FAN THE FLAME

daily devotionals

week 1

this week's devotionals by

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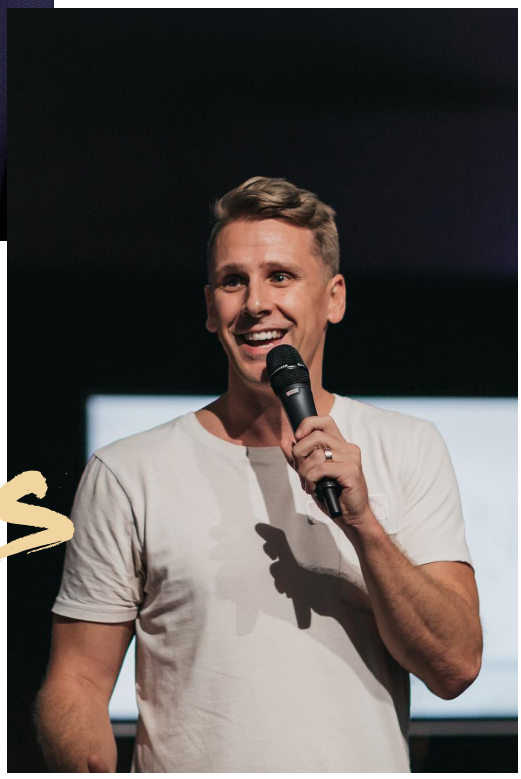

Dan Perkins

Lead Pastor at Hope Community Church

day 1

today's reading
acts 1:1-12

Hi and welcome to the Queensland Baptist Fan the Flame devotions. From Easter to Pentecost, we will be reading through the book of Acts together as a Movement. I pray that as we do this journey in God's Word together, that the Spirit of God will be fanned into flame within you, to boldly share the good news of Jesus with the people in your world.

After spending 3 years teaching His disciples about the Kingdom of God, Jesus tells them in Acts 1, to wait. Don't start doing what I have been doing. Don't copy what you have seen me do. Don't share what I have done for you. JUST WAIT.

For 3 years they had heard Jesus teach. They had seen Jesus heal. They had watched Jesus die and they were witnesses of His empty tomb. Now they were eating with the resurrected Jesus and listening to some final instructions from Him. If anyone was qualified to share the good news that the Son of God had come to earth and died on a cross as a sacrifice for sin to reconcile humankind to God and had conquered the grave to make a way for all people to receive everlasting life, it was these guys.

But Jesus said wait, until you... 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."

I want to remind us today that we are no longer waiting to be Jesus witnesses. If you have put your faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. You have received power to be Jesus' witness to the people in your world.

Two of my greatest fears growing up were public speaking and telling friends and strangers that I believed in Jesus. I don't think I am on my own there. Many of us hold some fear of speaking in front of crowds and many of us worry about our ability to share the gospel or how people will respond if we do. The good news for most of you is that you don't have to become proficient at public speaking, but if you do know the love and forgiveness of Jesus in your life, you are called to be Jesus' witness to the world around you.

I remember one night as a 19 year old surrendering all of my fears and failures to Jesus and asking Him to fill me afresh with the power of the Holy Spirit. I began to receive a new joy and confidence to share the good news of Jesus with others. I remember standing in line for the toilet at an event, and I just had to tell the bloke in front of me how good Jesus is. It certainly wasn't eloquent, and it was a little bit awkward, given the venue, but I couldn't help it. I was just so excited about what Jesus had done for me, that I had to tell someone. I don't know what impact that had on his life, but one of the greatest fears in my life, began to dwindle a bit that night.

We are not all called to be preachers, but we are all called to be witnesses of Jesus love and forgiveness. It is not substantial knowledge or superior eloquence that qualifies you to be His witness in the world, but simply the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit living within you.

Don't wait any longer to be His witness. There is a world out there that is waiting to hear the Good News about Jesus before it is too late. As we begin our Fan the Flame devotional series today, why don't you take a moment to surrender your fears and failure to Jesus and ask Him to fill you afresh with the power of the Holy Spirit to be His witness in the world today.

day 2

today's reading
acts 2:1-13

Throughout the Old Testament we read about certain people being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit for certain tasks at certain times. Bezalel was filled with the Spirit to make works of art to worship God. David was filled with the Spirit to write songs of worship. Prophets were filled with the Spirit to share Gods words with His people.

One prophet named Joel promised a time would come when all people would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Young and old. Male and female. He said, "In those days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people" This passage in Acts 2, reminds us that those days that Joel prophesied about are these days. Those days that were promised by God are these days of the outpouring of Gods Spirit on all people in the church.

