SPECIAL EDITION

WITH FOREWORD BY STEVE SMITH PENNED IN HIS LAST DAYS

SPIRIT WALK



The Extraordinary Power of Acts for Ordinary People

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STEVE SMITH

Spirit Walk: The Extraordinary Power of Acts for Ordinary People

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CHAPTER 1



PREDICTABLE STEPS FOR AN UNPREDICTABLE PATH

Jesus taught his disciples to pray this simple command to their heavenly Father: Cause Your kingdom to come on earth as in heaven! (Matt. 6:10).

For two thousand years since then, Jesus-followers have learned that prayer, the Lord's Prayer, by heart. Our Father's heart is that His reign will come fully to our homes, our neighborhoods, our nations. He wants to reign supreme in power in every place through hearts surrendered to Him.

Every day, a myriad of disciples around the world pray that God's kingdom will come fully. But when we pray for this, do we really mean it?

On every continent, transformation is sweeping communities, declaring victory over demonically controlled lives. Acts-like movements are bursting forth in people groups and cities as ordinary believers return to the fundamental DNA of biblical discipleship. As Christ-followers begin to live as disciples were always meant to live, they experience the power of the Spirit in their personal lives and ministries. Once this happens, discipleship becomes a fact of life. But until God's kingdom breaks loose in a community, gospel efforts will never keep pace with population growth. The transforming power of the book of Acts must emerge again and again to keep up.

Countless followers of Jesus long to live victoriously over sin and circumstances—to grow in Christlikeness. Yet for many, this way of life remains elusive. Strongholds remain. Christian maturity seems a long way off. Personal transformation sputters, though that's not the only challenge. Transformation of communities, cities, and people groups remain beyond the grasp for many.

Yet the number of Acts-like kindgom movements proliferates across the globe. How to walk in step with God to catalyze "kingdom come" (at home and abroad) is the question of the hour. How do we truly multiply disciples and churches?

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Three areas emerge as essential in the process of personal and communal transformation: (1) biblical ***paths*** or methods that any believer can follow, (2) discipleship ***processes*** to equip believers to walk those paths, and (3) a spiritual ***posture*** of reliance upon the Spirit of God to empower the process. Whether it is overcoming a stronghold in our personal lives or in catalyzing the multiplication of disciples, these three areas are essential. However, the secret to every fruitful lifestyle and ministry is not primarily in methods or processes, but in the Spirit of God.

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,
says the LORD of hosts. —Zech. 4:6

The Spirit Walk

Many earnest believers want the path (an effective ministry or lifestyle tool) and the process (a weekly life-on-life discipleship model) and assume that the spiritual depth and vitality in themselves and their groups are in place. They know they need better accountability and more purposeful structure and often assume that these will solve issues: bondages to wrong lifestyles, lack of evangelism results, shallow discipleship, a paucity of meaningful relationships, and sputtering multiplication of groups. In other words, they view a method, a program, and a pattern as the core.

> "…THE SECRET TO EVERY FRUITFUL LIFESTYLE AND MINISTRY IS NOT PRIMARILY IN METHODS OR PROCESSES, **BUT IN THE SPIRIT OF GOD.**"

These elements are important for real transformation.

But assume nothing.

Never assume that the spiritual posture is in place to breathe life into these approaches. Paths and processes should work but not if they are devoid of the power of God. Only the Spirit Walk enables good strategies–whether in personal life transformation or in plans to change the world.

Holding to a form of godliness,
although they have denied its power. —2 Tim. 3:5, NASB

From the beginning, Jesus defined His own ministry in this way:

*"**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,***
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

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He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
—Luke 4:18–19, emphasis added.

Jesus wanted it to be clear that the Spirit of God and the favor of God characterized His personal life and mission. He described Himself as clothed with, covered by, or overflowing with the Spirit. Jesus was a person dressed with the Spirit. Just as He modeled baptism, He also modeled to His disciples what a Spirit-led daily walk looked like.

Unlike the legalistic religious leaders of His day, Jesus did not simply hold to a form of godliness. He had its power. He embodied the Spirit Walk, from beginning to end.

