BECOMING AN ACTS 2
PERSON, FAMILY, CHURCH, COMMUNITY

The Book of Acts is the continued story of Christ's ministry following on from the Gospels, but particularly the Gospel of Luke. It's title, "Acts" causes us to wonder whether Luke intended to mean, *the Acts of the Church*, or *the Acts of the Holy Spirit*. Both titles are accurate. But it is equally true that the Book of Acts describes not just *any* acts of the Holy Spirit, but particularly acts that *transformed people, families, churches and communities*. To transform communities, Christ had to establish transformed churches. To transform churches, Christ had to transform families. To transform families, Christ had to transform individuals. The opening two chapters lay the foundation for the rest of the book, but it is particularly the last few verses of Acts 2 that describe the principles for which the Holy Spirit would the Christ's transformation of the world.

CONNECTING & REFLECTING

(i) What is one thing you can thank God for in the last week?

(ii) Who have you shared with about what you learned in our last study?

(iii) Which three people are you praying for to come to Christ?

A TRANSFORMED PERSON

CONNECTING & REFLECTING

(i) What is one thing you can thank God for in the last week?

(ii) Who have you shared with about what you learned in our last study?

(iii) Which three people are you praying for to come to Christ?

1. How does Acts 1:8 show that the Christ intended to transform the world with His Gospel?

_____

2. Based on Acts 1:8, how did Christ plan to transform the world and how was He going to help them to do this?

_____

The first believers obeyed the instructions of Jesus to wait *together* and pray for the promise of Acts 1:8 to be fulfilled. They waited. They prayed. They sought God for the 'baptism with the Holy Spirit'. Have you waited, prayed, and sought God for the promised Baptism with the Holy Spirit?

What's worth noting in Acts 1 is the importance of the individual. After Judas had departed, it was necessary to appoint another *individual* to take his place (Matthias). Individuals matter to God. You matter to God. God's plan and purpose for the world rests with individuals, just like you.

3. What does Acts 1 teach us about God?

_____

Peter, A Transformed Individual

4. Describe in your own words what happened in Acts 2:1-13 -

_____

_____

5. Read Acts 2:14. How does this Peter differ from the Peter we read of in the Gospels particularly toward the end of the Gospels?

_____

6. What can we attribute this transformation in Peter to?

_____

The Holy Spirit's transformation of the believer into the person God has destined them to be is shaped not merely by His infilling presence. Notice Peter's ability to quote from memory a passage from the Book of Joel to begin his sermon in Acts 2. Peter was not only filled with the Spirit of God - *he was filled also with the Word of God*. True spiritual and character transformation is shaped by both the leading of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

7. In what way does Acts 2:17 sum up the Spirit-filled believer's appeal to the non-believer?

_____

The hallmark of a Spirit-filled believer's transformation is their passion for the lost to come to know Christ. The Spirit leads them to pray earnestly that souls may be saved. The Spirit leads them to eagerly bear witness to others of what Christ has done in their life.

8. How does Acts 2:38 lay the foundation for the individual's life-long transformation by the Holy Spirit?

_____

9. Note what is required of a convert to Christ in Acts 2:38. Are these requirements necessary to also continue following Christ? If not, why not? If so, how?

_____

10. How aware do you feel the average follower of Christ is of their need to repent as they seek to follow Christ? Explain your impression.

_____

11. What aspects of individual transformation looked at in this study will you seek to develop with Spirit's help this coming week?

_____

Amen.

A TRANSFORMED FAMILY

CONNECTING & REFLECTING

(i) What is one thing you can thank God for in the last week?

(ii) Who have you shared with about what you learned in our last study?

(iii) Which three people are you praying for to come to Christ?

God has created us to be in community and in particular, a family. God has designed that we are raised by our father and mother who have committed themselves through marriage to each other for life. As the promised Holy Spirit is being poured out on the Day of Pentecost and thousands of individual lives were transformed from that day till this, we also see that God's intention was to transform families as well.

1. How does Acts 2:17 reveal that God's intention for the Holy Spirit's outpouring involved transforming families not just individuals?

_____

2. Note Peter's statement in Acts 2:38-39 about the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Some people argue that the Baptism with the Holy Spirit was only a once-off event. But how does this verse refute that and also how does it reveal God's intention for the Holy Spirit to transform families?

_____

3. Since the transforming work of the Holy Spirit is intended to transform parents as well as their children, what responsibility do believing parents have toward their children?

