



## **Week Six Prayer Focus – Jesus’ Power for His Mission**

**Ask the Lord Jesus to pour the Holy Spirit out on Belmont Church and give us hearts to receive the Holy Spirit without fear or limitations; ask Him to help us pursue the fullness of the Holy Spirit together with the fullness of the Word of God, in humility, unity and thankfulness; pray for us to change so that the Lord Jesus can lead Belmont as a family into our best days, all for His glory alone.**

### **Jesus’ Power**

In Acts 4 we see Jesus’ fledgling church is in an impossible situation. Their leaders, Peter and John, have just been released from prison and attempts to threaten and intimidate them to stop talking about Jesus. The religious establishment had just conspired and murdered the long-awaited Messiah. Entrenched in their system for hundreds of years, they were still trying to maintain their position through violence and manipulation. But the disciples had had their encounter with the risen King Jesus. They received a commission from their Lord, and they must not fail. Jesus had trained them in a 40-day intensive Bible study, taught by the Lord himself. He opened their minds supernaturally to understand what they had no doubt read for years. They waited as instructed and experienced the first glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, foretold centuries before, and saw as the Lord added 3,000 souls to His family in one day in response to the miracle of tongues and a single message. Now, Peter and John healed a man crippled from birth in Jesus’ name, and as a result the message about Jesus and His resurrection was preached and 5,000 men believed!

The response of the religious leaders is swift yet restrained at this point, because all the people recognized a great miracle had taken place. Jesus’ followers know if they continue it could cost them their lives, and they turn urgently to the Lord. They know they can do nothing without God’s power, so they pray. “So now, Lord, take note of their threats; and enable your slaves to speak your message with boldness! Stretch out your hand to heal and to do signs and miracles through the name of your holy servant Jesus!” Then this shocking account follows: even before they could finish praying, the place began to shake all around them! They were all filled with the Holy Spirit – again – and received power to speak God’s message with boldness.

### ***Conversation Starters with Jesus***

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you whether there is anything in your life that is putting out His fire or limiting His power in your life.

Lee Grady challenged us not to settle for being a “normal church” or for just a trickle of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How is the flow of the Holy Spirit in your life, your family, your work, your service for Jesus?

Ask the Father is there is anything He wants to say to you or show you about the ministry of the Holy Spirit to you and through you.

### Receive the Holy Spirit – No Law But the Holy Spirit

I grew up and came to Jesus in a large, traditional denomination that taught the gifts of the Holy Spirit were not for today. When the Bible was complete, that made the Holy Spirit obsolete, they said. Actually, God rarely if ever spoke anymore and people were left to find whatever they needed in the Scriptures, or rely on their own reasoning. At the same time, we had many rules we were told to follow in order please God, and if we did not follow them, we could expect some sort of reckoning, either from people, from God or both. Yes, yes we were saved through the cross, but it seemed like grace ended there. There was much truth and value in my spiritual upbringing, but it was significantly limited. While I deeply wanted to love and serve God with all my life, I had a serious problem: it is impossible without the help of the Holy Spirit!

The notion that the Holy Spirit is not for today is nowhere to be found in the Word of God. In fact, I believe it was more likely a doctrine that evolved over time to explain our experience and justify our lack of power. Rationality and pride developed a cover so we would not have to examine ourselves to see whether or not we look very much like Jesus. Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit means there is no longer any need for a list of dos and don'ts. The Bible teaching that we cannot even understand the things of God without the Holy Spirit! The entirety of our ministry is, through the good news of Jesus, to cause people to obtain and be governed by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3-4) – not controlled by religion or leaders or rules, not living in defeat trying to keep up outward shows of “respectable living,” at the same time hiding our hearts that remain stunted and untransformed. A wise mentor told me something in passing that I have never forgotten. I asked what was the “right thing” to do in the face of a particular moral dilemma. The answer was so simple and practical. Rather than pointing me to a rule or principle, the mentor bypassed all and pointed me to God: “No law but the Holy Spirit.”

So, we look back again at the first time the Lord Jesus with the wounds of his suffering still marking His hands, says to His followers, “**Receive** the Holy Spirit.” John records something noteworthy about Jesus' words. First, Jesus **breathed** on them. I have often wondered why He did that, for there is nothing the Savior does without purpose. Perhaps He is making a connection to the first time the Living God breathed on a man, when He formed the first person and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. A new race came into existence, and sin and death soon corrupted that race through Adam's disobedience and prideful unbelief. When Jesus breathes on His followers, perhaps He is announcing the beginning of a new redeemed race, dead to sin and alive to God forever, new creations in Messiah Jesus, people of the Holy Spirit. However, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian church, “Having begun with the Spirit's power, do you think you can reach the goal under your own power?” (Galatians 3:3.)

### **Conversation Starters with Jesus**

*What difference would it make in your life if you settled it that you are truly dead to sin, and sin is dead to you?*

*Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see places where having begun your life in Jesus with the Holy Spirit's power, you have tried to direct your life in your own power.*

*What would Belmont Church look like if we everything we did was done in the Spirit's power?*