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CAROLYN MOORE

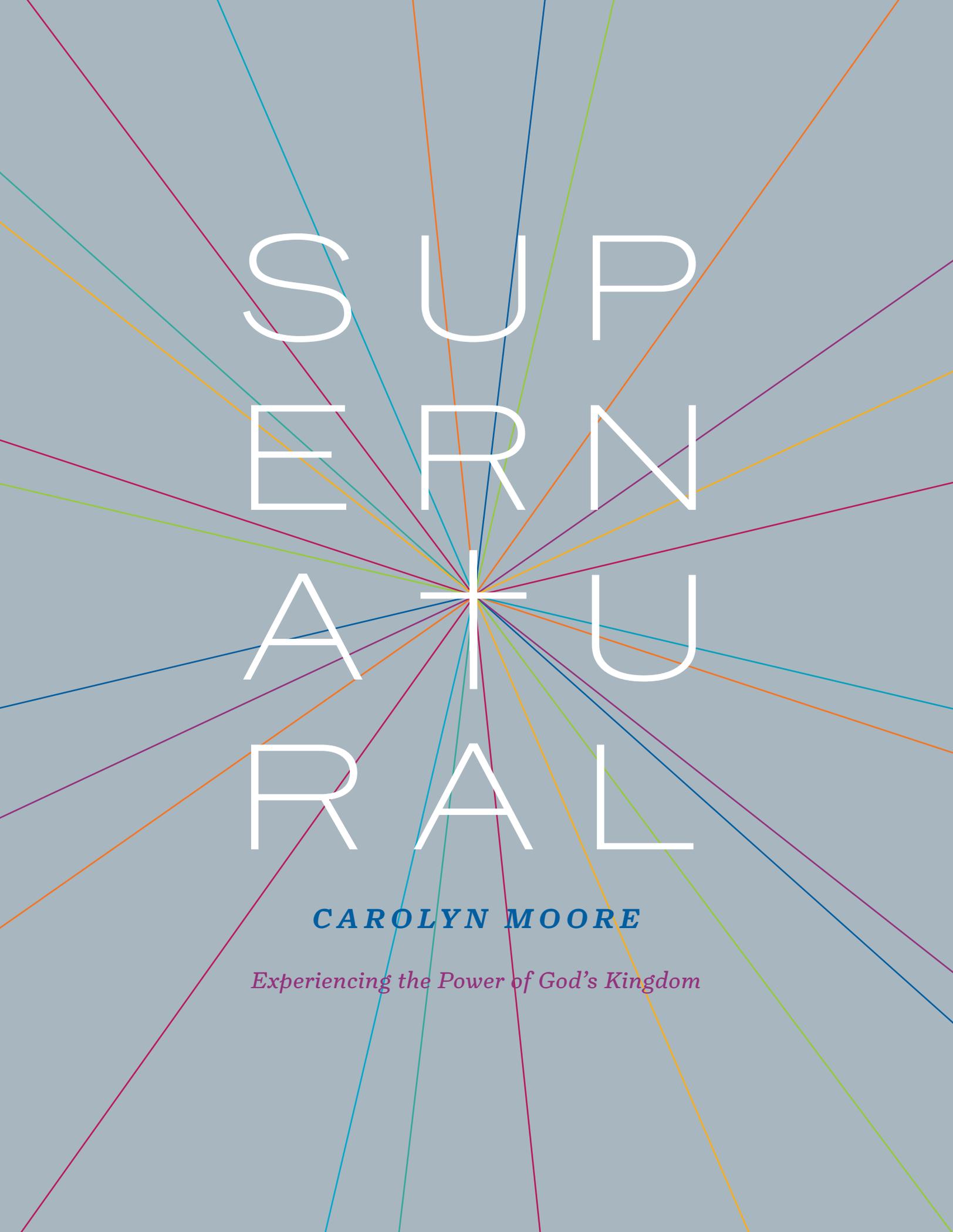
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Experiencing the Power of God's Kingdom

R A L





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CAROLYN MOORE

Experiencing the Power of God's Kingdom

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Let me warn you now: I have great expectations for you as you begin this study. Through your time in the Word, I expect your understanding of what it means to be a Christian and what it means to be “the church” to be radically changed. I expect, and am praying for you, to become hungry for the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and I earnestly hope you will be bold in seeking out his supernatural power. I am praying that you and I both will come to expect supernatural ministry inside our own communities of faith, and that what we breed in faith will spill out into the world to transform it.

I need to tell you that I am not hoping you will only enjoy this study or that through it you will be able to tweak the practice of your faith. Nope. I’m expecting transformation. Listen, we serve such a glorious God. He is a supernatural force in this world, and he is good. Supernatural results are what I’m expecting through this study because Jesus is supernatural. In other words, I expect you to encounter God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—as you open the Word, embrace the wonder, and cry out for more.