_____

God wants every child to come to know Him. Some Christian parents *hope* that this will happen without any effort to improve the chances of it happening. God expects parents to teach and train their children about God and His ways - but above all, to model what knowing and loving God looks like. This parental responsibility can not be delegated to a school, Children's ministry, Youth Group, or a church.

4. In what ways does Acts 2:42 suggest that parents were to shape the home-life of their children?

_____

5. According Acts 2:46, the early church met in two fashions. What were these different ways the church met together? What might the effect of this been upon children?

Even if you're *not* a parent, when you attend church or a Home Group of the church, often there are children observing you. The way you worship, participate, listen, pray, and fellowship tells children a lot about God! When a child not only observes their parents, but other adults, minimising their distractions (turning phones off or not bringing them into church) enthusiastically worshipping God, participating in the church's rituals, praying passionately, listening attentively and responsively, and fellowshipping in a caring and sensitive way, they form a positive view about the relevance of God. This opens up a child's heart to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

6. What do we observe about the early church's position on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of new converts based on Acts 8:14-18?

Philip, whose evangelistic efforts led to the revival in Samaria, was originally chosen as a deacon to help care for widows who didn't have families to care for them (Acts 6:1-5; also note 1Tim. 5:3-16). He would later marry, settle down, and have a family of four daughters.

7. What do we know of Philip's four daughters and what does this suggest to us of their home-life? (Acts 21:8-9)

The early church initially met in family homes. The leaders of these house churches were required to be men who led their families spiritually with well behaved children (1Tim. 3:4, see also Roman 16:5-15).

8. How do the following Acts references show that God intends to transforms entire families? (Acts 11:14; 16:15, 31; 18:8)

Parents should teach their children about God and His Word. But they should also pray for their children's transformation by the Holy Spirit and foster in them a desire to be filled with, led by , empowered from, and baptised in the Holy Spirit. Our children and our families should be communities of Christ-honouring support.

Amen.

A TRANSFORMED CHURCH

CONNECTING & REFLECTING

(i) What is one thing you can thank God for in the last week?

(ii) Who have you shared with about what you learned in our last study?

(iii) Which three people are you praying for to come to Christ?

The transforming work of the Holy Spirit impacts individuals by taking them from a life of sinful selfishness to a life where they are surrendered to Christ and led by the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther was striving to be right with God. He entered a monastery and became a monk. He underwent rigorous disciplines to live a holy life. He kept a whip over his bedroom door for flogging himself every time he sinned. Yet he kept sinning. He later said that if you had knocked at the door of his heart and it opened to you, there you would have found Martin Luther seated with his garment of hair, shaved crown of his head, and whip over his door. But after his conversion to Christ if you had knocked at the door of his heart and entered you would find none but Christ enthroned! How has Jesus Christ transformed your life?

The Holy Spirit transforms families. He elevates mothers and fathers to the sacred charge of caring for, leading, protecting, teaching and training their children so that they willingly volunteer themselves to be servants of Christ and His Church.

There is tale told of an English country church in the 1800s that had grown cold. The author calls it, "The Wesley Church". Sin had pervaded the small congregation in two of its most insidious forms: *worldliness*, and *self-righteousness*. It's new minister was a 25 year old man wise beyond his years. He began to teach on Second Corinthians 4:1-7. As he taught about the light of God, he showed that this light exposed worldliness, but he also noted that this light was displayed in "earthen vessels". Those who had the light of God's salvation, were not the light, they were simply the lantern (earthen vessel) of that light. The effect of this ministry was that those trapped in worldliness (drunkenness, fornication in particular) made a public confession to the church and repented. Those in the death-grip of self-righteousness were empowered to confess publicly their hypocrisy and repent while asking the church for forgiveness. The tale goes on to tell that the entire village was deeply impacted. No longer did they sense that the congregation of Wesley Church were looking down at them. One of the repentants said that he previously scorned the village atheist, but he now looked at him with compassion and understanding. It wasn't too long before that atheist was in the Wesley Church Sunday by Sunday worshiping the God he had vainly protested against.

1. What lessons can we see in Acts 2:42-47 for a church today?

_____

_____

2. What do we learn about the value of the church meeting in small groups as well as together in the larger congregation from Acts 2:42-47?

---

3. Based on Acts 2:42-47, what was the role of the original church leaders and how does this compare to what we expect of "pastors" today?

