ADULTS

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE™

Sermon Series: Unstoppable Gospel
To be used with: Session 1: Unstoppable Mission
Sermon Title Possibilities: Never Alone; Power for the Mission
Scripture: Acts 1:4-8, 12-14

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Unstoppable Gospel,* these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The Point: The Holy Spirit empowers us to spread the gospel.

Introduction: I remember when I started college. Like most incoming freshmen, I was excited to be entering the world of adulthood and facing life on my own. My parents came with me to help move me into the dorm. After we moved all my things into my room, we said our good-byes and they took off for home. I never will forget the sudden sense of fear that gripped me. All my life I had depended on Mom and Dad to look after me, but now I was on my own. Now I had to make my own choices, and I would be responsible for the consequences of those choices. It was a scary and lonely feeling.

We can only imagine how the disciples of Jesus felt as He prepared to return to heaven. For three years they had been with Him, and they had depended on Him heavily for encouragement and for their other needs. Who knows what went through their minds when Jesus left them? Yet our Lord promised they would not be left alone. In just a few days, the Holy Spirit would come, and He would be with them forever.

I. The promise of this power.

A. Jesus commanded His disciples to "wait for the promise of the Father."
B. What does it mean to be "baptized with the Holy Ghost"?
   1. Jesus contrasted it with being baptized with water.
      a. The word "baptize" comes from the Greek word *baptizo*, which literally means "to immerse".
      b. Water baptism symbolizes death and new life.
   2. Baptism with water is an outward symbol of salvation, but baptism with the Holy Spirit is a transforming experience that brings new life.
      a. Most Baptists, including this one, believe you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit when you accept Christ.
      b. The filling of the Holy Spirit is an ongoing experience.

II. The need for this power.

A. Jesus was about to return to heaven.
   1. Jesus' disciples still expected Him to establish an earthly kingdom.
      a. He had told them repeatedly He had not come for that purpose, but evidently they still did not get it.

b. Someday Jesus will return and set up His kingdom, but it's not our business to know when.

2. We still do not know when Jesus will return.

- When I was a college student in the late 1980's, there was a popular booklet called *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*. Like other books of its type, it proved to be erroneous. If you want to read a truly challenging book on Bible prophecy, I highly recommend *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*, by B.J. Orpeza.

B. The disciples had a big job ahead of them.
   1. They were to be witnesses to what Christ had done.
      a. A witness does not have to be an expert in a particular field. He simply tells what happened.
      b. "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria…"—In other words, no single part of the world is outside our responsibility.
   2. The Holy Spirit would empower them for this task.
      a. He delivers us from fear.
      b. He gives us the words to say.
      c. He draws people to Jesus through our witness.

III. The realization of this power.

A. In accordance with Jesus' instructions, they returned to Jerusalem.
   1. It was a "Sabbath day's journey" from the Mount of Olives—that is, about three-fifths of a mile. The group included:
      a. The eleven apostles (Judas Iscariot was dead, but would later be replaced by Matthias).
      b. Some women, including the mother of Jesus.
      c. Jesus' brothers.
   2. They stayed in the upper room and prayed.

- Many people use this passage as a proof-text for their belief in a post-conversion "baptism of the Holy Spirit", and that one can only receive such a baptism if he/she earnestly seeks it. However, proponents of this view conveniently ignore incidents where people were baptized with the Holy Spirit at conversion, and without any period of seeking (Acts 10:44-48). Jesus had already promised that the Holy Spirit would come, so this was a prayer of expectation.[1]

B. How do we receive the power of the Holy Spirit today?
   1. If you have trusted in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then God's Holy Spirit lives in you (Romans 8:9; Galatians 3:2).
   2. In Ephesians 5:18, the apostle Paul said, "Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." In the original Greek language, the word "filled" is a present passive imperative.
      a. The *present* tense implies a continuing action rather than a once-and-for all experience.
      b. The *passive* voice means God does the filling, not you.
      c. The *imperative* mode means it is a command. It is just as much a sin not to be filled with the Spirit as it is to be drunk with wine.

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- If you want to learn more about the work of the Holy Spirit, I highly recommend two books: *The Holy Spirit*, by Billy Graham, and *The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life*, by Charles Stanley.

Conclusion: I was ten years old when the first "Star Wars" movie was released. If you've seen any of those movies, you know they talk a great deal about "the Force". Some people equate the Holy Spirit with some type of impersonal force, but He is much more than that. He is the third Person of the Trinity. Why is it so important for us to maintain that distinction? R.A. Torrey said it as well as anyone: "If we think of the Holy Spirit merely as a power or influence, our thought will be, 'How can I get more of the Holy Spirit?' but if we think of Him as a divine Person, our thought will be, 'How can the Holy Spirit get more of me?' The former conception leads to self-exaltation; the latter conception to self-humiliation, self-emptying, and self-renunciation."[2] If you want to be an effective witness for Christ, let the Holy Spirit get more of you!

[1] One of the best treatments I've seen of this subject is an article by Dr. Jimmy A. Millikin, "The Holy Spirit, Tongues, and the 'Pentecostal Experience' in the Book of Acts", *Mid-America Theological Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 69-81.

[2] R.A Torrey, "The Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit", *The Fundamentals*, (reprinted without alteration or abridgement from the original four-volume edition issued by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles in 1917), Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000, vol. 2, pp. 323-324.

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