

A Powerful Presence, Part 2

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[0 : 00] Once again, we return to the book of Acts chapter 2, verses 42 to 47, which once again, we've realized how deep the Word of God is. We can only mind the best we can, but we'll never exhaust what the Word of God shows us. We can only do our best. And God by His Spirit shows us time and time again, you missed something. Go back and look at it again. Amazing.

Fathers, we come to Your Word now. We ask, first of all, that You accept our praise, You accept our worship thus far given, because we have come to You not in our own strength, but in the strength of Jesus. In His name, we have sung Your glory. We have given to Your glory.

We have prayed and confessed our sins, O Lord. Oh, may You find these things pleasing, for we have come before You, not just one another. We have come before You.

And now, Lord, we plead with You to speak to us through Your Word. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, do all Your holy will, heal us, show us where we're wrong, but then show us how to get right.

Open our eyes. Close our hearts towards the sin that so easily besets us. Give us passion for Jesus and for the kingdom of God. So come, Lord, use Your unworthy servant who bears his own sins before You, His own hurts and pains. Oh, Lord, we are all one. But thank You that You are a God who heals us and who carries us and cares for us. Speak through Your servant as He opens Your book and speak to Him. May Jesus get all the glory. Teach us to fear Thy name. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

[2 : 16] Amen. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And all came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. All who believed were together, had all things in common. They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. That is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Wow. Choir, thank you. It's good to see you. Good to hear you. Oh, uh-oh. That wasn't me. How can we have joy when we're so unhappy?

Come on. Man. How can we have joy when we're sad? We're hurting. Life hasn't gone the way we thought it would. Who ever thought a COVID would happen? We're hurting so many, so many. I'm hurting.

I'm with you. Elders are not immune. Pastors are not immune. We're all in this together. We, in some cases, we're downright miserable. Let's be honest. We're not—things is—as one writer wrote, this is not the way things are supposed to be. We're not even happy in our churches.

We're just a bundle of nerves. And you touch a nerve, you know what happens, right? Hey! We're all just—we're struggling through together. We need each other to struggle through together, but we're struggling through.

[5 : 02] How can we have joy and peace? Yeah, we can blame each other, but that's not—that won't do it.

What are we—how are we going to do it? How is it going to happen? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, right? I want some fruit, and not the forbidden kind either.

Years ago—now again, I'm going back in time. Years ago, the—the—I guess the first role-playing game to take the— America by storm was Dungeons and Dragons. Thank you very much.

Somebody— Thank you, Isaiah. Thank you, Elder King. Dungeons and Dragons.

Now again, it was a mixed bag. Christians came out against it. It was—it was really a horrible thing. Now we got tons of role-playing games. Well, and I was in high school. In my high school, I was a

geek, okay?

And my high school formed a D&D; club. I only went for a couple times. I just couldn't get into it. But I remember playing the game for a couple times. And I remember in that game, you would choose a character whom you'd be—kind of a superhero kind of character.

[6 : 26] And one of—I chose this one character, and he had this power called a presence attack. Presence attack. Presence. E-N-C-E.

And what would happen is you would just—you would just show up. You'd pop up into the crowd where your enemies were. You'd just show up. Boom! And just your very presence would immobilize and wipe out your enemies.

Kind of like the Incredible Hulk coming down into the middle of the street. Bah! You know. Sorry. Marvel. Presence attack. Totally fictitious. Except one.

When Jesus shows up, his presence is truly awesome.

When Jesus shows up and manifests his presence, the forces of darkness take flight. Lives are changed. His power is revealed.

[7 : 41] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We're not talking fiction now. We're not talking role-playing now. We're talking reality, divine reality, when God shows up.

But can I got to ask you the question? How many of us really long for his fearsome presence? Remember last week we began looking at verse 43 here, and places that things I haven't covered because we really focused on verse 42.

