

## The Normal Christian Life: *Not Weak, Not Weird, Not Wandering*

### Week Six: *Clarifying Controversy*



Jesus told his disciples to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would infuse their lives with supernatural power to be his witnesses—to share the good news about Jesus with the world (**Acts 1:4-8**). This promise of the Holy Spirit's power is for us today as well (**Acts 2:39**). So, if the **baptism of the Holy Spirit** produces power for transformation, and this is the will of God for everyone, why do we not see a greater and more consistent outpouring of the Spirit in our day? The scriptures are clear on this promise: God is not standing in the way. We are. When we do not fully surrender to God, He cannot pour His Spirit out upon us. When we seek to maintain control of our lives—*or worse, to control others through power and manipulation*—God cannot baptize us with the Holy Spirit. God will not share His power with power mongers. The history of the church is replete with seasons of fleshly, unbiblical power and control that has often prevented God's movement. Let's discover how we can get out of God's way and allow Him to pour His power out upon us!

### So what? What am I supposed to DO with this?

- **Do I want God enough to trust Him** with supernatural power for ministry in my life?
- **Am I willing for God to refocus** my life's purpose to the building of others up in Jesus Christ? Do I consider ministry to be a more valuable focus for my life and energy?
- **Seek God relentlessly for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.** Ask Him to reveal the spiritual gifts He has given me.

### A Special 40-Day Prayer Emphasis:

During the fall season at Mt. Hope, we are challenging everyone to step into a focused, purposeful, and fervent prayer emphasis. In addition to the four daily readings from Acts, create some space each day this week to pray with the verses and examples provided later in this handout.

**This week**, make a commitment to *invest four blocks of time* to meditate on God's Word slowly and carefully, to reflect on the internal leanings of your own heart, and surrender to God for His help.

- You can also watch our **"Daily Six"** video series released each day this week—*Monday through Thursday*—that parallels these readings from the Book of Acts. (<https://www.youtube.com/@mounthopechurch1651>)

### Day One: *Would You Trust God with This?*

**Read slowly** and carefully meditate upon **Acts 9:1-19**.

**Reflect:** When we read last week about Stephen being martyred in **Acts 7:54 – 8:3**, the young man named Saul was there, so profoundly filled with bitterness and hatred for Christians that he had dedicated his entire life to killing as many as he could. But his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus demonstrates to us that God can get ahold of anyone whom He perceives is ready to respond. Saul's conversion to Christ was instantaneous. God then called Ananias to go minister the Word of God and healing to Saul. Ananias knew of Saul's murderous intent, but God asked him to trust His plans and agenda for Saul's life. Ananias had to trust the revelation from God that Saul had indeed given his life to Christ. He put his own safety at risk to do so, believing that wherever God leads, it is indeed good and trustworthy.

- *Before you trusted Christ, how hardened was your heart? Was there a moment in that process where you were more ready to trust Him than you or others would have perceived?*
- *When you consider sharing Christ with others, does your mind first go to a place of fear or anxiety at what uncomfortable relational dynamics might result? Do you envision having to defend Christ to someone antagonistic or hardened? Would you be more emboldened to share with someone who was already hungry to hear the truth of Jesus?*

**Pray:** *God, help me to trust the leading of your Holy Spirit and to believe you will not send me into harm's way without your power. Lead me into meaningful conversation with those in my life who are hungry and open to seeking you. Help me share faith in your power, not mine. In Jesus' name!* (**ALSO:** Consider praying **Psalm 40:1-11** as your own prayer to God!)

## **Day Two: How Thoroughly Have You Been Changed?**

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon [Acts 9:20-43](#).

**Reflect:** Saul's conversion to Christ was bold, instantaneous, and thorough. His change from being a hate-filled, murderous persecutor of Christians to being an instant and bold witness for the identity of Jesus is remarkable. Do you notice that he began to share his newfound faith in Jesus "at once" ([Acts 9:20](#))? He went to the very same synagogues where he had been preaching against Jesus and now began to prove who Jesus was to them. When God changes us, we do not need to wait for more understanding, more knowledge, more readiness. The thorough transformation of our lives is witness enough to the true power of Jesus.

- *Are you willing to share with others about your Jesus "at once," or do you feel you are not ready? What more do you feel you need to tell others about what Jesus has done for you?*
- *What do you fear about sharing Christ with others? Do you fear awkward relational dynamics or not having solid answers to people's questions? Can you trust that as God leads you to people who are ready to receive, your story is adequate for them?*

**Pray:** *God, help me overcome my fear that I am not enough. I confess to you that the power is not in me anyway, it is in you, in your Holy Spirit. Fill me with your Spirit to be useful and empowered as a witness for Jesus. Lead me to the conversations you want me to have, and when I am there, fill me with your words to make a difference. In Jesus' name!*

(ALSO: Consider praying [Psalm 96](#) as your own prayer to God!)

