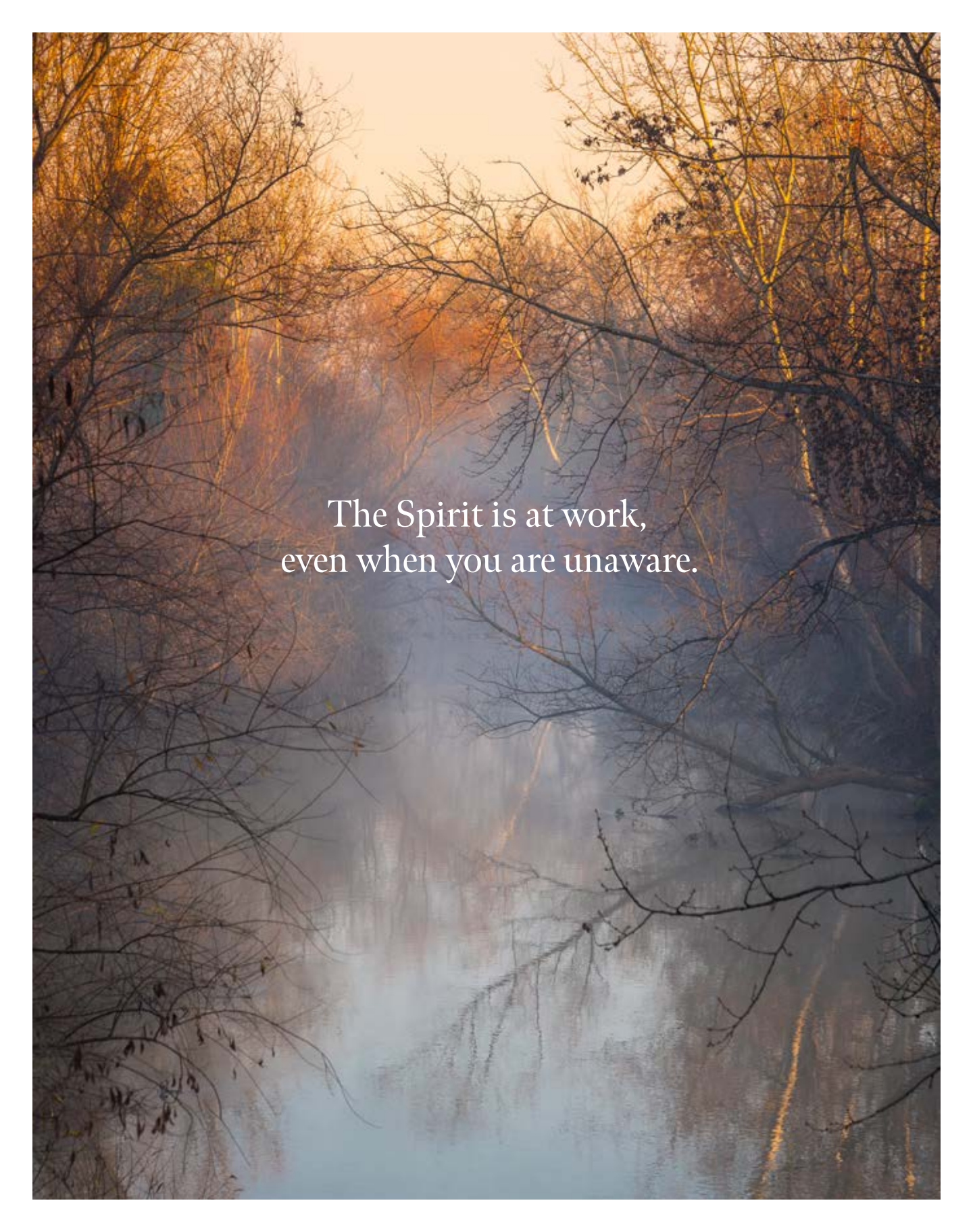
Yet, in that confused state, Peter did exactly what the angel told him to do.

It wasn't until he had gotten dressed and followed the angel past the guards and through the prison gate that Peter fully woke and realized that God had delivered him from the terrible outcome everyone had expected.

At the same time, a group of believers had gathered to pray. We don't know what they were praying specifically, but we know they were also confused. When Peter knocked on the door, no one believed it was him.