Remember that when the Spirit comes in revival, he brings the greater sense of the fear of God. Remember that. Something, little additional stuff, just briefly.

Jerry Bridges, little book, the practice of God. He says, To fear God is to confess his absolute uniqueness, to acknowledge his majesty, holiness, awesomeness, glory, and power.

That's how he describes the fear of God when that fear grips us. We acknowledge the greatness and glory of God.

[9 : 01] I love that word awesomeness. I'm not even sure it's actually a word, but I like it. All speaks of what he's saying.

God is awe-inspiring. That's what awesome is supposed to mean. We use it so blithely, so everything is awesome. Pizza is awesome. No, it's not.

But that's how we use the word. Okay. Slang, we do it. I use slang. But awe-inspiring. That's something that grips your heart. I was talking to Gianna and her husband Daniel.

They were traveling out west, and they showed me pictures of the Grand Canyon and how they were out there hiking and the sun setting over the canyon. Listen, that was awe-inspiring.

That was awesome. I wish I could have been there. Just the picture was enough to get me going. But to actually be there and see it? Wow. God. He is awesome.

[10 : 10] This idea of the fear of God is a key component in godliness, meaning devotion to God. That's what, in the Bible, when you see the word godliness in the New Testament, it means our devotion to God.

Bridges, once again, you got that triangle for me, guys? If you can put it up. I don't see it. I'm imagining it.

I can see it in my imagination. Are we going to have it? Because I can move on. You got it? Okay, whatever. We'll wait for it. Oh, there. Ha!

Da! Magic. Jerry Bridges, in his book, describes this idea of devotion to God. At the bottom, fear of God, love of God.

At the top, desire for God. He talks about how this makes up what it means to be devoted to God. The fear of God and the love of God form the foundation of true devotion to God, while desire for God is the highest expression of our devotion.

[11 : 17] So, you need the two at the bottom. The fear of God. Fearing God. He's awesome. All glorious. Then we bow before him. As the Bible says, we tremble at his word.

Because of... And because of Christ, we see him in all of his majesty. And then love of God. God's love for us. They go together, saints.

His love for us, which blows us away, which says to us, I love you, even though you're messed up. Even though you don't have any joy.

Even though you're angry. Even though you're upset. You're my child. If you're in Christ, he says, I love you. And he pours out that love in our hearts, according to Romans chapter 5, by his Holy

Spirit.

So, they form the foundation. And then notice what happens. The fear of God and love of God causes us to desire God. Listen, isn't that biblical? Jesus is the great treasure.

[12:17] And we long for him. All three of those experiences cause us to be devoted to God. I'm yours.

Everything I am. Everything I'm not. I'm yours, Lord. The old gospel song says, try me now and see. See if I can be completely yours.

It's our devotion to God that colors how we live for Jesus. And to what extent, especially when the world and trials press in on us. That's when we begin to find out how devoted we are to Jesus.

We know how devoted he is to us. We know that the cross shows us how devoted he is. How he's been with you every day and blessing you. We see God's devotion to us.

What we don't always realize is where our devotion is to him. And it takes some hard knocks for it to be revealed. I think that's what COVID is.

[13:19] God's showing us what's really in all of us. And I don't know about you, but I'm finding it ain't pretty.

In me. The culture says, think this way. Say this or we'll cancel you. What are you going to do? It's the fear of God in our devotion to Christ that keeps us on the right path of discipleship.

Otherwise, we will tremble at being canceled. Remember Proverbs 29, 25. The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.

Family, when we fear losing friends or even family or losing influence more than we fear the Lord, we end up caught in a trap.

And that trap saps our spiritual strength. And we end up compromising the truth in Jesus. Family, you are more safe trusting in the Lord and holding fast to his truth, even if all your friends and family turn against you.

[14:36] You're blessed. Psalms 27, 10. For my father and mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in. Hallelujah. Luke 14, 20, 27.