## **Day Three: God Knows Who is Ready**

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon [Acts 10:1-23](#).

**Reflect:** You may begin to see a pattern in this week's readings from Acts. God called Ananias to share faith with the murderous Saul who met Jesus ([Acts 9:10-17](#)). Saul began "at once" to share his faith ([Acts 9:20-31](#)). In today's reading, God calls Peter to stretch out of his comfort zone and share faith with a Roman centurion. Jews believed they were never to associate with Gentiles. Furthermore, Jews hated the tyrannical and oppressive Roman government. Cornelius was not only a Gentile, but a

commanding officer of a Roman military garrison. When he was turning to faith, Peter had to trust God for wisdom and power in the conversation. He went by faith, despite what his internal fears may have been saying.

- *Are there people in your life that you would simply prefer to not relate with? What makes you feel this way? How would you respond to God leading you into conversation with one of them?*
- *Can you trust God to lead you in sharing with whoever He would lead you to? Why or why not?*

**Pray:** *God, reveal to me how powerful is the "power" you promised when the Holy Spirit comes upon me ([Acts 1:8](#)). Help me to see how you empower me for conversations that I feel ill-prepared for or uncomfortable with. Lead me to those in my life that you want me to share Jesus. I will trust your strength and follow wherever you lead. In Jesus' name!*

(ALSO: Consider praying [Psalm 25](#) as your own prayer to God!)

## **Day Four: Another Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon [Acts 1:4-8](#) and [Acts 10:23-48](#).

**Reflect:** As Peter shared Jesus with Cornelius and his family, it became clear that the faith they were putting in Jesus was sincere. They professed nothing outwardly, but in a profound moment of God's outpouring, the disciples could see clearly that Cornelius and his family were being filled with the Holy Spirit just as they had been in [Acts 2:1-4](#). A similar manifestation of supernatural languages was given to them. Peter's response was to authenticate the sincerity of their faith by leading them to be baptized in water for their salvation. This story is another confirmation in scripture that a unique outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a normal part of the Christian experience. Sometimes, God just moves when He knows we are ready!

- *Would you be surprised to see God move upon you without expectation? What do you envision that would look like?*
- *Have you asked God to pour out His Holy Spirit upon you?*

**Pray:** *God, I want all that you have for me in your Holy Spirit. Help me to get out of your way and to let you take control of all my life. I surrender to you whatever you desire to do within me. Fill me! In Jesus' name!*

(ALSO: Consider praying [Psalm 37:3-11](#) as your own prayer to God!)

# Mt. Hope Church 40-Day Prayer Initiative

October – November 2024



For 40 days, would you join us in praying and fasting for God's provision and power to rest upon our church? Would you pray for a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life, in the lives of people connected with our church, and for the direction and ministry of our church?

Each day, pray over the Bible verses provided. Read the passage from scripture out loud, carefully, slowly. Use the example prayer to help you pull out of the verse some ideas of how you could put the prayer in your own words!

**ALSO:** Join us for a 24-Hour Prayer Vigil Saturday, November 9 through Sunday, November 10. The Mt. Hope family will sign up for 30-minute prayer times throughout a 24-hour period to call upon God for the future direction and provision for our church.

## DAY ONE:

*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

**Psalm 1:1-3**

- God, I delight in your Word...your counsel. I surrender any place in my mind where I am following the way of the sinful. I renounce the ideas and counsel of the ungodly in my life. I choose to meditate on your Word day and night. I believe and trust that you will bring prosperity to my endeavors as I meditate on your Word! In Jesus' name!
- God, pour out your Word into our church. Stir the people of Mt. Hope to be in the Word daily. Transform us by your Word. Reveal your Word to every one of us. Accomplish what you sent it to do in our lives! In Jesus' name!

## DAY TWO:

*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you.*

**Isaiah 26:3**

- Oh, God...you give me peace. I receive this peace in Jesus' name. I trust in your to be my safety in all my circumstances. Where I am stressed, I surrender it to you, and I believe you for my help and comfort. I renounce anxiety and restlessness. I stand steadfast in my trust of you, and claim a sound, peaceful, stable mind. In Jesus' name!

- God, strengthen the people of Mt. Hope. Lead us to rest and steadfast trust. Make us a church that is completely dependent upon you! In Jesus' name!

