**The Dangers of Running on Empty**

*I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.*

*He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

*And I will do whatever you ask in my name,*

*so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.*

*You may ask me for anything in my name,*

*and I will do it.*

(John 14:12-14)

**I was Robbed:** Growing up I was robbed of God’s power. I don’t recall seeing miracles – no blind person ever got their sight back, no lame person ever got up and walked, and God never shook the place in which we were meeting. Oh, we spoke much about God’s mighty acts in the Bible and preached often about them, but apart from the miracle of salvation I do not recall having a first-hand experience of the power of God! But wait I do recall being miraculously healed as a young boy of 7 years from an incurable disease so maybe the problem was not on God’s side!!! But no one spoke about it or expected it to happen again.

*It was like we were running on empty! We are supposed to be filled with God – with his presence and His power but we end up doing life and ministry in our own strength!*

**Reflect and Share:**

Indicate where you find yourself living and ministering at the moment and share it with your neighbour:



**1. Jesus and the Power of God**

Jesus announced the coming of God's reign and backed up his claim by doing wonders (Mark 1:21-2:12):

(1) He drove out an unclean spirit.

(2) He healed Peter's mother-in-law and others.

(3) He cast out demons throughout Galilee.

(4) He cleansed a leper and healed a paralytic.

Jesus spent the night in prayer before choosing the apostles and then went on to heal all the people. (Luke 6:12-19)

God’s power was a key feature of Jesus as the Messiah. When John the Baptist wanted to know if Jesus was the promised one, Jesus answered: *"Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."* (Luke 7:22).

The book of John says that Jesus did many more miracles than what were recorded. (John 20:30-31)

**2. The Disciples and the Power of God**

In what ways was the power of God seen in the lives of the early disciples?

(1) Matthew 10:1,7-8 - Jesus gave his disciples authority to drive out demons, heal the sick, raise the dead and cleanse lepers.

(2) Mark 6:13 - The disciple drove out demons and healed sick people.

(3) Luke 10:1-2,9,17 - The disciples healed the sick and the demons submitted to them.

(4) Mark 16:15-18 - Jesus commissioned his disciples drive out demons, speak in new tongues, pick up snakes unharmed, and to heal sick people.

Jesus said that his followers would: (1) Do greater things than he did (John 14:12). (2) Heal sick people (Mark 16:18). (3) Cast out demons (Luke 9:1-2). (4) Receive power to be witnesses (Acts 1:8).

Jesus commissioned his disciples: *“As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.”* (Matthew 10:7-8)

Jesus led a ministry filled with the power of God: *“At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.”* (Luke 7:21)

**3. The Early Church and the Power of God**

In what ways was the power of God seen in the life of the early church?

(1) Acts 1:8 - They would receive power to be witnesses.

(2) Acts 2:1-4 - They were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

(3) Acts 2:14-41 - The apostles did many wonders and miraculous signs.
(4) Acts 2:42-47 - Peter and John headed a man who had been crippled from birth.

(5) Acts 3:1-10 - God shook the place where they were meeting and they were filled with the Spirit spoke the Word of God boldly. These were the same group of people who were filled in Acts 2.

(6) Acts 5:1-11 - Peter knew that Ananias and Sapphira had lied and they saw God take their lives
(7) Acts 5:12-16 - Peter’s shadow healed people and the sick and tormented were healed.

(8) Acts 6:8 - Peter’s shadow healed people and the sick and tormented were healed.

(9) Acts 8:5-8 - Philip did miraculous signs, drove out evil spirits and healed people who were cripple.

(10) Acts 9:36-43 - Peter healed Tabitha.

(11) Acts 12:6-7 - Peter is freed from prison.

(12) Acts 14:1-4 - God proved their message was true by giving them power to do miracles.

(13) Acts 14:8-10 - Paul healed the lame man.

(14) Acts 16:16-18 - Paul cast an evil spirit out of a slave girl.

(15) Acts 19:11-12 - God did extraordinary miracles through Paul.

(16) Acts 20:9-12 - Paul raised Eutychus from the dead.

Some other instances outside of the book of Acts:

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 - Paul’s preaching was followed by a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 - The Gifts of the Spirit include the ability to do miracles, heal the sick, etc.

James 5:14-18 - Elders are given power to pray for the sick and they recover.

**Summary:** The church was born through a mighty demonstration of God’s power and continued to manifest the miraculous, which was an overflow of the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the disciples and other believers.