Jesus, our Lord speaking. This is down on the screens. If anyone comes to me, he says, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters.

Yes, even his own life. He cannot be my disciple. Note the word cannot. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Here's the question. How can Jesus demand that kind of devotion? Now, he doesn't mean, by the word hate here, he doesn't mean that you actually hate, he hates a sin.

He's talking about in comparison to your love and desire and fear of him. It makes everything else look like hate.

[15:41] How is it possible? How is it possible? In 2015, Coptic Christians were put to death.

You probably remember that, the book, the 21. Put to death. Because they refused to recant the name of Jesus. We refer to people in Muslim countries who come to Christ.

And there are Muslims who are turning to Jesus still. Many. Some having dreams. Not even having access to the Bible per se. But still turning to Christ.

We call them Muslim background believers. MBBs. And what happens when they turn to Jesus is they're cut off from their families. Sometimes, even at the threat of death.

They're cut off from their families. Why would they do that? Why would they risk that? Why do they think somehow that's a good thing to experience?

[16:47] A worthy thing to experience. Not good. Worthy thing to experience. Only seeing Jesus by the Spirit as he is.

As he is. Who is he? The most awe-inspiring, desirable, and valuable treasure in the universe. Only that Spirit-empowered experience in reality can produce that kind of devotion.

Where are we? I have to ask myself, where am I? Lord, search me and know me. Try my heart. Where am I? What am I devoted to?

What and who are you devoted to? Notice also in God's presence, as the Spirit fills our worship, there is also power.

Back to verse 43. Notice what he says second. All came upon every soul. Now watch this. Many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. This is what happens when the Spirit of God fills his church here, especially in this new covenant moment.

[18 : 06] But I believe that here the Holy Spirit inspired the fear of God, which led God to reveal his power. And as he revealed his power, their fear of God increased.

In other words, they were blown away by Jesus and who he is. They were overwhelmed with the fact that he had risen from the dead, that he had died for their sins, that he was the Messiah, the one who had come to redeem them and set them free.

Overwhelmed by it. And that brought awe into their hearts. They were blown away. And as they experienced that awe, God responds to them and reveals his presence by showing power. And as they saw the power, they stood in awe of him even more. What a beautiful circle. God is presence. He is present.

He reveals his power by doing things that only he can do. This phrase that in the text, wonders and signs, is kind of a technical phrase.

[19 : 23] It's used in the Old Testament in particular. In places like Exodus 7-3. This is, remember, this is, this is again, this is, we're looking at the, the Exodus, Moses going before Pharaoh.

God says, but I will harden Pharaoh's heart. And though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Signs and wonders.

You see it coming up again. I can't give you all the verses, but let's skip over to Psalm, Psalm 135, verse 8-9. He's referring to the same event. He, he it was, who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast, who in your midst, O Egypt, sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants.

Signs and wonders. When you come over even to the, to the New Testament, you'll find that Jesus, Jesus is described in Acts chapter 2.

You might turn over to that. Acts chapter 2, 17 to 22. In these last days, this is Peter preaching. God declares, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.

[20 : 33] Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions. Your old men shall dream dreams. This is when the spirit comes upon his people. This is, this is what's happening here in the book of Acts.

Even on my male servants and female servants in those days, I will pour out my spirit. They shall prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above, signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

The sun shall be turned to darkness, the moon to blood before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. It shall come to pass to everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Now watch it. Now Peter breaks in. Men of Israel, hear these words. They just quoted. Now, and now these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know.

What's happening? What's happening? And the terms signs and wonders speaks of God's salvation. It speaks of God bringing his people out of Egypt.

[21 : 45] It's used many times, most of the time. It's describing that situation. When we come to the New Testament, it's being used again. But now we're speaking of Jesus and what he did in his ministry to begin to reveal his glory.

Salvation has fully come in the person of Jesus. Moses, that deliverance was only a picture of a greater deliverance to come.

