

Week Five

Conversations with God

ACTS 1–5

READ

Have you ever run into an old friend and been startled by the change in his or her life? He lost or gained weight. She used to be sad and is now very happy, or she used to be happy and now is sad. Maybe he found a new career or the love of his life, or maybe she simply grew up and matured. Whatever it was, the change was dramatic, and you couldn't help but notice.

The books of Luke and Acts, working together, record a radical shift in the dispositions of Christ's earliest followers. Acts, which was also written by Luke, picks up where the gospel of Luke leaves off. But despite the seamless nature of these writings, one hardly recognizes the main characters of Acts as the same main characters from Luke.

In Luke, for example, the disciples vied for position and acted competitively towards one another...

An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. (Luke 9:46)

And then in Acts we read...

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. (Acts 4:32)

In Luke, we see Peter fearful and timid about associating with Jesus...

A servant girl saw [Peter]... and said, "This man was with him." But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him." (Luke 22:56-57)

In Acts, though, we see Peter boldly responding to the threats and accusations of the religious leaders:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders... It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed (Acts 4:8, 10).

In Luke, we see Jesus call a ragtag team of socially-disregarded fishermen and tax collectors to be his disciples (e.g., Luke 5:1-11, 27-32). Then in Acts, we see that the apostles "were highly regarded by the people" (Acts 5:13).

What happened? How do we account for the change?

Notice that when Jesus left them, he didn't just tell them, "Okay, I'm off to heaven now. You're the new leaders. Go make things happen." Rather, he instructs them...

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. (Acts 1:4, 8)

We then see the apostles waiting expectantly together, and then in the second chapter, it happens...

ACTS 1–5

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:2-4)

The promised Holy Spirit came and filled them. The Spirit of Jesus was no longer just *with* them, now the Spirit was *in* them. They were changed, and the world would never be the same.

As you read Acts, watch for evidence of this radical shift in Jesus' early followers and note the role of the Holy Spirit in this transformation. Even more, recognize that the promised Holy Spirit, and the courage that follows, was meant not just for them, but for us today.

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call (Acts 2:38-39).

In your conversations with God this week, meditate on the role of the Holy Spirit in your own life. Do you see evidence of the Spirit's indwelling, or do you see a life that still needs to be radically transformed? Where you are prideful and overly ambitious, ask for the Spirit's humility; where you are afraid to claim the name of Christ in front of others, ask for the Spirit's boldness; where you are striving to serve others in your own strength, ask for the Spirit's empowerment.

MEMORIZE

This week's memory verses:

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

Ephesians 2:10 *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

MEDITATE

Meditating is simply talking and listening to God. Your conversation with God will be inspired and informed by reading and memorizing Scripture, but your conversation should also be personalized. Carefully consider the passages, but don't *just* consider the passage. Talk and listen. Pour out your thoughts, concerns, frustrations, and joys. Or just sit in silence before God. Some talk best with God in a quiet room. Others prefer to talk with God while running or walking. Most importantly, engage God in a way that is authentic and personal.

Use the space below to record memorable thoughts or highlights from your Conversations with God to share with your Small Group or Running Partners.



ACTS 1–5