There are forty separate entries in this book. You could probably start anywhere and get something out of what you read (though I recommend taking them in order). By simply numbering them, I hope to give you multiple options for using this material. You might choose to use this as a personal devotional study, taking it one at a time over the course of forty days. Or you might gather a group for an eight-week study, reading five each week for eight weeks. Or maybe your group wants to steep in this study over a longer stretch of time, studying one entry each week over most of a year.

Whatever works! That’s my advice. As long as you are in this to go deeper into the things of God, I’m your biggest cheerleader. However you read it, be all in. That’s what matters.

A teaching video with eight sessions accompanies this study, so you’ve got that resource to draw from as well. Exercises are structured to give you every opportunity for a deep personal and spiritual experience. A brief section called

“Listening to the Word” at the end of each entry gives you the chance to bring the Word home to live in you. Make the most of those moments. Take the time needed to let God speak.

Rather than providing all the Scripture references within the text, you’ll be asked to do the work of finding the passages in your own Bible so you can mark up the sections studied and begin to create a habit of looking for where God is at work in Scripture. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you experience the Bible as the living Word. This is the one book that has the ability to speak a fresh word into your life wherever you are, to be relevant over and over again. That’s the power of the living Word.

You’ll also want to keep a journal or notebook for this study. Write your responses to the questions in that book. If you will actively participate in this study, you will cultivate devotional practices that will continue long after this guidebook has been shelved.

I often journal in two colors, writing my own thoughts in black or blue ink and what I sense may be Spirit-inspired thoughts in red. When I do this in my own time with God, I don’t try to analyze it; I just listen for the voice of the Spirit and write what I hear in red ink. A week or so down the road, I may come back to that entry to see how it sounds with the benefit of a little time and perspective. Often, I am amazed at how helpful those entries can be to my journey with Jesus. I do believe he still speaks into our lives. I have encountered him in the practice of journaling, and I hope you will too.

I hope the combination of this guidebook, your own journal, the creative prayer exercises, and a quiet place to listen to the Word will converge to create a spiritual revival in your life and in your church. Nothing less . . . only *more*.

Know that as you begin, I am praying for you. My friends, I expect great things!

INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote: “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection. . . . Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Phil. 3:10, 12).

I want more.

I am hungry to see the power of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

Hungry.

I’m not talking about so much that passes these days for Spirit-filled experiences. We have defaulted to bragging; we tell too many “big fish stories.” We talk of huge moves of God that are not quantified by fruit, and we call our good feelings “moves of the Spirit.” My concern is that we sometimes misrepresent the Spirit by assigning to him feats easily accomplished in the natural and by making more of what happens in our corporate gatherings than is actually there.

We have overplayed our hand and become accustomed to calling any emotional response a great move of God. Meanwhile, we are completely shortchanging what must surely be a much more awesome and beautiful power than fleeting experiences that result in no lasting transformation.

What is most disturbing is that we cling to stories of Holy Spirit power in other places at other times, as if by only having heard the stories we can somehow claim participation. While I certainly celebrate with followers of Jesus in other countries who report awesome healings and even resurrections (I believe these to be true), I am not content to let what is happening in other places suffice for my own experience of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

I am hungry for the power of the Holy Spirit to fall on us . . . *here*. We, too, are responsible not just for learning the lingo and culture of Spirit-filled living but also for watching for the actual work of the Spirit in our churches, our families, and our own lives.

Aren't you hungry for more?

I am starving for it and have decided to lean in and get more intentional about watching for what the Holy Spirit is actually doing right here, right now. I am praying for the kind of personal and corporate renewal that can be attributed to only the power of God. I'm no longer content to be encouraged by a good word or titillated by emotionally charged moments. I want to be changed by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and I want that for those I pastor. I want that for you.

In Luke 9–10, the followers of Jesus have power and authority to cast out demons, cure diseases, proclaim the kingdom, and heal the sick. That is a far cry from what we are experiencing in most churches today. Until we are honest about that, I'm not sure we'll be able to move past the weak substitutes for which we've settled. How many of us are willing to stop calling it the power of

God when we leave church feeling good about ourselves? How many of us are willing to lean in and start crying out for the real thing?

I am praying for the kind of personal and corporate renewal that can be attributed to only the power of God. I want to be changed by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and I want that for those I pastor. I want that for you.

Don't American Christians also deserve to see the power of God and become conversant in the real and powerful work of the Holy Spirit? Aren't we, their leaders, responsible for properly defining that power and calling our people to that hunger?