We're not necessarily at this time saved from our physical enemies, but we're saved from something worse. We're saved from the penalty and presence and power of sin over us.

We're saved from the wrath of God. We're saved. We're set free. We're now children of God as opposed to being those who are outside of the covenant, away from God, turning, living in darkness.

Oh, I remember. I remember what it was like to live without Jesus. I don't know if any of you do, but I remember. I wouldn't go back for all the money in the world.

[23 : 01] Jesus is worthy. And whatever it costs to follow him, amen. He's that awe-inspiring.

But here's the thing. In our passage, it shows us that it lays stress on the fact that the signs and wonders were being done through the apostles. It lays stress on that.

You say, why? This is the way Paul has to defend his status as an apostle, actually. In 2

Corinthians chapter 12, verse 12, the signs of a true apostle were performed among you, says, with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

The apostles represent Christ in a way that we do not. Their ministry was the continuing ministry of Jesus. And the signs and wonders in particular pointed to the fact that they had been with Jesus and were continuing his work.

That's why it's laid emphasis upon them. So that phrase in particular should be limited to the events I'm describing, the Bible's describing, Old Testament salvation, the salvation of Christ, and the work through the apostles following.

[24 : 24] But here's the question. Should we expect miracles today? Should we believe that God is still a God who does miracles?

Or like EPB, has a power line fallen down? A tree hit his power line and has his power been cut off from the earth?

You know where I'm going. I don't think so. I respect my cessationist brethren who believe miracles ceased at the giving of the word of God in the first aid.

I respect them, but I think they're crazy. Jesus Christ is saying yesterday, today, and forever, the Bible says. Yes, I believe God once again has in different places continues to show his power, continues to do things that only he can do.

That's what I call a miracle. When only God can do that. Some of you have experienced some of that, especially in your health issues, when you've gone back to the doctor and they said, it's gone.

[25 : 38] Well, where did it go? Did you eat it? And they're scratching their head because they don't understand because life and death are in the hands of the Lord.

Whatever the verdict the doctor has given you, your times are in his hands. And you are immortal until he says you're leaving.

You ain't going nowhere until God says it's done. And we've seen God move and do things that only he could do. And yes, yeah, we got these miracle workers who advertise miracles.

The apostles never did that. Watch, read the book of Acts. They're just going about serving Jesus. Note that, y'all. They're going about following Christ in the fear of the Lord.

They're seeking to serve him. They're proclaiming the gospel. They're loving on people. And all of a sudden, God's power shows up. Rise up and walk.

[26 : 45] You were dead. You ain't dead now. The Bible even shows us in Acts that Peter's shadow, he just walked down this street. He didn't know that was going to happen. But his shadow will fall upon folk and heal them.

He didn't know that was going to happen. He didn't advertise that. Come see my shadow. Be wary of those who advertise miracles.

I don't think they're sent by God. That's me. But, you know, you check it out. Yeah. God is still powerful.

And we, and I noticed that the church actually, and actually, they actually prayed in chapter, chapter, chapter five. They actually prayed that God would do more miracles in his name.

They actually prayed for it. So we prayed for miracles. My pastor was dying. I'll never forget this. Dr. Boyce was, had come down with, I think it's pancreatic cancer, liver cancer, liver cancer.

[27 : 48] It was liver cancer. And he stood before the church. He had, he was going to go through a round of chemo. And I'll forget what he said. He said, should you pray for a miracle?

He said, miracles are by definition rare. Rather pray that God would be glorified. That was his last words to our church. And he left and went to be with Jesus.

Do we seek miracles? Do miracles change people? The people who saw Jesus' miracles later cried, crucify him.

That should be a hint. Miracles don't create faith. The spirit of God does. Miracles reveal the presence of God and the power of God.

And yes, and we should ask God to reveal himself. But miracles is not what we seek. What we seek is his presence. What we seek is that he will reveal himself among us.

