



# ENCOUNTER

“YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER... AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES...”

—JESUS

**Experiencing the Power and Witness of the Holy Spirit.**

**A 21-day, self-study in the book of Acts.**

**Jeremy M. Gwaltney**

Dear Harvest,

Last summer in preparation to celebrate our 50th year as a church, I got the joy and privilege of conducting almost three hours of interviews with our two previous pastors, Vic Hildebrand and Steve Chupp. Both of them had their spiritual life and passion shaped by a remarkable encounter with the Holy Spirit known as the “Jesus Movement” of the 1970s. It was this encounter with the Holy Spirit that formed our church and is at the center of our DNA as a spiritual family.

Listening to their stories I became keenly aware of several things that I deeply want for our church family today.

*#1) A powerful move of the Holy Spirit.* Fifty years ago, God was visiting His people all over the world, and here in in Goshen, with a book of Acts-like move of His Spirit. Churches were born, miracles happened, and the Gospel was spread all over the world.

*#2) It was not manufactured.* A genuine move of the Holy Spirit is meant to be just that — genuine. Anytime we try to recreate something in our own effort, it becomes either dry spirituality or a form of idolatry. This was not the case in the time of our founding. Hungry people, seeking an encounter with the living God, found Him! And they found Him in remarkable ways.

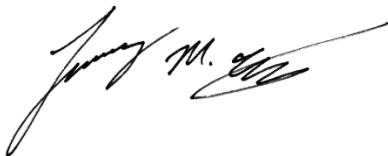
*#3) Expectancy.* Steve Chupp said it best in our interview, “people came each week just looking to see what God was going to do!” There was a belief that God Himself would show in significant ways every time the people gathered. This, in turn, made people eager to seek Him more!

*#4) A longing.* It is a longing for us as a congregation to encounter a fresh move of the Holy Spirit! Notice, I said “fresh.” I want something that is as powerful as what God did 50 years ago, but specifically for this time, this moment, this generation. I want us to hunger for Him in new and powerful ways. I want the God of the universe to show up and do whatever He pleases every time we gather.

This is what our Encounter 21-days of prayer and fasting is all about. A concentrated time at the beginning of our year to seek the Holy Spirit and ask Him for a fresh encounter. An encounter that is full of power and ignites our witness for Him. This devotional is a simple journey through the book of the Bible that started it all, the book of Acts. My hope is that a fresh

look at this book will spark a flame of desire for a fresh encounter with Jesus.

Let's begin!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy M. Gwaltney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeremy M. Gwaltney  
Lead Pastor  
Harvest Community Church

## *WEEK 1*

*Focus Point: Expect an Encounter*

## *Week #1*

### *Focus Point: Expect an Encounter*

One of my favorite things about the book of Acts is that Jesus is gone by verse 9 of chapter 1, and yet, *Jesus commands the entire action of the entire book.*

It is Jesus who says, “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”<sup>1</sup> It is Jesus who says, “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 ends of the earth.”<sup>2</sup>

The rest of the book is watching the amazing encounter that Jesus’ disciples — His church — has with the Holy Spirit. And then watching this Holy Spirit-witness of Jesus explode; first in Jerusalem<sup>3</sup>, then into Judea and Samaria<sup>4</sup>, and ending at the far reaches of the Roman Empire<sup>5</sup>. Every action in this entire book is commanded by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

This is why Luke wrote to Theophilus, “I have dealt with all that Jesus *began* to do and teach...”<sup>6</sup> Jesus is still doing. Jesus is still teaching. He is just using us by the power of the filling of His gift of the Holy Spirit.

I believe that over the next 21 Days, Jesus wants to begin, again, to do a mighty work in Harvest. He wants to fill us with the power of His Spirit to be a witness to our world. He wants us to be changed forever, and He wants us to reach our city, region, and world. This is my prayer for us. This is my prayer for you.

Let me encourage you to engage with one of the most important secret ingredients to this calling and power: the ingredient of *expectancy*.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:5 — All Scripture references are in the ESV version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 1:8

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2

<sup>4</sup> Acts 9:31

<sup>5</sup> Acts 28:16

<sup>6</sup> Acts 1:1

Skepticism kills faith. We know from Matthew's account of Jesus' last moment on earth that there was doubt in that gathering.<sup>7</sup> But the overwhelming sentiment is one of anticipation. One of expectancy!