---

4. Reading on in Acts 6, the church was forced to add leaders. Why? What was their role? Why weren't the apostles expected to do this role? What lessons from this can we apply today for a church?

---

5. How was the efforts of the first Church a *partnership* with the Holy Spirit based on Acts 2:43?

---

6. How should we, the church, partner with the Holy Spirit today?

Being a "Spirit-led" church involves attention to the Word of God and prayer (note Acts 6:4). This must be the primary dual role of a pastor who leads a church. But Acts 2 shows us that the church was able to provide practical and physical support to each member through meeting in homes where believers could pool and share their gifts (note Romans 12:4-6).

7. How was the church in Revelation 3:15 described? What might that have looked like? How can this condition be avoided by a church?

The Holy Spirit wants to transform every church into a community of fully devoted, caring, gifted believers who reach out, worship well and hunger to know God. His transforming work takes place as the church meets together in small groups *and* together in the larger congregation. Let's be a Holy Spirit transformed church!

Amen.

A TRANSFORMED COMMUNITY

CONNECTING & REFLECTING

(i) What is one thing you can thank God for in the last week?

(ii) Who have you shared with about what you learned in our last study?

(iii) Which three people are you praying for to come to Christ?

The Holy Spirit transforms individuals, families, churches, and communities. The story in Acts 2 of the birth of the Church does not present the goal of the Holy Spirit's work in our world to merely save people who group together to form a local church. The vision of God for mankind is much bigger. Much. What God was doing in the Church of Acts 2 had an immediate impact on their community (Jerusalem) and was eventually felt in every part of the Empire (note Colossians 1:5-6, 23). Wherever a church ceases to regard itself as an agent of the Holy Spirit for bringing transformation to its broader community, it runs the risk of becoming irrelevant.

1. What was Christ's warning to the church in Revelation 3:1-3?

   _____

   What might have led to this warning being given?

   _____

2. How did Christ describe His followers in Matthew 5:13-14, and what might this cause Him to expect of His Church?

   _____

From history we can see that whenever God's people ceased to care about their communities, and not *shine their light*, the world around them got darker (note Psalm 74:20). For example, when Israel went deeper into idolatry, around 700BC, God's Word of Warning was fulfilled about them being "vomited out of the land" (Lev. 18:28) when the Assyrians came and exiled them from their land - never to return. About a hundred years later when Judah had ceased to walk with God and be "a light to the nations" (note Isa. 49:6; Acts 13:47). Interestingly, it was in this period that several world religions began including Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, and Hinduism. Also interestingly, when the Church ceased to shine its light in what is now aptly referred to as "the Dark Ages", Islam commenced.

3. How should Christ's statement in John 17:14-16 be understood as it relates to how involved we get in our "world"?

Wherever a church has had a vibrant and fruitful witness to it's community, it has led to community transformation. Where God's people, the agents of the Holy Spirit, have not displayed the light of Christ to their dark world, divorce has run rampant (Mal. 2:16); violence has increased (Gen. 6:11), greed and corruption go unchecked (Jer. 22:17), and the vulnerable are oppressed (Ezek. 22:29). When a nation is blighted by corruption of officials, crime, and family-breakdown, chances are high that the Church has retreated. Some people think that the world is getting darker - but how much darker would it be if there were no churches bearing a prophetic-evangelistic light to their communities?

4. Read Acts 19:10-20. How does this passage show that the Holy Spirit's transformation of a community was genuine?

5. Why do you feel that some churches do *not* have a vision to see their communities transformed?

A local church does not have to be perfect before it can reach out. But it's witness to its community is made all the more persuasive and effective by its conformity to what the Bible describes for the church.

6. Note the qualities of a Biblical church from these Scriptures -

(John 13:35)

(John 17:21)

(Eph. 4:1-3)

(Eph. 4:11-12)

(Heb. 13:1-7, 17)

The Holy Spirit wants to transform our community so that Christ is honoured, His commands are known and respected (Matt. 28:18-20), vulnerable people are not oppressed (James 1:27), people are hospitable toward each other, marriage and family are valued (Heb. 13:4) and the rule of law is upheld (Rom. 13:1). This, of course, is only genuinely possible where *individuals* are transformed by the Holy Spirit so that families can be transformed, so that churches can be transformed. May God have His way in us, so that we can see our community transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Amen.