The one thing of which I've become most convinced is that for us to have any hope of breaking through to something deeper, we must get honest. Until we stop calling every warm experience a genuine move of

God, we won't find the deeper well. It is as if we've found a stagnant pond in the desert and have camped there when an oasis of sweet, pure water is just ahead.

I am hungry for more and tired by less. If you are actually experiencing it, I want to hear your stories—your first-person, real-life, recent, authentic stories of the power of God at work in your own life or in your community. I want to hear first-person healing stories that have resulted in works that glorify God. I want to hear real stories that have resulted in spiritual fruit and advanced the kingdom of God on earth.

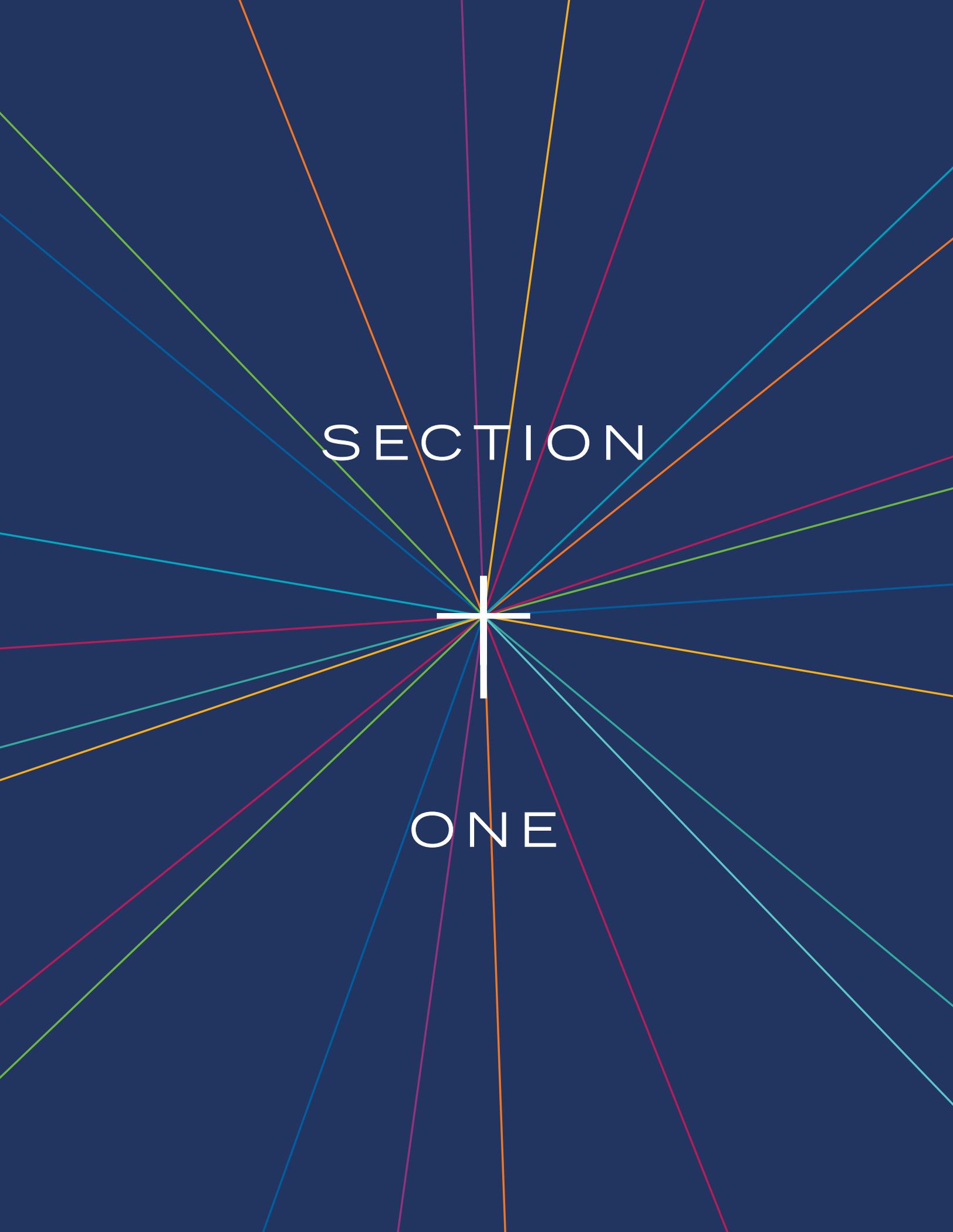
I want to hear proof of the authentic, awesome power of God working in our churches, in our lives.

Paul's words resonate deeply with me:

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (Phil. 3:10–12)

I am pressing in and I invite you to join me. I want to know the power that resurrects people from the dead. I want more than just “good church.”