On the day of Pentecost as Jesus followers were all together praying in the upper room a sound like a violent wind blew through the house and what looked like tongues of fire rested upon the heads of everyone in the room. Fire came to rest on old bald heads with long beards and fire rested upon young, braided heads with no beards. The Spirit did not discriminate. All the believers were filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit and began to share the wonders of God in languages that they did not know.

On the day of Pentecost the Spirit lit a flame and the church of Christ was born. The Spirit may not enable you to share the wonders of God in a language that you don't know but He will put a fire in your heart to serve Him and way for you to uniquely and powerfully share the wonders of God.

My first attempt at serving in the church was in the Sunday School and our Sunday school superintendent had a rule. One week you organised the craft. Next week you led the singing and the week after you told the story. Week 1 of my craft was an unmitigated disaster. I am still in therapy from experience of leading the singing on week 2. But on Week 3 I told the story about Jesus and it wasn't great but I experienced the power of the Spirit at work in my life and I have been telling stories about Jesus ever since.

When believers prayed together a fresh wind and fresh fire of the Holy Spirit was poured out on all people to powerfully share the wonders of God. You might have a bald head, with a long beard and been around church for an even longer time. Or you might have long braided hair and be far too young for a beard of any sort. However much hair you have on your head, the Spirit of God is poured out upon you, so you can share the wonders of God, in your unique way.

Lets pray together for a fresh a wind of the Spirit to blow through every church and ministry in our Movement and ordinary people would find their unique way to share the extraordinary wonders of our great God.

day 3

today's reading
acts 2:14-41

I will never forget being at an event where a world-famous evangelist was preaching. I had high expectations of this person but as he shared I was wrestling with my sense of being underwhelmed. While the words of the evangelist were persuasive and passionate it was not the clear presentation of the Gospel message I had expected. As the preaching continued I wondered to myself "Lord will anyone respond to the Gospel invitation today?" Then the moment came and the invitation was given to come to the altar, to repent and be born again. Before my eyes, hundreds and hundreds of people got out of their seats and rushed to the stage. Many dropped to their knees, face to the ground. People were weeping as they were led through steps of repentance and as they declared their faith in the saving work of Jesus. As a young preacher, I remember being amazed at what had taken place. I was humbled as I processed the move of God I had witnessed. What I had seen was beyond mere human ability, something extra was at work, it was clearly a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:4).

As crowds gathered following this amazing scene in Acts where God sent his Spirit, there was a mixed response. Peter grabs a hold of the opportunity with boldness and presents to the crowd God's amazing plan for salvation. He points to prophecy and then leads them to the revelation that this was God's plan all along (v23). Thousands must have been present, as we read that on that day around 3000 were added to the number of believers.

As I read this scene I am impacted afresh by both the power of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit. As Peter masterfully points people to Jesus as God's plan for redemption, confused observers become repentant followers. The text says that "the words cut to people's hearts (v37)" and they were moved to respond. Peter connects the dots understanding that what had just taken place was what Jesus had instructed them to wait for (v4, 8) and what Joel had prophesied many years before (Joel 2:28-32). He also understood that this gift of the Holy Spirit would be for all followers of Jesus moving forward.

In a world where so many are confused and perplexed, we can trust in both the power of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit.

When was the last time you witnessed a demonstration of God's power?

What would it look like for you to see more of the Holy Spirit at work through you today?

Let's pray that we would see the opportunities like Peter did. Maybe they won't look like what we expect. I imagine Peter hadn't seen this coming. Let's have faith that the Gospel can still touch people's hearts. Let's trust in the work of the Holy Spirit, the promised gift, that continues to empower followers of Jesus everywhere.

day 4

today's reading
acts 2:42-47

I imagine many people reading this have read this passage many times before, some may have even preached on it. What we read here captures the fresh move of God and the outworking of that move. There is a sense of something new and exciting. At the risk of being overly familiar with this text, I want to invite you to read it again but this time as you read imagine that you are one of the new believers.

How did that go? Did you feel the sense of excitement at what God was doing? Were you able to picture yourself in those scenes - sharing meals, praying together, learning and growing? Did you catch the deep sense of awe described in verse 43?

So what set the scene for what we read? What initiated this new unity, awe and wonder? Two significant contributors stand out. The first, the incredible promised gift of Holy Spirit, God's presence and power dwelling in his children. The second, the large number of new followers of Jesus. We know of 3000 from the day of Pentecost and then we read that every day the number grew (v47).

For any church leader, the Acts 2 church stands out through both scripture and history as the ultimate faith community. What's not to like? We see God moving in power, beautiful unity between believers, extravagant generosity fuelled by love and compassion, discipleship and multiplication.

If Galatians 5 reveals the fruit of the Spirit when it comes to character, perhaps Acts 2 reveals the fruit of the Spirit when it comes to faith and community.