There was an expectancy to see Jesus after the resurrection (v.3). There was an expectancy of the promise of the Holy Spirit (v.4). There was an expectancy that Jesus would restore Israel (v.6). There was an anticipation of something big about to happen. The disciples just didn't know what it would be.

Then Jesus said it... "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses..."

They were to wait and seek the power and filling of the Holy Spirit. In fact, they were not to depart from Jerusalem until they got this power and filling from the Holy Spirit. They had expected something, and Jesus told them what to look for. So what did they do?

*All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer... — Acts 1:14a (ESV)*

They came together and they prayed. They prayed for a long time — more than a month!

Their expectancy was matched with prayer. And at the right time, in the right moment, Jesus poured out the power of the Holy Spirit on all of them and the church exploded onto the scene with Pentecostal fire! The world would never be the same.

Before you jump into this 21-day journey let me ask you, *what is your level of expectation?*

Do you believe God can impact your life? Do you believe God can change something in you forever? Is there something you want God to do? Is there a power that you are lacking? Are you ready to see and ask for His Holy Spirit power and witness?

God is all powerful and sovereign. He can do whatever He wants when He wants. But He LOVES IT when we come to Him and expect Him to do

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 28:17

something great in our lives. This was part of the power at Pentecost in Acts 2; a group of people seeking and praying because they expected God to move!

Are you ready to come together these next three weeks expecting Him to move? If so, let's jump in and begin to seek Him together. Let's ask Jesus to help us encounter the power of His Holy Spirit so that we can be His witnesses to the world.

Day 1  
Reading: Acts 1-2

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice that Jesus says in Acts 1:8 that His disciples will receive “power” from the Holy Spirit and be “my witnesses” when the Holy Spirit falls upon them. Notice what the Holy Spirit power of speaking in tongues is doing for those hearing them speak: Acts 2:6, 11.

Notice who the power of the Holy Spirit is for: Acts 2:17-21



*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 2  
Reading: Acts 3

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice that Jesus says in Acts 1:8 that His disciples will receive “power” from the Holy Spirit and be “my witnesses” when the Holy Spirit falls upon them. Notice what the Holy Spirit power to heal is doing for those hearing them speak: Acts 3:11:19.

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 3  
Reading: Acts 4

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice that Jesus says in Acts 1:8 that His disciples will receive “power” from the Holy Spirit and be “my witnesses” when the Holy Spirit falls upon them. Notice what the Holy Spirit power of healing is doing for those before the council: Acts 4:16-22.

Notice how the power of the Holy Spirit is changing people: Acts 4:32-34

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 4  
Reading: Acts 5

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice that Jesus says in Acts 1:8 that His disciples will receive “power” from the Holy Spirit and be “my witnesses” when the Holy Spirit falls upon them. Notice what the Holy Spirit power of the Holy Spirit is doing while the disciples are being persecuted as witnesses of Jesus: Acts 5:41-42.

Notice what the power of the Holy Spirit is doing: Acts 5:12-16

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 5  
Reading: Acts 6-7

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice the requirements of the men who were to serve food to the widows:  
Acts 6:3

Notice how Luke describes Stephen: Acts 6:5

Notice the power that the Holy Spirit gave Stephen: Acts 6:8

Notice the legacy of Stephen's witness: Acts 7:55-8:1



*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 6  
Reading: Acts 8

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice that Jesus says in Acts 1:8 that His disciples will receive “power” from the Holy Spirit and be “my witnesses in Jerusalem in Judea and Samaria.” Notice where the witness of Jesus is taking His disciples: Acts 8:4-5.

Notice the power of the Holy Spirit: Acts 8:7

Notice the results: Acts 8:8

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 7  
Reading: Acts 9

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice that Jesus says in Acts 1:8 that His disciples will receive “power” from the Holy Spirit and be “my witnesses” when the Holy Spirit falls upon them. Notice Paul’s calling: Acts 9:15-16

Notice the power of Paul’s calling: Acts 9:17-19

Notice where the church has spread to and how it is operating: Acts 9:31

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

## *WEEK 2*

*Focus Point: Encounter the Power*

## *Week #2*

### *Focus Point: Encounter the Power*

It is remarkable to me to see all the ways that the Holy Spirit moved with supernatural power in the book of Acts. What begins as small flame-like tongues appearing on top of people's heads in Acts 2, soon set the entire Roman Empire ablaze. It begins with the Spirit empowering the disciples to proclaim the Gospel in languages they had never learned, then Peter — the great denier of Christ — standing in front of thousands to interpret ancient prophecy, then Peter and John healing a lame beggar by the temple gate, and on and on it went. Supernatural encounter after supernatural encounter.