**4. Your Journey in the Power of God**

**Group Sharing:**

How have you experienced the power of God in your life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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How do you want to experience the power of God in your life? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**5. My Journey in the Power of God**

Here are some of the ways that I have experienced God’s power in recent years:

**(1) Healing the Sick:** While doing Sonlife training in Malawi some years back God’s power healed a young boy name Paul of malaria when a friend and I climbed a mountain to pray for him after a long day of training.

**(2) Raising the Dead:** About 6 years back a young man stopped breathing during one of our youth services and after trying to get a doctor from the main sanctuary, I realised the only option left was to pray that God would raise him from the dead. As I prayed on the microphone for God to send his power and raise him to life, Neo lifted up his upper body and took a massive gulp of air. He spent a few days in hospital for some tests to be run but he is very much alive and was at church a few weeks back.

**(3) Driving out Demons:** I have had two recent experiences where demons have manifested – one in our youth room where I prayed for a high schooler who was clearly manifesting and he was set free and now sings in the worship band at church. On another occasion I was attending a Victory Weekend and I had the privilege of praying for one of our car guards who was experiencing violent demon activity and he was delivered – that experience was a little scary but God’s power is always greater than the devils!

**(4) Praying for People:** There have been countless time in youth or during our main services at church where I have had the privilege of praying for people to either be filled with the Holy Spirit, or to be set free from something that has them in bondage and there has been clear signs that God’s power has flowed through me - including a strange manifestation where my hand shakes as God’s power flow through me to the person.

**(5) Prophesying Over People:** On many occasions I have received words of knowledge for people or have shared personal prophecies for people. One example was speaking over our previous lead pastor where I saw a vision of a rod that he had taken up that was inscribed with two words (Integrity and Truth) and these words have clearly reflected his ministry over the past ten years. I have also been on the receiving end of numerous prophecies that has spoken accurately into my life and where God has subsequently led me.

**(6) Facilitating God Encounters:** I have had the privilege of setting up on two occasions a unique experience of God’s power among youth in our ministry - something we called The Power Stations experiences - and have seen youth receive an infilling of power, power to witness, healing from a sickness, miracles for themselves or others, as well as deliverance from something that was keeping them in bondage.

**(7) Facilitating Victory Experiences:** I have also had the privilege of leading one of the key interventions designed by our movement to help people gain victory in their lives. I have done it in the context of a youth camp, presented it over a weekend, presented it on four occasions over a 10 week Sunday morning journey and also got to lead it as a camp fro youth from Namibia and Botswana in Ghanz, Botswana in July 2017. On each occasions in these various formats the power of God was been clearly evidence as breakthrough is experienced by youth or adults.

**Guided Reflection: Leaving the Boat**

As I read this story, I want you to place yourself in the story and hear what Jesus is saying to you:

*During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."* (Matthew 14:25-33)

(1) How has Jesus challenged you in this session to step out of your boat – your comfort zone?

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(2) What do you think Jesus is calling you to do as he calls you to “walk on water”?

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(3) As you consider the risks of a life of faith, what do you believe Jesus will do for you?

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*For this reason [grasping the greatness of this plan by which Jews and Gentiles are joined together in Christ] I bow my knees [in reverence] before the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ], from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name [God--the first and ultimate Father]. May He grant you out of the riches of His glory, to be strengthened and spiritually energized with power through His Spirit in your inner self, [indwelling your innermost being and personality], so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through your faith. And may you, having been [deeply] rooted and [securely] grounded in love, be fully capable of comprehending with all the saints (God’s people) the width and length and height and depth of His love [fully experiencing that amazing, endless love]; and [that you may come] to know [practically, through personal experience] the love of Christ which far surpasses [mere] knowledge [without experience], that you may be filled up [throughout your being] to all the fullness of God [so that you may have the richest experience of God’s presence in your lives, completely filled and flooded with God Himself]*. (Ephesians 3:14-19 AMP)

So, how can we be Spirit-filled?

John Piper says there are 2 ways: (1) Use God’s Means and (2) Ask God to Fill You.

There are a number of means that God uses to fill us - here are three important ones:

**1. Drink the Word:** Get into the Word every day and you will be topped up.

**2. Stop the Leaks.** Avoid temptation, walk in the light and confess sin quickly! Sin makes us leak and we will soon become empty if we don’t stop the leaks.

**3. Receive from Others:** Hang around refreshing people so they can keep you filled!

Let’s ask God to fill us with his Holy Spirit. If you are feeling empty or if it has been a while since you asked God to fill you, then come forward and our leaders from various churches will pray for you.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, help me to do great things as though they were little*

*since I do them with your power,*

*and little things as though they were great*

*since I do them in your name.*

(Blaise Pascal)