Don't you? Yes? Then read on.



SECTION

ONE

SENT PEOPLE

Key Observation

Unless I miss my guess, most of us in the Western world do not have a wide experience with casting out demons and participating in physical healings.

Read Luke 4:18–19, then read Luke 9:1–2.

- Mark all the action words in both of these passages, then make a list of those words.
- What adjectives (descriptive words) do these action words inspire?
- What new thoughts do you have about the mission of Jesus after reading these two passages together?

As he sat among his people, Jesus cast a vision for a radical change in the spiritual climate. He stood up in the middle of church one day and read from a scroll unrolled to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18–19)*

What a bold proclamation! Jesus, standing on the authority of the Spirit, was staking his claim as the first apostle and prototype of this good news. Yes, Jesus was and is an apostle! Had you considered that fact before? The term in Greek literally means “sent one.” In that sense, Jesus most definitely fit the definition. He was sent to earth by the will of God the Father with very specific

marching orders—to reveal the kingdom to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, the oppressed, and those who have never felt favor with God. He was sent to cast out demons, cure diseases, proclaim the kingdom, and heal the sick. In Luke 4, he does this. He drives out multiple demons, heals quite a few people, and calls down favor over a tax collector, a few fishermen, and some other misfits who are invited into his inner circle to watch and learn what it means to be sent ones.

We are not shooting for tolerable. We are shooting for transformation and for lives that carry power and authority.

That's Luke chapter 4. From there until chapter 9, it is wall-to-wall ministry. Then in Luke 9, there is a shift: Jesus recast the vision, but this time he did so by sharing power with his followers. He pulled the twelve disciples together, and “he gave them power and authority

to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1–2). Can you imagine? This was a high calling for this gaggle of misfits.

- Can you even imagine what that charge must have felt like for those first followers of Jesus?
- How would you receive such a charge?
- Have you ever had the experience of God calling you to a task you felt utterly unequipped to accomplish?

Jesus' followers were told they now had both the authority and power to do what they'd seen only one other person do, and what they saw was so remarkable that they assigned divinity to the man doing it. It must have been stunning. Those regular, not-the-brightest-bulb-in-the-box people were sent out to drive out demons and cure diseases and proclaim the kingdom and heal the sick. They would become the culture changers! They would welcome and advance the kingdom of God by bearing fruit in their “sent-ness.” This was the first work of the Twelve, whom we call apostles—the “sent-out ones.”

There is a catch, of course, to this kind of sending. To drive out demons, you have to get within spitting distance of demon-possessed people (many of whom spit!). To heal, you have to touch people with all manner of disease. To proclaim the kingdom, you have to associate with heathens. You must get up close and personal with the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed. That was and is the offer on the table because that, Jesus said, is how climates change and the kingdom comes.

Now, hold that paradigm up against what many of us experience in the American church today. Unless I miss my guess, most of us in the Western

world do not have a wide experience with casting out demons and participating in physical healings. It happens in developing countries where first generation Christians don't know any better—that is a bit of missional humor; of course, our friends in other countries certainly “know better.” In many other countries, Christians are running circles around us in spiritual revival right now.

Our culture has come to accept an hour in church and a blessing before meals as the center of the Christian experience. Meanwhile, driving out demons is just weird. We relegate that to the fringe. But folks, this is how Jesus defined for his followers what it means to be sent out to represent the very best the kingdom has to offer this world: that followers have power and authority to drive out demons, cure diseases, proclaim the kingdom of God, and heal things that destroy people's lives.

This ought to be our target as we progress in the Christian life. We are not shooting for tolerable. We are shooting for transformation and for lives that carry power and authority. Let that sink in.

LISTENING TO THE WORD

As we begin this study together, write a prayer in your journal, expressing your own honest feelings about God's power, your part in his plan, your doubts, your hopes. Pray, asking God to fill you with his Holy Spirit and for him to give you ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to you throughout this study.

THE MARK OF SUPERNATURAL POWER

Key Observation.

To be incarnational means to embody the Spirit of Christ.

Read Luke 9:1–2

- List all the things Jesus does for his followers in those two verses.
- Now list all the things he empowers them to do.
- How did the twelve disciples get their power and authority?
- How do you suppose they knew when it was given to them?

Yep, I know we've already read the first two verses of Luke 9. We're reading them again today and will continue reading them throughout this study because I believe they represent Jesus' deep hopes for people who are sent out in his name. Why do I believe that? Well, because these are the words he used when he sent folks out in his name. He sent them out with power and authority to cast out demons, cure diseases, proclaim the kingdom, and heal the sick.