## DAY THREE:

*O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways... For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

**Psalm 139:1-5; 13-16**

- God, I thank you that you know every thought, every desire, every action, every initiative of my life. I thank you that you are with every detail of me. I renounce the lie of Satan that I am insufficient, broken, a failure, or incapable. I receive and stand in faith upon your intimate love over me. In Jesus' name!
- God, reveal to our church and our people the uniqueness you have created in us. Reveal to each of us the unique place we have in your church, and how the specific way you created each of us is for a purpose designed to build your church. In Jesus' name!

## DAY FOUR:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*

**Proverbs 3:5-6**

- God, I trust in you alone. I renounce my dependence upon my own understanding as all there is to truth, and I confess that your Word is more truthful than anything I can perceive. I acknowledge and confess that you are present with me in every moment and every circumstance, and I choose to trust you. In Jesus' name.
- God, lead our church to be a ministry of truth led by your Holy Spirit. Help us to make the leadership decisions in front of us by the wisdom and leading of the Spirit, and not by human understanding. Reveal yourself to us in our steps, our thoughts, our decisions, and our direction. In Jesus' name!

## DAY FIVE:

*"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."*

**Isaiah 1:18**

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.*

**Isaiah 43:18-19**

- I confess that in Jesus' name, I am forgiven and cleansed entirely. I renounce the lie that I am still marked and still defined by that sin. I confess that I am free, forgiven, cleansed, and accepted, in Jesus' name!
- God, cleanse us of any hidden sins, or any corporate sins that might be affecting our church. Wash us entirely in the gracious blood of Jesus for all that is wrong among us. In Jesus' name!

#### **DAY SIX:**

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*This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.*

**Isaiah 30:15**

- God, I rest in the grace and mercy of your salvation. I have given you my heart in repentance from my sin. Now, I sit quietly and trust. I renounce all shame and anxiousness over my past. I trust you to be my strength. In Jesus' name!
- God, as a people, as a church, we rest in you. We depend on you for our future. We submit ourselves to you. Help our pastor, our Elders, our board, our staff, and our leaders to rest solely and dependently upon you. In Jesus' name!

#### **DAY SEVEN:**

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*Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."*

**Isaiah 30:21**

- God, I receive your wisdom and guidance in my life. I trust that you will speak to me of all that you desire for me to do. I will not stand in my own strength and understanding but will trust in you. In Jesus' name!
- God, reveal your specific direction to us. In particular with the building expansion we are exploring, reveal precisely each step, each provision, each decision to us. In Jesus' name!

#### **DAY EIGHT:**

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*He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.*

**Isaiah 40:29-31**

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

**Matthew 11:28-30**

*"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

**2 Corinthians 12:9**

- God, I receive your strength. I renounce the lie that I am incapable, or that I have no strength left. My strength is not the issue; it is your strength, O God, in which I stand. I rejoice that your power is perfected in my weakness. I receive your power, rest, strength, energy, and way in my life. In Jesus' name!
- God, pour out your strength into our church. Provide power for healing, for victory, for deliverance, for freedom. Strengthen us for the tasks ahead and renew us from our weariness. In Jesus' name!

#### **DAY NINE:**

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*"No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD.*

**Isaiah 54:17**

- I rejoice that nothing the devil can forge against will prevail, for God is with me. Lord, I thank you that you will vindicate me. I renounce the lie that I must defend myself. I renounce any lie of the devil that seeks to hold me in fear. I am secure in the Lord Jesus Christ!
- God, protect us from the attacks of the enemy against our church and the people of our church. Deliver us from all evil, and from any evil spirits that are arrayed against us. In Jesus' name!

#### **DAY TEN:**

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*As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

**Isaiah 55:10-11**

*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

**Hebrews 4:12**

- God, accomplish your Word in my life. I receive your Word as all truth; I confess it is more authoritative than anything I can perceive. Divide and discern within me the true attitudes of my heart. I renounce all the lies the enemy sends against me, and I stand upon the Word of God as my victory. In Jesus' name!
- God, powerfully spread your Word through the teaching ministries of Mt. Hope Church. Enable every teacher, small group leader, mentor, and friend within our church to speak the Word of God boldly. In Jesus' name!

## DAY ELEVEN:

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*For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*

**Isaiah 57:15**

- God, I confess to you the contrite humility of my heart. I renounce the lie of my insufficiency and I renounce the pride and determination of my flesh. I accept the strength of your Spirit with in me. In Jesus' name!
- God, help our church to be humble and contrite before you. Help us not fall to the trappings of human success or popularity. Help us not to pursue a worldly polish to our ministry. We submit ourselves to you and trust you for your power to come solely from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name!