Two thousand years later, the ancient path remains the same. We must turn back from any legalistic or human-empowered version of religion and ministry that emphasizes forms and patterns apart from the power of God.

The Turning Point in Acts

After three years of personally shaping them by His physical presence, Jesus gave His followers a clear command for how they would continue His mission. In addition to charging them to make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them to obey all He commanded them (Matt. 28:18–20), He exhorted them not to start that process until they had received power from on high.

"You are witnesses of these things. And behold,
I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.
But stay in the city until you are clothed with power
from on high." —Luke 24:48–49, emphasis added.

"But ***you will receive power*** *when the Holy Spirit*
has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses
in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the end of the earth." —Acts 1:8, emphasis added.

He set them on the ancient path of the Spirit Walk. In their three years with Jesus on earth, the apostles frequently missed essential points or squandered ministry opportunities. But their spiritual perspectives changed in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost. The filling of the Spirit (and

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the repeated filling of the Spirit) was the turning point in the lives and ministries of the disciples.

Over the last twenty years, I have led believers around the world through an in-depth study of Paul's journeys to learn from his example and apply these principles in our ministries. Invariably, the primary observation that emerges is that, while Paul had a clear path of ministry and strong discipleship processes, he was led by the Spirit. Paul knew what to do but the Spirit showed him where to do it, with whom, and in whose strength.

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia,
having been ***forbidden by the Holy Spirit*** *to speak the word in Asia.*
And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but
the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.
So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul
in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying,
"Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul had seen the vision,
immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had
called us to preach the gospel to them.
—Acts 16:6–10, emphasis added.

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone
with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil,
struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. —Col. 1:28–29, emphasis added.

Paul and his team lived the very way Jesus predicted they would: the Spirit Walk. An unpredictable path paved with predictable steps.

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound,
but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.
So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." —John 3:8

Remember, the word "wind" and "spirit" are the same word in the Greek. Just as we cannot predict the direction of the wind, so we cannot predict the direction God will take us as we implement the principles of His Word.

Breakthroughs and movements emerge when we follow the pathways God has prepared, not those we try to create ourselves. No matter how many disciples we make or groups we start, at some point we stall if He is not in full control. If the Spirit does not guide us to the people He has prepared, we are spinning our wheels. You can have a perfect model for evangelism and follow-up discipleship, but if you

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don't find the God-prepared people, fruit remains small. You may win individuals to Christ, but you fail to find the breakthrough people who will lead many to salvation—people like the Samaritan woman, Cornelius, and the Philippian jailer.

His Spirit is blowing in your life, opening doors to bring real life transformation—if you will let Him. Your job is to surrender to His purposes and empowerment. We must trust that the key to every miraculous transformation is not us. If you are paralyzed by feelings of personal inadequacy or hobbled by pride, there's a simple solution. Turn the attention from yourself back to God. His work has never depended upon you but only upon Him. He loves to use you when you surrender to His Spirit within you.

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. —1 Cor. 3:5–7

His Spirit is also moving all around you to open the hearts of people. Your job is not to prepare their hearts. Your job is to find the people God has opened and then to disciple them, revealing paths they can walk in and lead other new disciples down. Just as you have the Teacher living in your heart, tutoring you in Christlikeness, so do they. It is your duty to trust the Spirit of God in them and help them respond to Him.

The Turning Point in Every Historical Awakening

Just as the filling, guiding, and empowerment of the Spirit were the focal points of the book of Acts, so also has it been in every revival and awakening in history. Churches everywhere cry out that our world needs fresh awakening. We beg for awakening, and yet we neglect the central elements that are required for this miracle to emerge.

One overarching characteristic of these movements in history has been an outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the people of God based upon the Word of God. How do we return to such a phenomenon? Although movements are obviously a work of God, there are essential ways that the people of God can cooperate with God to help facilitate this.

The sails of a sailboat do not propel it forward; the wind does. Yet a wise sailor knows to raise the sails so that as the wind blows, the boat can move forward. And as the wind blows, the sailor knows to adjust the sails to keep the boat moving with every shift of the wind.

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