A friend in our community often argues with me (in a good way) about the mark of the Holy Spirit in a life. I say the mark of the Holy Spirit is a supernatural ability to love, basing my thoughts on Paul's teaching. He wrote, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22–23). All these flow from the

Spirit, and you'll notice that in that list love is the headwaters. Our ability to love is not self-generated or self-taught. It comes to us directly from the Holy Spirit.

The mark of the Holy Spirit is a supernatural ability to love, right?

My friend argues the mark of the Holy Spirit is power, and he looks to Acts 1:8 to make his point, where Jesus said, "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." Clearly, Jesus wanted his followers to know that power to evangelize would come with the call to go. "You *will* receive power," Jesus said. Not "you *might* receive" or "if you're lucky you'll receive." Nope. Jesus said, "You *will* receive power."

So, which is it? Love or power? The answer—wait for it—is yes. I suspect (though I'd really rather be right) that we're both right and that in kingdom terms, *love* and *power* are two ways of talking about the same thing. In the kingdom of God, love is power, and power is always loving. Power is never self-serving, and love is never wimpy (you should underline that). When Jesus gave his followers power, it was the kind that drove them out to heal, along with a heart broken for those who hurt. Love drove them out to meet people exactly where they were, with power strong enough to call out demons and overcome disease. In other words, they were not sent out with raw power and no heart. They were sent out as Christ-bearers, to be and do incarnational ministry in both the love and power of Christ.

Our call is to receive the power and authority offered us by Christ himself, then to go forth as he sends us to drive out the darkness and expose the kingdom of God.

To be incarnational means to embody the spirit of Christ. It means we don't go on our own power and authority, but on his. And that brings up a critical point made in today's passage: *kingdom power and kingdom authority are gifts from God*. We don't generate them on our own steam. Our power and authority to carry out supernatural ministry are gifts, an anointing of the Holy Spirit. And this is why we must pursue the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Without him, we are sunk.

Don't attempt supernatural ministry on your own strength. Because you can actually *do* ministry without the Holy Spirit. People do all kinds of good things without supernatural power. All day, every day, people operate out of their own talents on their own authority. Take the word of a recovering striver. Plenty of us are driven by ambition or fear or even a good heart and good intentions to

do good things (I am literally sitting across the table right now from an atheist I've befriended who works at a food bank). And when they do, they achieve *natural* results, not *supernatural* results.

But, folks, this is not the biblical call. Our call is to receive the power and authority offered us by Christ himself, then to go forth as he sends us to drive out the darkness and expose the kingdom of God. If we're going to give the world a better definition of "church," we need the infilling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, so we can actually witness *supernatural* ministry.

Read Luke 11:2–4

- Compare this prayer that Jesus taught his followers with the charge he gave them in Luke 9:1–2. Taking this prayer and this charge together, what do you learn about the values of Jesus?
- What matters to him?
- What miracles are Jesus calling for in his prayer?

In Luke 9, Jesus imparted kingdom power and kingdom authority to a few people who had been following him, and he charged them to go out and become the answer to his own prayer. And that is still our charge today. It is to become the answer to Jesus' prayer. We are sent people, because Jesus, who was sent by God, is still with us. He is still at work in our world welcoming and advancing the kingdom of God, and he will not stop until the kingdom comes and God's will is fully realized on earth as it is in heaven.

LISTENING TO THE WORD

Let's get honest here. Where in your life do you need to humbly admit that your ministry or work is more about natural effort and good intention and less about the power of God? Where have you become tired of the striving? Where are you settling for tolerable when God wants to create transformation? List those places in your journal, then pray that God will make you hungry for more.

JUST DO IT

Key Observation:

If we do our part and pray, he'll do his part and show up.

Read Luke 9:1–2

- When Jesus sent out his twelve disciples, what charge did he give them?
- How do you suppose they responded when Jesus laid this spiritual expectation and invitation on them?

Years ago, I had the experience of seeing a demon leave a man's body. He came to my office to complain, and that day he was in a seriously contrary mood. He complained about everything, and as he went on and on, for about an hour, his complaints became more and more personal. Eventually, I'd had enough. It might not have been my best pastoral moment, but I got angry. I began to *discuss*, let's say, with some vigor how I felt about his attack. Almost immediately as I began to speak, however, I had the sense that the person to whom I was talking was not this man in front of me but some demonic force. I can't tell you why I thought it was inside his chest, but in the moment that's where my energies were focused. My eyes were drawn to his chest, and I began to speak directly to the demon. (I am not saying this is how it ought to be when we pray for people or against demonic forces. I'm just telling you how it was for me that day.) The experience became pretty intense rather quickly. I'm sure I was louder than I meant to be. I was clinging to some authority that rose up within me, and I was not about to let that thing, whatever it was, get the upper hand.

