

You Don't Have to Act Christian

*Plugged into the Source:
living in the power of the Spirit*
July 17 & 18, 2010

Intro:

I was talking to a friend who works at 7-11 about the popularity of energy drinks. Apparently a lot of people around here are in need of a boost. It's actually a global trend. *RedBull*, the biggest seller, is a Thai drink made by an Austrian company. The can claims it *improves performance, increases endurance and concentration*. I hope you don't feel like you need one right now!

Rockstar Energy drink: Bigger, Better, Faster, Stronger. This is appealing to someone who feels low on fuel.

AMP energy: gets you focused and ready for anything life throws at you! AMP energy keeps you connected and on top of your game at all times. Amp energy: more power to you! That is what we need! And you can get this stuff in pill form too.

Up TIME: Perfecting the power to achieve!

These slogans remind us of a universal need for power. *We all need power to live life to the fullest.* We want to get the most out of every opportunity. We all want to tap some source to help us maximize our performance in life. These products claim that they provide the needed power! They promise a serious rush. Somehow I have to wonder if users won't find that *what goes up must come down. We all need power, but not just a temporary high. We'd like a more permanent solution to our need, not just for our muscles, but also for our attitudes, abilities. Our need is not just physical; we also need spiritual strength and stamina.*

Think of the way you feel in the morning before your coffee - you just can't get going - you're *dragging* and you'd just as soon give up and crawl back under the covers. Is this picture an analogy of your spiritual life?

Maybe you've come here today willing to admit: *I'm not doing a good job acting like a Christian. It's not working;*

something's missing. It could be that the *something* that has been missing is really a *someone!*

oThe key concept: The Holy Spirit is God's personal answer to our need for power to live the Christian life.

Think of how God works. God meets our needs with himself! As Jesus is God's personal answer to our need for power to *enter* the Christian life, so *the Holy Spirit is God's personal answer to our need for power to live the Christian life.* Jesus knew his followers would need strength to survive after he was crucified and resurrected. He promised them the indwelling Spirit. **Jn. 14:16 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever 17 ...the Spirit of truth.** Jesus said the constant inner presence of the Spirit would be even better than his physical presence! **16:7 - But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.** Notice the personal pronoun. Jesus isn't talking about a force but a person like him: the Holy Spirit. God didn't prescribe a pill. There is not something you can drink. God's answer to our need is personal. He gave himself. The Holy Spirit is *God within us*, empowering us to live like Christ. *God within: Jn 14:17 the Spirit ... lives with you and will be in you.* He takes up residence: **1 Cor 6:19 - body is temple of the Holy Spirit. Gal 4:6 God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.** He is our source of strength. **Zech 4:6 Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.**

We will be talking about the Holy Spirit in this new four-week series. When I was studying last fall for the lesson I taught on the Spirit in the *foundations* series, I decided I would come back to this topic and explore it in more detail. There are many facets of the Spirit's identity and ministry. We will focusing on four. Next week I'll talk about *walking in the Spirit*, then in sermon three we'll study *the fruit and gifts of the Spirit*. The last message in the series will be on *the filling of the Spirit*. And as you already know, today's lesson

is about *the power of the Spirit* - God's indwelling presence that empowers us to live for Christ!

T - Let's turn to **Acts 1:8** and see our key verse for the day.

oThe Key verse: Acts 1:8

"But 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."

Notice it starts with the word, *but*. This means it presents a contrast. The disciples had just been fretting over the timetable for end-times events. Jesus wanted them to get busy with what they should be doing in the meantime. *Be about my business right now and right here!*

This verse teaches *The Holy Spirit empowers Christians...*

More is needed to spread Christianity than political power. The secret is not a technique. The source is the Spirit.

Power is *dunamis*, from which we derived the English words *dynamite* and *dynamic*. Those words describe the explosive results of the Spirit coming on the disciples. They were *transformed* from doubting cowards into bold believers. This verse and the rest of Acts provide a reminder about the centrality of the supernatural element. Christianity doesn't work without God's power. **R.**

...to represent Christ... We are his *witnesses*. We are not to view ourselves as spiritual salesmen nor as recruiters. Witnesses describe what they experience. They don't try to con anyone; their function is to point to what is true. By his Spirit, *God empowers us to tell others about Jesus*.

People schedule *counseling* appointments with pastors, but they are often really *evangelism* and *discipleship* appointments. They are about *leading people to follow Jesus*. And I've seen God's power many times in this process. He provides the right words to say. It's as if he is in the room. *He is!* **Mark 13:11 - do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.**

We don't testify about *our church* but about *our Lord*. We are *his* witnesses. Jesus is the focus. Jesus described the Spirit: **Jn 15:26 - He will testify about me**. You don't harness the Spirit's power to do your will. He's God and cannot be controlled. He controls us. He doesn't exist to make your life easier. Their lives weren't easier! *Witness = martyr!*

Notice also it says we are to *be* witnesses, not to *do* witnessing. Of course, being a witness involves witnessing, but the stress is on our *identity* not *activity*. The point is subtle, but meaningful. As I was thinking about this on a long walk this week, I found myself confessing that I occupy myself more with *what I need to do* that *who I need to be*. Can you relate? God wants things done. But our activities come from our identity.