This is because the supernatural God dwells in you through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the gift Jesus gave to us, His Church, as the result of taking the throne of Heaven after His death, resurrection, and ascension.<sup>8</sup> It is the power of the Holy Spirit that verifies in our life and to the world that the Kingdom of Jesus is the only true and lasting Kingdom because it is an eternal and supernatural Kingdom.

I mentioned in week one, that Acts 1:8 shows us how Jesus directs everything in His church. His witness is to go out to Jerusalem, Judea, and to the ends of the earth. But His directions are carried by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. That is why there is hardly a page in the book of Acts in which a miracle, healing, or supernatural revelation does not take place.

Which begs the question: *Why would we, the people of Jesus' supernatural church, ever try to do anything without His supernatural power?*

We are in relationship with a supernatural God. A God that can bend all of creation to His will whenever and however He pleases. This God chose to dwell in you by His Holy Spirit. And Jesus said it is that power of the Holy Spirit that allows us to take His witness to our world.

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<sup>8</sup> Acts 2:33

This week as you read through Acts my prayer is that you would begin to realize and yearn for a greater sense of the Holy Spirit's supernatural power in your life. Not only that, I pray that you would see this supernatural power come to pass in the weeks ahead.

Does the power of the Holy Spirit mean that you will raise the dead, speak in a language you do not know, receive a supernatural dream, or boldly proclaim Jesus in a public setting (let's pray so!)? Not necessarily. Remember, the Holy Spirit filled Stephen to serve food for the widows. Barnabas was called by the Holy Spirit to sell a field and give all the proceeds to the church. Such simple, almost ordinary acts of obedience — but empowered by the Holy Spirit.

What were the results of these acts of submission and obedience to the Holy Spirit's command? Stephen preached the sermon and then died while Saul of Tarsus watched. Stephen's sermon would then become the basis for Saul's (who becomes Paul) theology. Where does Saul become Paul and get his training in ministry? As you will read about this week, Barnabas, who has now, by the power of the Spirit, become an apostle at the church in Antioch, will take Paul under his wing and lead him on his first missionary journey.

All of this came about because Stephen, Barnabas and Paul all encountered the power of the Holy Spirit!

I want to encourage you this week as you read and study to allow God to become a supernatural God to you! Ask the Holy Spirit to birth in you a greater desire for Him. Allow God to make you hungry for more of the Holy Spirit's power in your life.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what He wants you to do?

It might be praying for someone who is sick. It might be signing up to serve in a ministry at Harvest. It might be to give financially to something.

But if you step out in faith, it will be supernatural and God will use it to advance His witness.

Let's do supernatural work in supernatural power!



Day 8  
Reading: Acts 10-11:18

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice how the power of the Holy Spirit is working: Acts 10:3-5, 9-13, 44-46

Notice the witness that results from the power: Acts 9:45-48, 10:16-18

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*



*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 10  
Reading: Acts 13-14

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice the power and mission of the Holy Spirit: Acts 13:2-4

Notice the power of the witness: Acts 13:48, 14:3

Notice the cost of the witness: Acts 14:19-21

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 11  
Reading: Acts 15

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice what the power of the Holy Spirit is doing in the church: Acts 15:7-11

Notice how it is changing the witness: Acts 15:19

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*



Day 12  
Reading: Acts 16

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice how the power of the Holy Spirit shaped Paul's mission: Acts 16:6-10

Notice the result of the witness: Acts 16:29-34

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 13  
Reading: Acts 17

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice how the witness of Jesus encounters difficulty: Acts 17:5, 6-7, 13, 32.