[28 : 59] What we seek is God himself. And if he wants to do a work of power, we say amen. Have your way. As the kids would say, do your thing.

But something else that happens here, and I'm going to end with this. Something else happens here. It's not just his presence brings fear. His presence brings power, revealing himself that he can do something that no one else can do.

But notice this last thing, and I mentioned this in the beginning, and we'll end with it. In God's presence, there is fear leading to joy. Joy-filled witness.

Joy-filled. Notice what happens here. I mean, we already talked about how they shared everything in common. That's also part of God's presence. We already talked about that some time ago. But I want you to drop down to verse 47.

Praising God, having favor with all the people, and the Lord added to the number day by day those who are being saved. What's happening here? First, you have to understand fear and joy go together.

[30 : 10] You got it right here in the passage. So, you can't... So, if you don't like the word... If you don't like the fear of God, then you don't like the joy of God either. They go together. God shows up with his incompatible grace, and the church experiences reverence and awe in his presence.

But then joy begins to overflow with praise to him. That praise is continual praise. It means to speak of the excellence of a person.

And it wasn't just in their singing and in their worship. It was in their language every day. They couldn't help talking about the greatness and goodness of Jesus.

They weren't talking about their church ministries per se. They were talking about Jesus. They were experiencing reverential love for Jesus. And therefore, they wanted him more than anything.

And that overflowed into praise, talking him up. They talked about what Jesus had done in their lives.

[31 : 15] They talked... This sounds like a testimony, don't it? They talked about who he was and how he had lived and how he had done miracles. They talked about when the apostles began to teach them about the life of Christ and how they saw him touching people that no one else would touch.

How he cared for the poor when no one wanted to care for the poor. How he cared for the lepers that no one wanted to even be around the leper. How he cared for people who were the outcasts of society.

Like the woman of Samaria at the well or others. He talked... They talked him up. They were amazed at how Jesus showed such character and grace.

How much do you talk about Jesus? We're good at arguing about politics and about abortion rights and this and about that and the Supreme Court.

And we want to argue about how great America is. And we want to argue about this. But I want to know who's talking about Jesus. That's joy.

[32 : 28] That's joy. When you're overwhelmed with Jesus, you can't... It's like when you... Come on, grandparents. When that grandbaby was born, you drove everybody crazy talking about that child.

Taking pictures upside down, right side up. Bad shots, good shots. You had shots of that beautiful baby. Nate and Mindy, I know you all just had one. And Petraria and Walt just had one.

We got pictures already. We love... I mean, we can't help it but talk about our... And show pictures. Family. Jesus is even better.

The world needs to see pictures of Jesus. And people who are overwhelmed with him talking him up. That's what's happening here. Amen.

Maybe that's why we don't see so many conversions. I'm talking about me now. Listen to what Hebrews says. Hebrews 13, 15, and 16.

[33 : 30] Through him, through Jesus, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. That is the fruit of lips. What's the praise to God? The fruit... The sacrifice of praise.

The fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Watch this. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have. For such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

The sacrifice of praise are our lips that confess him. You sing it. We sing it in here. Amen.

Amen. Amen. But family... But family... We need to talk about him out there. Amen. That's what he wants. The sacrifice of praise that confess him.

Amen. And the other sacrifice... Notice it. Hebrews 13. Do good and share what you have. Acts 2.

[34 : 34] That's what's happening. That's what's happening right there. They're... They're talking him up. They're... They're... They're... They're having worship. Woo! Jesus is Lord. Woo! They're singing songs that we sang this morning, praising God.

Woo! Woo! Doing the holy dance. And they're having a wonderful time. But then they went outside. And they said, hey, Jedidiah, come here, man. Let me tell you about somebody. They went to the grocery store.

Woo! I'll take that lamb. But hold you up. Let me tell you about another lamb. I mean, come on. They're... They're talking Jesus up. They're... They're finding... They're finding place. Brother LaSondak, they're finding place in the conversation to talk about Jesus. Amen. Amen. Because they can't stop.