The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to represent Christ ...in ever-widening circles of influence...

Notice progression. *...in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*. Their influence and responsibility moved out through concentric circles. It started right where they lived, extended to the surrounding area, then the country next door. And it kept on going. This verse functions as an outline for the Book of Acts. It started in Jerusalem then moved throughout Judea. By Acts 8 we see Philip preaching to the Samaritans and the second half of the book records how Paul took the gospel to the world.

It's the same way with us. Representing Christ in the power of the Spirit starts at home. Talk about Jesus with your family. Do your kids see your faith in action? Do you discuss your spiritual life with your wife? I read the Psalms daily: *Declare what God has done*. Do it. Praise God!
T - Our responsibility starts with our families, but we're not to stop there. Everyone needs to see and hear about Jesus. He said we're to *be his witnesses to the ends of the earth*. *The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to represent Christ in ever-widening circles of influence...with no limit*. When it comes to representing Christ, we aren't to stop and say, *this far and no farther*. Christians are to cross cultural,

ethnic and geographical boundaries. We aren't to turn back when there are linguistic, economic or political differences.

Jesus set an example for his disciples by reaching out to Samaritans and Greeks. He urged his followers to have no regard for differences. They eventually got it. Jesus said he came to the whole world to save sinners. And he said, **John 20:21 - As the Father has sent me, so I send you. R.** This message tells us *how*: by the Spirit's power!

oThe key application: *To live without the power of the Holy Spirit within is to merely put on a show and act Christian. You don't want to live without God's power within!*

Without the Spirit, we are reduced to playing a role, just trying to imitate Christ on our own. No matter how good the act is; it is still just a show.

We've got a clip from the rock concert that will help me make my point. Live Aid was held simultaneously in London and Philadelphia back in 1985. 2 billion viewers in 60 countries watched the live broadcast. It featured the biggest acts of that era, including Sting, Phil Collins, U2, Queen, David Bowie, The Who, Elton John, CSN, Eric Clapton, Santana, Paul McCartney, Tom Petty, Neil Young, Mick Jagger, and Bob Dylan. **START VIDEO NOW.**

It also featured my old friend, Jeff Foskett, playing with the Beach Boys. Let me tell you about him. We met in the dorm at UCSB. That was the era of disco and we were desperate for an alternative. Jeff could imitate anyone - professors, etc. He started a retro band that covered mostly British Invasion acts from the '60's. He could sound just like the Beatles, Stones, Zombies, Animals, or anyone else he wanted to mimic. They were the ultimate cover-band.

A few years after college an old surf friend told me about an article in the LA Times saying that the Beach Boys were getting so old that they couldn't sing like they used to, but their concerts were getting better again because of Jeff. They hired Jeff to sing what they couldn't. He could copy the way they sounded in their prime. Jeff

went on to play with Paul McCartney, Heart, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Chicago, the Moody Blues, etc. He has earned over 40 Gold and Platinum Record awards and a Grammy. How did he get so far? He's a great impersonator. He can sound like what he is not. Is that how you have gotten so far spiritually? By honing a convincing impersonation?

Back when I knew Jeff, he professed to be a Christian. As such, **we are imitators of Christ (Eph 5:1).** How well do we do? I didn't do too well in those days because *I was doing it on my own*, trying to copy Christ in my own power, and not operating according to the power of the Spirit. I was copying certain Christian characteristics and I was pretty good at sounding like what I wasn't. I suppose I faked out a lot of people.

Some people may be talented mimics, but any imitation of Christ is a poor performance unless it is empowered supernaturally.

You may ask, *Is acting so bad? I just want others to think I'm godly.*

In the movie, Galaxy Quest, the past-their-prime cast of a Star Trek-like TV show are taken up into space by some misguided aliens who were in need of *some real space heroes*. The has-been star has to reveal that he's just an actor and it's all been just a show, but the alien's language has no word for pretending. It's a foreign concept. So to clarify, the aging actor has to admit that he's been *lying*. He's been acting according to what isn't true, playing a false role.

I wonder if your Christian life has just been an act up to this point, a poor imitation. We don't have to try copying Christ on our own. God wants to empower us from within. The Christian life isn't just an act, a pretend performance; it's a personal experience with our living God.

oThe key challenge: Acknowledge your need for supernatural strength and accept God's gift of the Spirit.

In Acts 1 we see the disciples waiting on the Spirit. We don't have to now, in fact he's waiting on us! He's here. When people think of the Spirit coming on people, they think of a *hysterical* thing, but it was a *historical* thing. Acts 2 documents the promised coming of the Spirit. **Rom 8:9** teaches that that if you're a Christian you already have the Spirit. But you may be living without his strength, just going through the motions.

It may be that you've honed your imitation and you've gotten pretty good at it now. I hope you've come to the point where you're willing to say, *I can't do this by myself!* That's when you can experience God's power. You can move past pretending. The act can end. **Prayer. Team.**