Notice the persistence of Paul: Acts 17:34

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 14  
Reading: Acts 18

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice how the Spirit reveals Jesus to empower His witness: Acts 18:9-10

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

## *WEEK 3*

*Focus Point: Respond to the  
Encounter*

## *Week 3*

### *Focus Point: Respond to the Encounter*

One of the things I love about the account of God moving in Acts is that people are driven to respond. As you read you will notice that there are very few casual observers. The power of the Holy Spirit, the signs and wonders, the message of Jesus, all demands a response!

In Acts 1-2...

- When Jesus said you will receive the Holy Spirit, the disciples respond with a question about the end times.
- When Jesus tells them to wait until they receive power, the disciples respond with prayer.
- When Peter explains what is happening at Pentecost, the people respond, “what shall we do?”
- When Peter told them, 3,000 responded by receiving the word and being baptized.
- Then those 3,000 responded by forming the first church in Jerusalem.

Every encounter with Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or the message had a response. Most of them were life changing.

On Sunday, Monday and Tuesday of this week, we are going to gather to worship Jesus and ask the Holy Spirit to impact us with His power and witness. We have spent two weeks preparing for this event. We invested our faith into expecting an encounter with the Holy Spirit. We have asked the Holy Spirit to reveal His power to us.

My question to you is, *how will you respond?*

Now is our time. Now is your time. I want to encourage you to respond in the following ways.



*#1) Respond by showing up.* Take the time to come, worship, and seek God.

*#2) Respond with expectancy.* Take time to ask, “what does God want to do in me?”

*#3) Respond with surrender.* As you worship, as you hear the Word preached, as you sense the Holy Spirit moving; surrender to Him. Let’s allow Him to do supernatural things in our hearts and lives.

I believe this is an empowering moment in an empowering year for Harvest. A moment that has the potential to change your life forever, change our church forever, and change our region and world forever.

Let’s respond to the Holy Spirit!

Day 15  
Reading: Acts 19-20

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice what the power of the Holy Spirit is doing through Paul: Acts 19:11

Notice the power of the witness: Acts 19:17-20

Notice what the Holy Spirit is saying to Paul about his testimony: Acts 20:22-24

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*



*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 17  
Reading: Acts 22:30-24:21

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice the power of the Holy Spirit to encourage Paul: Acts 22:11

Notice the power of the witness: Acts 22:30, 23:31-33,

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 18  
Reading: Acts 24:22-25:12

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice the influence of witness Paul is having: Acts 24:24-25, 25:1, 7, 12



*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 19  
Reading: Acts 25:13-26

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice the influence Paul's witness is having: Acts 25:23

Notice the power of Paul's witness: Acts 26:26-29

Notice what Paul is doing for the witness of Jesus: Acts 26:32

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 20  
Reading: Acts 27

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice how the Spirit reveals the ship's rescue and notice why: Acts 27:21-25

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

Day 21  
Reading: Acts 28

*Thought Questions:*

- Is there a person or detail in the reading that you identify with the most? Why?
  
- What verse stands out to you the most? Why?
  
- What in the reading most inspired you to encounter the Holy Spirit? Why?

*Key Detail:*

Notice how the Spirit empowered Paul: Acts 28:3-9

Notice the extent of Paul's witness: Acts 28:16, 30-31

*What is something in your reading that you can apply to your life today?*

*What are you praying for today?*

## *Reflection*

Before we close out this study, let's pause before rushing off too quickly to other things. Let's take some time to review what the Holy Spirit has done in our hearts in the last three weeks.

Below are a series of reflection questions. Take time over the next week to answer and reflect upon them.

### Reflection Day One:

- What did you give up as part of your 21-day fast?
  
- How did that help you encounter the Holy Spirit?
  
- Will you add this thing back into your life? If so, how will you be different than before?



- What answers to prayer did God give these last three weeks?

- What are you praying for today?



### Reflection Day Three:

- Take some time to review your notes from week one of this study.
- What impacted you most from that week?
- How did this encounter change your life/perspective?
- How will you remember it going forward?
- What are you praying for today?

### Reflection Day Four:

- Take some time to review your notes from week two of this study.
- What impacted you most from that week?
- How did this encounter change your life/perspective?
- How will you remember it going forward?
- What are you praying for today?

### Reflection Day Five:

- Take some time to review your notes from week three of this study.
- What impacted you most from that week?
- How did this encounter change your life/perspective?
- How will you remember it going forward?
- What are you praying for today?