



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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**Holy Spirit: Unplugged**

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**Acts 1:8**

*"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

**Never think because something is invisible it is therefore unimportant or weak.** Take air, for example. Air is a force with incredible strength. It can support several 100 people in a plane. It can snap a tree in two or demolish a landscape. With velocity it becomes devastating. Air energized by a hurricane or tornado, can clear out an entire mobile home park in seconds, a town in Kansas in minutes. All while invisible! If you contain it in a network of hoses and valves under enough pressure, it can bring a massive commercial bus or truck-trailer rig to a screeching halt. It will even stop a locomotive pulling 100 cars. It will break thick concrete on a driveway or a freeway if it's pushed through the right tools. In fact, it can lift massive amounts of weight.

How? Air. That's all, just air. You can't feel it. You can't see it or smell it...hopefully! You can't, except in most technical ways, measure it or weigh it. However Paul Snowwhite did point out to me it's not too hard to measure the temperature of it—with a thermometer! But air keeps you alive every minute. If I took air away from this room for five minutes, we would all become brain damaged. We cannot live without it. Yet when we fly or apply our brakes or watch a mechanic work on our car, we think nothing of it. Air is powerful stuff.

Never think because something is invisible it is therefore unimportant or weak. But we fall for that, don't we? I know I get trapped by all the stuff in my life that seems to be breathing down my neck. Maybe you're there too: Work issues. Health issues. Relationship issues. Financial issues. Deadlines. Past failings. Relationships that won't be made right. Inward failings. Spouses self-destructing before our eyes. Our selves destructing before our eyes. With all the stuff flashing before our eyes, many of us are just hoping with summer coming we can find the time to come UP for air. We've become blinded, and you never stop long enough to realize the MOST important stuff in your life is that which you can't yet see. It's like air.

You know the Bible talks a lot about air. The Old Testament calls it *Ruach*. The New Testament calls it *Pneuma*. The English Bible doesn't translate either one as *air*. Usually, it's *breath*. "*God breathed into Adam the breath of life.*" Or it's called *wind*. "*Like a mighty rushing wind.*" As the Holy Spirit gave birth to the church. Tongues of fire...violent wind...and it all began!

See, the Holy Spirit is not: a ghost. He's not an "it," like "the Force." He's not passive or imaginary. He's not a substitute for God. He is Diety. In the Bible, a number of synonyms are used for Spirit - words like Helper, Advocate, Comforter, Counselor, Convicter, Restrainer, and Encourager. He is portrayed by symbols too, such as the dove, fire, wind, water, even living water. We're going to look at some of these over the next few weeks.

We are so impressed by what we can touch and weigh and see that when it comes to something that is invisible (like air), we write it off. Christians all around the world need the reminder that *the most powerful force in life* is something we can't even see...so powerful we are given eternal life as a result. That's powerful.

And we believe every moment of your earthly life leading up to eternal life, the Spirit of God is ready to work within you and me. So never think something is insignificant because it is invisible. (thoughts are based on Charles R. Swindoll, Christian Life).

**What if you operated in that power?** What if we found a way to unplug all the things in your life that keep you from experiencing God's Holy Spirit? Imagine the Holy Spirit, God Himself, unleashed: on Dexter neighborhoods, or Pinckney sports fields, or Chelsea businesses, or Ann Arbor students? God knew we would need Him today.

When Jesus left the earth and sent a Helper, like Himself, the Spirit came and became a part of the disciples' lives *deep within*. Imagine how freaked out they were when Jesus left them. But it was better than they could have imagined: God was no longer near them, as Jesus was, but *in* them.

Jesus had lived, died, and was resurrected. And just before Jesus' ascension back into heaven, He told His disciples, "*you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth*" Acts 1:8. That is a promise from our Savior. The Holy Spirit will come. You will receive power. And you shall be my witnesses.