In the power of the Spirit, confusion and faithfulness are not mutually exclusive. Peter thought he was dreaming *and* he followed the angel's instructions. These friends had doubts *and* they gathered to pray. They prayed *and* they were amazed that God answered as He did.

Can you relate? Sometimes, we don't know how God is working until after His work is accomplished. Sometimes, He answers before we know to ask. Other times, He answers contrary to our asks. But through it all, we can think and act as people of hope, because His sovereignty will never fail. He is at work in the details, even when we are completely unaware.

A photograph of a misty forest scene. The foreground is dominated by the dark, intricate branches of bare trees, some of which are reflected in a calm body of water below. The background is a soft, hazy landscape of more trees, with a warm, golden light filtering through the mist, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

The Spirit is at work,
even when you are unaware.

REFLECTIONS

Why might Peter think what was happening was simply a vision and not a real occurrence?
Why would the praying believers think an angel stood at the door instead of Peter?

Why should we expect God to work in surprising ways, even today?

How can you be faithful to God when you are confused about what He is doing in a situation?

INSIGHTS

Two men named James are mentioned in Acts 12. The James identified in verse 2 was John's brother, who we read about in the gospel accounts. He was one of the twelve disciples during Jesus's earthly ministry. The James mentioned in verse 17 was Jesus's brother, who became a believer after the resurrection, became a leader in the Jerusalem church, and wrote the New Testament letter that bears his name.⁵

ACTS 12:18-25

¹⁸ At daylight, there was a great commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ After Herod had searched and did not find him, he interrogated the guards and ordered their execution. Then Herod went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

HEROD'S DEATH

²⁰ Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. Together they presented themselves before him. After winning over Blastus, who was in charge of the king's bedroom, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food from the king's country. ²¹ On an appointed day, dressed in royal robes and seated on the throne, Herod delivered a speech to them. ²² The assembled people began to shout, "It's the voice of a god and not of a man!" ²³ At once an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give the glory to God, and he was eaten by worms and died.

²⁴ But the word of God spread and multiplied. ²⁵ After they had completed their relief mission, Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem, taking along John who was called Mark.

DAY
40

IN CORRUPTION

At the beginning of Acts 12, King Herod tried to establish his earthly authority by persecuting the church. He had James executed with a sword. He imprisoned Peter. Then, after God delivered Peter from prison and Herod couldn't find him, he ordered the execution of the sixteen men who had guarded the prison that night. From there, Herod moved quickly, continuing his quest to build himself up as the world's greatest authority.

As surely as God is at work, evil continues.

As evil continues, God's people might be tempted to believe God is not in control. But the last three verses of Acts 12 assure us, He is.

James had been martyred, Peter had been imprisoned, and believers lived under the constant threat of persecution—and God was in control. When Herod, seated on a throne in royal robes, delivered a speech that had his audience attributing deity to him, he reveled in the glory—and in that very moment, God struck him down in horrific fashion.

And as wicked Herod both lived and died, the church continued to thrive.

There is nothing that can separate those who are filled by God's Spirit from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). No matter what corruption exists in earthly authority, God's Spirit moves among His people—nothing can prevent that reality.

Yes, evil will continue on this sin-cursed earth until Jesus returns. At the very same time, the Word of God will spread and multiply in places where believers take courage to faithfully continue in His kingdom work, no matter what.

Nothing can prevent the Spirit
from moving in your life.



REFLECTIONS

Considering verses 18-23, how do you explain verses 24-25?

Do you expect the Spirit to move in and among the community of faith today? Why should you?

Considering the corruption you see in the world today, what would it look like for you to courageously remain faithful to God?