I kept speaking intensely to it until it was gone. For a moment after I went silent, the guy, who never moved or said a word while I was casting this demon out, stared at me. Then he sank down in the chair almost as if he were lifeless.

He didn't fall out of the chair, but I could see that all the energy it took to hold himself up was gone.

We stayed silent for a few beats, then the man looked at me and said, "It's gone. I feel absolutely no anger. In fact, I can't *make* myself get angry with you right now. It's gone." We prayed again, and he left my office. He later told me he could hardly make it to his car before he collapsed in exhaustion. He stayed in the parking lot for half an hour, then drove home and slept for the rest of the day.

Lest you assume I was indoctrinated into this practice early in life, think again. I am probably more like you than not. I grew up in a mainline Protestant church. I could hardly *explain* the Holy Spirit, much less *experience* him. When I entered seminary in my thirties, let's just say I was not the brightest bulb in the seminary box. And yet, God has filled me and schooled me in the Holy Spirit, and I believe this is what he wants for all of us. I believe Jesus longs to see his church acting as if he is a supernatural God and supernatural power is ours.

- What questions do you have about demons or demonic activity?
- What concerns are raised in your spirit as this topic is discussed?
- Can you take those concerns and pray about them?

I believe that Jesus has given us power and authority over not only demons but also physical and emotional illness. Recently, I witnessed a miracle. A woman who was blind in one eye (the result of a stroke six months prior) had been told by a doctor that the loss of her eyesight was permanent. He likened it to a lightning bolt shooting through her eye.

I believe Jesus longs to see his church acting as if he is a supernatural God and supernatural power is ours.

That's the woman I met—blind in one eye, unable to drive any more, and resolved to live with it. Then the Holy Spirit showed up. At the retreat, she was given the gift of profound inner healing. She experienced a touch that left her feeling worthy and loved. She went home and told her husband she'd never felt so free. The next morning, after a strangely peaceful sleep, she awoke to find

she could see her husband. He was laying on the side nearest her blind eye, so that was kind of a deal. Her blind eye wasn't blind any more. For the next two hours, they tested her eye in every way they could think of to make sure this was real. It was.

What if this woman's inner healing opened the way for her physical healing? What if it is all much more connected than we realize? And if so, how do we detect the difference between spiritual and physical illnesses? How do we know

when and how God is going to move? After decades of praying with people in faith and watching the results, here is my best, most spiritual answer to your question: I don't know.

Seriously . . . *I don't know*.

But in the absence of knowing, I subscribe to Nike's school of thought on this: *Just do it*. Just pray for people. Pray for them like Jesus is listening and like Jesus wants to see healing at least as much as you do. And on the days when you don't believe it will ever happen, pray in obedience as Scripture commands (see James 5). I figure, if we do our part and pray, he'll do his part and show up.

And here's the thing: If you're wrong, *nobody dies*.¹ If you pray and nothing happens, at least you prayed. At least you called on some force greater than yourself, and you practiced faith in the process. Those are good things, their own kind of miracle, because hope in a supernatural God is a rare and glorious thing.

LISTENING TO THE WORD

End this session by asking God to show you how to get ready to receive his power and authority to cast out demons, cure diseases, proclaim the kingdom, and heal the sick. Ask him to reveal what you need to abandon so you can be "all in" for this charge. And then ask for courage to move when he moves.

TRUTH IS A PERSON

Key Observation

“Aim at Heaven, and you will get earth ‘thrown in’: aim at earth, and you will get neither.” –C. S. Lewis

Read Luke 9:1–2.

- We've now read these lines through multiple times. Can you close your Bible and say them from memory?
- What are the key phrases from these two verses? What is the priority?
- How do you hear Jesus' voice when you imagine him giving these instructions to his followers? Is he enthusiastic? Serious? Passionate? Concerned?
- What word would you use to describe him? What word would you use to describe the Twelve as they listen to Jesus?

The only power worth pursuing is power borrowed from faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Life is too short, your time too limited, and your skills too valuable to be spent on anything less than kingdom work accomplished in kingdom power. I'm thinking about that famous quote from C. S. Lewis: “Aim at Heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’: aim at earth and you will get neither.”² Addressing the physical needs and emotional discomforts of people without offering them the good news of Jesus Christ is like aiming for earth instead of heaven. In other words, we have a *Person*-centered faith, not a *people*-centered faith. We love people, and we are passionate about the things that break God's heart. But to have anything of value to offer people, we have to go through the heart of God to the Person of Jesus. Otherwise, we'll land short of the kingdom.