I remember sitting with Brad after church one Sunday. Brad had come with no church or faith background, he had ongoing struggles with addiction, been in and out of jail, and had lived a life full of challenge. Recently he had heard about Jesus and it turned his world upside down in the best possible way.

As I sat with Brad he told me how grateful he was for church and how much he looked forward to Sundays. Then asked me a serious question "why does this only happen once a week?"

Of course, there were other opportunities throughout the week - connect groups, bible studies, prayer meetings etc But I think I heard what Brad was saying. He was saying "I want to be a part of a faith community where God is powerfully at work and there are people who love him and love each other and that love is evident in the way they live, not just once a week but EVERYDAY."

If you are connected to a faith community take a moment today to give thanks for all the great things you have experienced in that community. Maybe send someone a message of thanks for how they have impacted you.

If you aren't connected to a faith community, can I encourage you to find one. These communities aren't perfect but God has good things waiting for you there. You will be blessed and they will be blessed by you too.

day 5

today's reading
acts 3:1-10

Dorothy was in her 60s when she visited our church that day. She was there because she had a heart condition that meant she couldn't drive. When her friend couldn't drive her to her usual church, she decided that wouldn't stop her and she walked to the closest church.

After church, she asked me for prayer. She explained how that week she was going to have major heart surgery after years of issues. Dorothy asked if we could pray for peace and for surgery with no complications. I remember wondering "What if God just fixed her heart?" So I asked Dorothy if she was ok with a prayer for healing and she said yes. So we prayed, very simply "God bring your peace and if you want to do a miracle, a new heart would be great."

On Tuesday the church office phone rang. It was Dorothy and she was hysterical. In between her sobbing, she kept saying "Why me, why me?"

As the tears slowed Dorothy shared how she had gone in for a pre-op scan before surgery and to everyone's surprise, she had a new heart. No surgery was needed.

About a month later Dorothy came to visit again. This time she drove herself. Her new heart meant she had her license back. As she walked into church full of joy she carried a handful of paperwork, 17 years worth of heart scans revealing issues. On top was one single page, the most recent report which stated very simply that Dorothy's heart was in perfect condition.

There are several things that jump out at me in our text, like how this miracle happened in the normal everyday routine. This was a completely different setting from the crowd we read about at Pentecost (Acts 2). It wasn't an evangelistic crusade either. This miracle happened right where Peter and John had likely walked many times before. The main character was a man they had probably seen many times before. Maybe other times they were able to give the man silver or gold. But not this time. This time God was waiting to display his love and power right where they had walked before.

I also notice that this man asked for silver not healing. The immediate need that had his focus was daily provision even though he was carried in everyday to sit with his crippled legs. There are people around us everyday who are living just like the lame beggar. They have needs in their life that are also an opportunity for them to encounter and experience God's love. I wonder how often God is waiting to work miracles in our mundane? What if we are daily walking past what is so familiar and miss the opportunity for heaven to touch earth? How do you feel when you consider that God wants to use you to reveal his love?

Let's pray we can see the opportunities God puts in front of us. Sometimes it may be to give generously, sometimes it may be a miracle. The outcome? Healing, praising God, lives changed, and people being filled with wonder and amazement, just to name a few.

day 6

Take today to catch up on any readings that you may have missed during the week and spend some time on the weekend reflection below.

As we consider what it looks like for God to 'fan the flame' of our hearts let's embrace afresh our role in His amazing redemptive plan. Read over the good news Jesus shares with his disciples in Acts 1:8 and pray over the following questions:

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."

What opportunities did I have this week to be a witness for Jesus? How did I handle those? Confess any moments where you may have acted out of fear, rather than the bold power of the Holy Spirit. Open your heart to be led more by the Spirit.

What opportunities might I have in the week to come to point others towards Christ? You might like to think over the week ahead or even look through your calendar. Holy Spirit I open my heart to you that I would be filled with power for those moments.

Who in your life doesn't yet know the Lord? Pray for them now and see if God wants you to say or do anything to encourage them on their journey of faith.

day 7

Take today to catch up on any readings that you may have missed during the week and spend some time on the weekend reflection below.

On a day where many of us will spend time in our communities of faith at church, we consider the incredible picture of the Church we see in Acts 2 and 4:

2:42 "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

4:32 "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need."

If you don't have a church home at the moment, why is that? Spend some time researching local communities of faith you could visit.

If you do have a church home, consider that community now. Are there any people you know who need prayer for sickness, trial or difficulty right now? Pray for them now, you might want to send them an encouraging message.

The community of the earliest believers has many beautiful characteristics: devotion, joyful fellowship, wonder, unity, gratefulness, generosity, boldness, graciousness. Which of these stands out to you the most? How might you foster more of this in your community of faith this week? Is there one that seems the most difficult? As the Holy Spirit to guide you to a way you might practice that this week.

QB
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