INSIGHTS

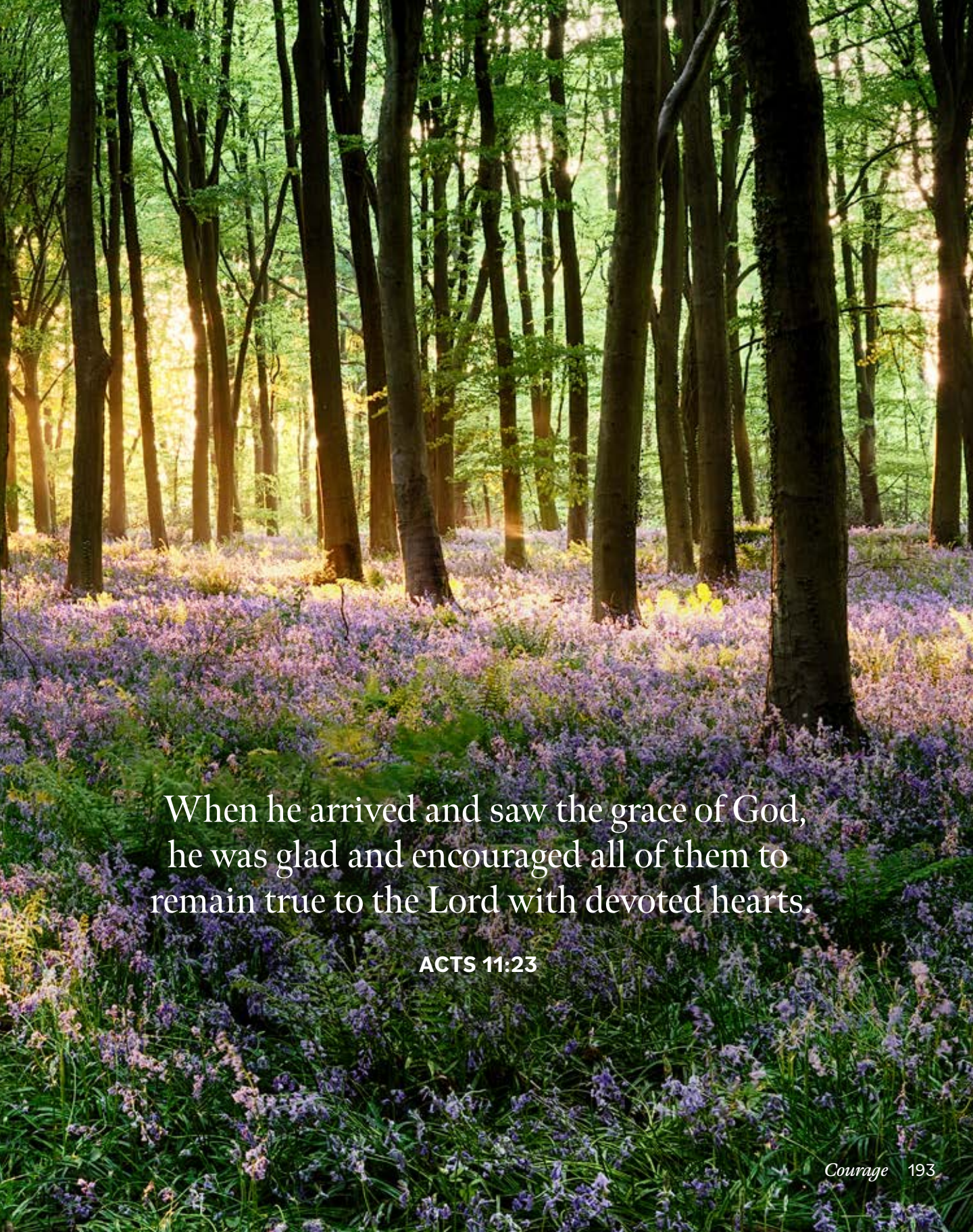
In Acts 12, Luke revealed three different purposes of angels on earth: deliverance (vv. 7-10), guardianship (v. 15), and death (v. 23). These messengers of God were present at the creation of the world and at Jesus's birth (Luke 2:13-15). While we don't know all the ways angels minister to God's children, we can know and believe that they do minister His will (Psalm 103:21).⁶

DAY
41

PAUSE & LISTEN

Spend some time reflecting over the week's reading.





When he arrived and saw the grace of God,
he was glad and encouraged all of them to
remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts.

ACTS 11:23



REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on Acts 11-12.

What stuck out to you most in this week's reading? What surprised you? Confused you?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about God and His character?

What does this week's Scripture teach you about humanity and our need for grace?

In what situation of confrontation, change, calamity, confusion, or corruption do you need to live in the courage of the Holy Spirit?

What steps of faith and obedience is God asking you to take through these Scriptures?

PRAY

Think about the situations in which you need courage, whether in facing confrontation, change, calamity, confusion, or corruption. Thank God for His Spirit who indwells you and fills you with courage to obey in all things. Ask Him to make His courage a reality in your life, so others will see and know the reality of life in Jesus Christ.