This is exactly what Jesus warned his followers at the end of Luke 9. He essentially said, “You will have a thousand excuses for why you can’t do this. You’ll be glad to do good things on your own steam, but you will not want the cost of proclaiming the kingdom. And, friend, while that may provide temporary relief, it will be devastating in the long run. To get to life—*real* life—you will have to carry the whole gospel.”

Read Luke 9:57–62.

- Read verse 60 again. What do you think Jesus meant by his response?
- Is there more than one possible meaning at work here?

In my Bible, I’ve written the word *paralysis* in big red letters above these verses. Luke, who gave us example after example of people who got right up to the line of surrender, froze. It’s as if the idea of going with Jesus was more appealing than the reality. It reminds me of the scene where Moses talked to God face-to-face (Ex. 33:12–23). God tested him at just this point, saying, effectively, “I’m not going with you, because you are a stubborn bunch” (my paraphrase of Exodus 33:3). Moses got alone with God, shared intimately in his presence, and then responded with one of the most profound questions in the Old Testament, maybe the whole Bible. He asked, “If your Presence does not go with us . . . how will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people . . . ? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?” (vv. 15–16).

It’s a profound question. What exactly makes us—the church—any different from any other well-run nonprofit, or even the nonprofits that aren’t run so well? If God isn’t in it and if we aren’t intimately aware of his presence among us, what makes us any different? Brothers and sisters in Christ, I have late-breaking news for you. You’re not in church to learn how to run a nonprofit. You’ve been called to step into a great move of the Holy Spirit, a move that will often take you way outside your comfort zone. “How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us?” There’s to be no waffling, no shirking back, no getting ahead of God. Either go with Jesus, or don’t go at all.

No waffling, no shirking back, no getting ahead of God. Either go with Jesus, or don’t go at all.

This is the essence of the charge in Luke 9:1–2. It is Jesus who sent his followers out with his power and authority—the power and authority from his own stash that he laid on them. It is Jesus, who sent them out with *his* truth. *Proclaim the kingdom*, he told them. To proclaim the kingdom is to proclaim Jesus. So it turns out that truth is not a set of facts; truth is a person.

Do you know that truth? Do you have a personal experience of him? If someone showed up at your table in Starbucks and asked you the reason for your hope, what would you tell them? Think it'll never happen? Did I mention that I'm sitting at Starbucks right now, across the table from my atheist friend? If you don't already have a simple way to share the gospel with someone, try reading these sermons from some of the first followers of Jesus:

- * Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14–40
- * Stephen's sermon in Acts 7:1–53
- * Paul's sermon in Acts 13:17–39

How grateful I am for the faith of powerfully courageous men and women who laid down their lives for the sake of this precious, life-giving, miracle-working good news. What a privilege it is to stand on their shoulders and find our place in that great cloud of witnesses!

LISTENING TO THE WORD

Is your heart full of a desire to do good things for people, or is your heart full of Jesus? Because your mouth will speak what your heart is full of. The beauty of the gospel is that when rightly ordered, one will lead to the other. A heart full of Jesus will lead to a desire to do good things for people! So, are you deeply, passionately, all-out in love with Jesus? If you cannot honestly say right now that you are in love with Jesus, then please stop everything and cry out to God, asking him to restore (or give) you a fresh passion for him. Ask for it. Flat-out ask. Don't wait. Don't hedge. Jesus wants your heart, so this is a prayer he is likely to answer.

GIVE WHAT GOD GIVES YOU

Key Observation

This invitation to participate with the Holy Spirit in the works he wants to do in the world is an invitation into partnership.

Read Luke 9:1–6 and then read Matthew 10:1–15.

- On a sheet of paper or in your journal, make two columns with these two headings: “Similarities” and “Differences.” Now, comb through these passages and make a note under “Similarities” of everything that seems similar in the two passages. Then under “Differences” make notes of anything you find in one passage that you don’t find in the other.
- If you had to boil down all of Jesus’ instructions in these two passages to a simple one-sentence commission to the disciples, what would it be?

When I read the details of Jesus’ commissioning of these missionaries, I have fresh respect for those first followers. Clearly, Jesus wanted to strip them of any sense of self-sufficiency so he could create in them a holy dependence on him.

It is curious that Jesus doesn’t want them to take anything with them. After all, these are the descendants of those first Israelites who walked out of Egypt with Egyptian silver and gold clanking under their cloaks. Taking with them everything the Egyptians handed over was a sign that God was with them. That silver and gold was poured back into the tabernacle that housed the presence of God. Yet now as they are sent out again with the promises of God, they are told to take nothing. So, when it comes to being sent, on which principle should we rely? Should we take stuff? Or no stuff?

Here’s what I suspect. I suspect the answer is yes.