## DAY TWELVE:

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*“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’”*

**Isaiah 65:1**

- Thank you, God, for revealing yourself to me. I ask you to do the same for my friends and loved ones who are far from you. Chase after them, call to them, and reveal yourself to them. In Jesus' name!
- God, reveal yourself to everyone in Loudoun County through our church and the many other churches like us who are seeking your face. Pour out a mighty awakening and revival in our county. In Jesus' name!

## DAY THIRTEEN:

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*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.*

**Jeremiah 17:7-8**

- God, I confess that I am blessed in my dependance upon you. I will not fear the challenges, shortcomings, needs, and insufficiencies in my life, for you are with me. I trust that you will bring forth supply into my life. I renounce worry and fear. I receive joy, peace, and confidence from you. In Jesus' name!
- God, we trust you for provision, resources, and strength to accomplish what you desire in our church. You are enough for us. We do not need the power of man. We will not fear the absence of resources. We trust you have enough to supply us all we need. In Jesus' name!

## DAY FOURTEEN:

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*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord.*

**Jeremiah 29:11-14**

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

**Romans 8:28**

- God, I thank you that your plans for me are good. I stand in your hope. I renounce the lie that my future is bleak. I trust that you are with me, and that you are working in my life towards good outcomes. I choose to seek your face, to seek for all of you. I give you all of my heart. In Jesus' name!
- God, we trust you for the direction of this church. Lead us. Reveal to us where you are taking us and what you want to do next within it. Mt. Hope belongs to you. Please do your work here among us! In Jesus' name!

## DAY FIFTEEN:

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*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.” The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.*

**Lamentations 3:22-29**

- God, I rejoice that your mercy and love for me is constant and fresh every single day. I renounce the lie that the circumstances around me are too great. You are my portion; you are all that I need. I wait patiently for your salvation from all my concerns. I have hope in you. In Jesus' name!
- God, thank you for the healing you have brought to so many people at Mt. Hope. Continue to be the strength and deliverer of all of us. Rescue your people from the hardships that seek to consume them. Empower us to be a church of refuge and support to everyone in need. In Jesus' name!

## DAY SIXTEEN:

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*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

**Ezekiel 36:26-27**

*And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*

**Joel 2:28-29**

- God, I receive the new work you are doing in me. You have changed my heart. You have taken out the hardness and placed in me a soft spirit. I receive your Holy Spirit within me. Move me, O God, to follow you in all my ways. Pour out your Holy Spirit over me and lead me in new directions. In Jesus' name!
- God, pour out your Holy Spirit in a mighty baptism upon Mt. Hope. Fill us with your Spirit in the same way you filled the early church! In Jesus' name!

## DAY SEVENTEEN:

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*I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed.*

**Joel 2:25-26**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

- All the damage of my past has been restored by you, O God. Thank you for making me so brand new, that anything from my past no longer has a hold on me, and it no longer defines me. I receive the brand-new creation that you have formed in me. I renounce shame and I receive your new identity for me. I confess and rejoice that I am an entirely new creation—nothing of the old remains. All is made new, in Jesus' name!
- God, lead everyone who encounters Mt. Hope Church to a brand-new life. Restore the wounded and broken among us and through us! In Jesus' name!

## DAY EIGHTEEN:

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*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor...Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*

**Luke 4:18-19, 21**

- God, I rejoice that you have come to set the captive free. Free my friends and loved ones. Give them sight to see the fullness of your Gospel. Set them free from all demonic oppression. I renounce the devil's blinding of their minds. Reveal yourself to them. I stand upon the fulfillment of the promise of scripture that you will set them free, in Jesus' name!
- God, anoint Mt. Hope Church to proclaim the Gospel in our community. Use us powerfully. Draw the broken, the oppressed, the needy to our church to receive the Holy Spirit's power and deliverance over them! In Jesus' name!

## DAY NINETEEN:

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*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

**Luke 6:38**

- God, I receive the abundance you want to pour into my life in return and in measure with my generosity. Use that which I give to others and to your work. I trust you to meet my needs where my own provisions are insufficient. In Jesus' name!
- God, pour out abundant provision for the physical needs of our church. If you indeed are leading us to an expansion of our facility, we trust you to supernaturally provide for the financial resources to do so. Lead me—speak to me—about what part I should play in sacrificing with generosity for our future! In Jesus' name!

## DAY TWENTY:

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*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*

**Luke 10:18-19**

- God, I rejoice that you have written my name in the Book of Life, that you have saved me. I stand in the joy of that salvation and receive the authority you have given me, in Jesus' name!
- God, overcome the enemy through Mt. Hope Church. We stand in your authority. In Jesus' name!

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**DAY TWENTY-ONE through FORTY:** Repeat. Seriously... go back and read and pray the same verses and the same petitions each day. But this time, expand your thoughts and put fresh dependency on the Lord!