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

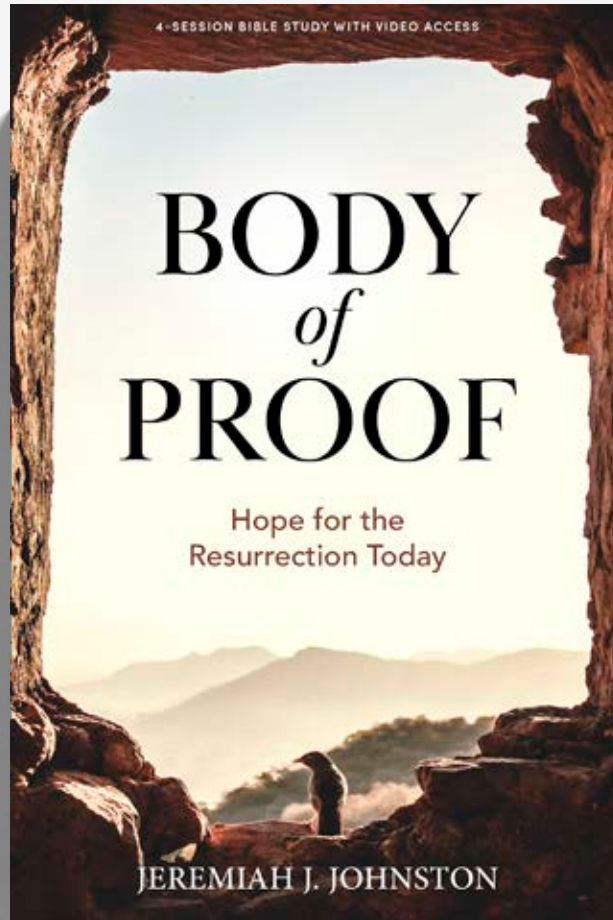
- Cover Sheshagiri KM, *Person standing in forest, Dandeli, India, Unsplash*
- 9 Stephanie Klepacki, *Morning sun and fog, Unsplash*
- 16 Toby Wong, *Morning mist, Tactic, Guatemala, Unsplash*
- 22 Wirestock, *Sun rays falling on a forest, Getty Images*
- 26 Dave Hoefler, *Foggy forests of Snoqualmie Pass, Kittitas County, Washington, United States, Unsplash*
- 32 Casey Horner, *Forest near Oregon, Unsplash*
- 36 Stephanie Klepacki, *Sun shining through the trees, Unsplash*
- 40 Kalee McLaughlin, *Light rays hit the forest floor, Getty Images*
- 42 Syed Ali, *Trees of Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka, India, Unsplash*
- 46 Stewart Watson, *Majestic giant redwoods in New Zealand, Getty Images*
- 52 Sandsun, *Stream in the forest in Rhodope Mountains near Devin, Bulgaria, Getty Images*
- 56 Venti Views, *Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, Crescent City, California, Unsplash*
- 62 Hackisan, *Long and mossy tree trunk, Germany, Getty Images*
- 66 Sydney Moore, *A bench in the forest, Unsplash*
- 70 ImagoDens, *Giant sequoia trees in Redwood National Park, Getty Images*
- 72 Bartfett, *Sunrise in Redwoods National Park, California, Getty Images*
- 76 Jeremy Bishop, *Sun light passing through tree, California, Unsplash*
- 82 Veeterzy, *Green leafed tree, Pexels*
- 86 Mazzzur, *Amazing banyan tree, Getty Images*
- 90 Felix Mittermeier, *Tree with crawling roots, Pexels*
- 94 Kridsada Krongmuang, *Giant Bodhi tree in Thailand, Shutterstock*