When Jesus tells them they will receive power, the author Luke uses the Greek word "*Dynamis*," (spelled like dynamite). meaning "miraculous power, strength, ability and abundance." The root word means "to be able". But listen—in the New Testament, God's power is nothing more than the fact of Jesus Christ: the strength of God. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit to live and minister in God's power. That's what it looks like. It's not magic or manipulation. It's the power of God to make all things right. In Jesus, God's kingdom enters history and overthrows the rule of hostile forces. You and I simply put our faith in Him. In faith, all things are possible, because we're acting out God's Kingdom. Mark 9:23 "*All things are possible for the one who believes.*" It is only in fellowship with Jesus that his disciples can do anything. In John 15:5 Jesus told them "*apart from me you can do nothing.*" The Spirit makes our relationship with Jesus possible.

We must receive that power. Jesus corrected the church-people of His day, saying Matthew 22:29 "*You are in error because you don't know the scriptures or the power of God.*" in Matthew 22:29. Do you know the Scriptures? What a great goal for summer. The Bible is clear: God's power that gave *Jesus* the strength for His acts of power also empowers Him for new, resurrection life. That's the power of the Holy Spirit, available to every one of us here today.

But there's one other key to experiencing God's power (which is Jesus) in your life. Jesus says it in our verse: "*you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses*" near and far. You shall receive AND you shall be witnesses. The Greek word for witness is *Martyr*, (spelled like martyr). It's a *legal* term from the 1<sup>st</sup> century meaning witness, one who remembers and can tell about something in trials or transactions. And a witness is not an expert. Don't wait until you become an expert to start witnessing to Jesus. But notice that the power and the witnessing go together. It's as though Jesus is saying the miraculous power I give you for living comes when you point people to me. That's why it's so important to be here on Sundays. By simply showing up, you're giving witness to Jesus, and God's Holy Spirit breathes into you and me in a powerful way as we encounter His Word. And for the Christ followers, it began at Pentecost. So Happy Birthday, Church.

Remember as we studied world religions, we learned Christianity is a historic faith. In other words, facts, not ideas or myths, are the issue. Those who bear witness have lived through them. Christ followers, when endowed by God's Holy Spirit somehow become equipped to go out as witnesses to the world, to the point that the Gospel reached Dexter, and the Holy Spirit came upon people here in a revival 175 years ago!

No human power can convert a soul and make Jesus real to the people and break their slavery to sin. The Holy Spirit, He drove their movement and enabled them to live as believers. Jesus gave His life FOR you. The Holy Spirit gives Jesus' life TO you. And Jesus promises His followers that His Holy Spirit would encourage them. When the feelings, the enthusiasm, and the fellowship is gone. When they were alone.

When they were in prison. When they were whipped and beaten. When they were threatened with torture and death: *they were never really alone. God's Holy Spirit was with them...and is with you.*

When your enthusiasm is gone, God's Spirit is not.

When you don't know the next step to take, God's Spirit does.

When you don't know you're going to handle your situation, the God's Spirit does.

When you don't know how to begin that painful conversation, God does.

When you pray to receive Jesus, you have a full measure of God's Spirit.

Because Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to live in you, you have a full measure of God's power. I pray you go the rest of this day—a whole day, led by God's Holy Spirit. He knows what you need, and He's with you through it all.

You're not necessarily called to *be* lawyers, doctors, or even preachers. You're called to be WITNESSES. You simply tell what you've seen and heard. And the power of His Holy Spirit does the rest. The very last words of Jesus were "*to the ends of the earth*" or "*to the uttermost part of the earth.*" The Great Commission. The great adventure.

A final thought: Did you ever realize that the whole rest of history until Jesus comes again is written in Acts 1:8? Acts 1:8 is the index for the book of Acts, and the rest of history to this very day. Imagine if we become empowered by the Holy Spirit to reach out to the unconnected 1000s right here in our Jerusalem, and then set out from there. How different our towns would be! Imagine if *every* church were empowered by the Holy Spirit to reach out right where they are. It could happen. After all, just because something is invisible doesn't mean it is therefore unimportant or weak...and won't happen...