If God gives you resources to build the kingdom, use them. If he gives you a great building, a lot of culturally relevant bling, and every convenience at your fingertips, use it. But if he doesn't, go anyway. Because at the end of the day, it isn't the stuff God uses. It is the cloud and the fire that made the tent into the tabernacle, and it is the Holy Spirit that gives an apostle power and authority. The stuff is useful but not necessary. Most miracles happen for free.

The spiritual principle is this: give what God gives you. Write that on a Post-it note and put it on your bathroom mirror. I want this statement to condition you every day to go out and pour out what God pours in. Lay hands on people. Pray. Call down the power of God. That costs nothing except a little pride, and you probably have a little of that to spare.

You are called to go and take with you whatever you are given, with the absolute confidence that God will use it to advance his kingdom on earth.

There is another scene in the book of Acts where the disciples of Jesus are out doing good things without any physical resources. Because the scene happens after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we know Peter and John have taken to heart what Jesus taught them while he was with them.

Read Acts 3:1–10.

- What image comes to mind when you first meet the man in this passage?
- Why do you suppose he calls out specifically to Peter and John? Do you think they are among many whom he is asking for alms, or is there something particular about them that grabs his attention?
- Why do you suppose Peter responds as he does, saying, "Look at us!" (v. 4)? What is gained by asking the man to look at Peter?

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter sees the man healed in a moment. Write down all the reasons you can think of why God might have accomplished a miracle in this man's life. Why this man? Why this place? Why through Peter and John?

In this scene, we see the teaching of Jesus come full circle. In Luke 9, he sent out the Twelve to heal, save, and deliver. He told them to take nothing with them. When they went, they could not completely understand the "why" behind Jesus' instructions, but by the time they had returned from that first missionary journey, they were convinced. They had seen the power of God overshadow any physical comforts they may have had or shared.

Now that Jesus had ascended and the apostles were serving on their own, they had owned Jesus' teaching. That was how they rolled. They had learned to offer nothing but the power of God. They understood themselves as walking vessels of the kingdom, and they appreciated the treasure of that. I can tell you that in our ministry at Mosaic (the church I pastor), this has been a huge lesson for us. We have discovered that the quickest way to squelch the work of the Holy Spirit in a relationship is to throw money at a need. That unbalances the power dynamic in a bad way. Yes, sometimes funds and stuff are exactly what's needed, but much more often the relationship is the real treasure.

When the Holy Spirit invites us to participate in the works he wants to do in the world, it is an invitation into a partnership. It changes how we approach life. It is about becoming open to the opportunities around us. If you have accepted the Holy Spirit into your life, you are a tabernacle—a sent-out person with kingdom power to see miracles happen. This is who you are. You are called to go and take with you whatever you are given, with the absolute confidence that God will use it to advance his kingdom on earth.

LISTENING TO THE WORD

Give what God gives you. So what has God given you? Make a personal inventory of every asset in your life. List everything—personality traits, house, car, funds, talents, connections, spiritual gifts, experiences . . . all of it. Now, place it before God and ask him how he plans to use all you've got to welcome and advance his kingdom.

Group Gathering

OPEN WITH PRAYER

WATCH SESSION 1 VIDEO

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS
BASED ON READINGS 1–5

1

Key Observation

Unless I miss my guess, most of us in the Western world do not have wide experience with casting out demons and participating in physical healings.

Question for Discussion

As you begin this study, how comfortable are you with the idea that following Jesus includes casting out demons, curing disease, proclaiming the kingdom, and healing the sick?

2

Key Observation

To be incarnational means to embody the Spirit of Christ.

Question for Discussion

How does the word “incarnational” help you to think about the power and purpose of supernatural ministry?

3

Key Observation

If we do our part and pray, he'll do his part and show up.

Question for Discussion

What if it is all much more connected than we realize? Does this thought inspire possible connections in your own life between seemingly unrelated wounds and ailments?

4

Key Observation

"Aim at Heaven, and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth, and you will get neither." —C. S. Lewis

Question for Discussion

How has the church (not your church specifically, but the broader church) missed its aim for heaven, and how has this impacted our effectiveness as Christians?

5

Key Observation

This invitation to participate with the Holy Spirit in the works he wants to do in the world is an invitation into partnership.

Question for Discussion

How would it change your approach to prayer and ministry if you began to think of yourself in partnership with Jesus for the sake of exposing the kingdom of God on earth?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

This study is an invitation to interact with a group *inside* the Holy Spirit. Think of this group as a crucible or petri dish, and your conversations as an experiment in growing supernatural faith. Begin the experiment here by spending time in listening prayer. Each of you should listen quietly, pen in hand, and write down anything you hear. Trust the Holy Spirit to speak. Have someone close in prayer, then share any key ideas for the edification of the group.