- 100 Dimas Pradipa, *Potted plant with stones*, Pexels
- 102 Soniabonet, *Ficus benjamina tree on a foggy day in Spain*, Getty Images
- 106 Derumka, *Aerial view of the autumn forest*, Shutterstock
- 112 Paul Aniszewski, *Early autumn beech forest in the fog*, Shutterstock
- 116 N K, *Sun rays pouring through trees to forest floor*, Shutterstock
- 120 Stone36, *Mysterious footpath in the foggy autumnal forest*, Shutterstock
- 124 Andreiuc88, *Roots of a tree in a foggy forest*, Shutterstock
- 128 Vladimir Mulder, *Autumn city park at night in fog*, Shutterstock
- 132 Teo Tarras, *Forest in autumn with fog*, Shutterstock
- 136 Den Belitsky, *Low clouds at sunrise in autumn in Ukraine*, Getty Images
- 142 Nikolay Zaborskikh, *Fallen autumn leaves by a forest creek*, Shutterstock
- 146 Patrick001, *Autumn landscape near Zlatna, Poland*, Getty Images
- 150 Kovaleva_Ka, *Beech tree in autumn forest*, Shutterstock
- 154 Image Source Pink, *Autumn tree reflected on a lake*, Getty Images
- 158 Brum, *Beautiful little cascade waterfall in autumn forest*, Shutterstock
- 162 Nuture, *Swamp cypresses with fog and morning sunshine*, Getty Images
- 166 Tunatura, *Beautiful winter forest with sunset, Czech Republic*, Getty Images
- 172 Smileus, *Sun rays in a winter forest with a hiker, Germany*, Getty Images
- 176 Mario Elias Munoz Valencia, *Misty winter riverbank, Spain*, Getty Images
- 180 Carol Hamilton, *Coyote foot prints in the woods*, Getty Images
- 186 Gatsi, *Morning fog on the river Pinios, Larisa, Greece*, Getty Images
- 190 Eugene Nekrasov, *Green sprout among fallen leaves at sunset*, Getty Images
- 192 Simotion, *Path through bluebell woods at sunrise*, Getty Images
- 204 Steven Kamenar, *Illuminated woods*, Unsplash

ENDNOTES

1. Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, vol. 5, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 3–4.
2. Stanley E. Porter, “Acts,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blub and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1715.
3. Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, vol. 5, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 3.
4. Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, vol. 5, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 14.
5. Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, vol. 5, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 201.
6. Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, vol. 5, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 201.

DID IT REALLY HAPPEN?



The single most important fact of the Christian faith is that Jesus isn't dead. Yet outside of a few days each year, we don't spend a lot of time contemplating His resurrection. In this four-session Bible study, we'll look back on that incredible weekend. We'll see why we can trust in the resurrection of Jesus as a historical fact and place our hope in Him to save us and others.

lifeway.com/bodyofproof

Step into God's beautiful story.



Storyteller is a Bible study series uniquely designed to be inviting, intuitive, and interactive. Each volume examines a key theme or story in a book of the Bible. Every week includes five days of short Scripture reading, a daily thought explaining each passage, a short list of questions for a group Bible study, and space for you to write down your discoveries. And new volumes are being added every year.

Learn more online or call 800.458.2772.
lifeway.com/storyteller



FOUNDATIONS

A 260-DAY BIBLE READING PLAN FOR BUSY BELIEVERS

ROBBY & KANDI GALLATY

REPLICOTE

FOUNDATIONS

NEW TESTAMENT

A 260-DAY BIBLE READING PLAN FOR BUSY BELIEVERS

LATY
AFLEUR

BIBLE READING PLAN FOR GROUPS

FOUNDATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

A 260-DAY BIBLE READING PLAN FOR BUSY BELIEVERS

ROBBY & KANDI GALLATY

REPLICOTE

Manageable one-year plans for Bible reading

Foundations gives you a one-year Bible reading plan that requires just five days of study per week to fit your busy schedule. It includes daily devotional material. And through the HEAR journaling method, you'll learn how to Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond to passages, allowing for practical application.

Foundations

Study key passages of the Bible in one year, while still having the flexibility of reading five days per week.

005769893 \$14.99

Foundations: New Testament

Read and reflect on the New Testament in one year with this reading and devotional guide.

005810327 \$14.99

Foundations: Old Testament

Read through the story of the Old Testament in one year using this manageable five-day-per-week plan.

005831469 \$14.99

lifeway.com/foundations

Learn more online or call 800.458.2772.

To the ends of the earth

The first chapter of Acts reveals Jesus's last words to His disciples before He ascended into heaven: ". . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." — Acts 1:8 (CSB)



The remaining chapters tell the story of what happened when the Holy Spirit showed up and empowered the mission of the church. It was a miraculous spread of the gospel—all fueled by a Spirit-empowered boldness and passion that is still available to all disciples of Jesus Christ.

This six-session Bible study is designed to help you:

- Learn about the first Christian community
- Become familiar with an important New Testament book
- See the mission of God expand from Jerusalem across the world



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

eBOOK

Includes the content of this printed book but offers the convenience and flexibility that come with mobile technology.

005848249 **\$19.99**

More Storyteller resources can be found online at lifeway.com/storyteller

Price and availability subject to change without notice.