Where does the joy come from? In the midst of our pain and sorrow and hurt. It's when we contemplate Jesus. When we focus on Jesus. We remember Jesus.

[35 : 30] When we let him... Let him remind us of his goodness and grace. We're miserable because we're not thinking about Jesus, y'all. And when we're miserable, we treat each other miserably.

Because we're not thinking about Jesus. We're missing him. That's why we need him. And notice what happens. He causes their witness to be fruitful.

And the Lord added to the number day by day those who were being saved. Their winsome witness becomes a magnet through which God draws people to himself. They grew in favor with the people. How did that happen? They did good to him. And they saw a genuine joy and faith in Jesus.

They didn't feel like they were being used. You're just doing good so I'll come to your church. You're just being nice to me because you want me to come to your church. No? I want you to know Jesus.

[36 : 37] If you come to my church, amen. I want you to know Jesus. Do you see it? Do you see what's happening? And do you see what's not happening?

The American church is so political. Everything's a political cause. Well, no one wants that. No one wants a witness that's just attacking you.

You should be voting my way. You should be thinking, no one, that's not a winsome witness. I'm not saying vote your heart, amen. Vote your conscience. But listen, saints, that's not going to win people to Jesus.

I was in a store. I can't tell you the name because I protect the guilty. I was checking out, put my card in the machine.

It didn't work. There was money in the account, okay? And I'm like, what the? And a lady came over to help me. I said, ma'am, can you? She had her back to me a little bit.

[37 : 40] She did something. She put it in. Boom, and it went right away. I said to her, wow. I said, what did you do? And she's looking at me. I said, what did you do? I wanted to know because I could do it next time.

What did you do? And I made the mistake. I said, what kind of mojo did you work on that? She said, I don't believe in mojo. I believe in Jesus. Now, I'm like, ma'am, I was only joking.

I don't joke that way. Later, I said, ma'am. Sometimes a joke is just a joke. It's okay. It's just, you can take it as a joke.

And I just walked away. And it hit me. Is that how we witness to people? Do you think if I had been a Christian, I would have been drawn to Jesus by that? No.

Joyful witness, full of praise that talks about him, not about your movement and politics or your tribe over here.

[38 : 50] Maybe not even so much your church, though. You can talk about, but it's about Jesus. Yes. Brother Lasandak told us a story yesterday at the men's breakfast.

I'm ending here. Elders, please come forward to serve the Lord's Supper as I finish up. But he told us a story of what happened back in Uganda. Thank you, pastor, for doing that.

Thank you for sharing with us, sir. He went into a village. He and his team, and Kathy, I'm assuming you were with him. Y'all went into this. You weren't there at that time?

Okay. They went into this village. And somehow you ended up talking to the women. I didn't kind of get why you ended up talking to the women, but you did. And shared the gospel with them. And these ladies, they were like, we believe this.

Wow. Hold it. But we can't be committed to this yet. We got to go talk to our husbands. And so they said, will you come back and share with us, share with our husbands what you told us.

[39 : 48] So they go off to another village to spend a day doing ministry, being heckled, I think you were mentioning. And I don't know if any dirt was being thrown. I think it was not a good situation. But God blessed your ministry there.

And the team was wiped out. They're exhausted. I said, I'm talking about this man back here, by the way, with the white beard and his wife next to him. They're exhausted. So you can ask him more about the story. They're exhausted.

They come back. They're on their way back home, back to their base camp or whatever. And he's exhausted. He's tired. All of a sudden, he remembers, I promised those women we would come back. Now, you know how, come on, saints.

We've been at Bayberry all day. And we're dragging ourselves from Bayberry. Now, y'all know for Memorial Day outreach we do to the inner city community, we're dragging, imagine dragging yourself.

I'm tired. I'm coming home. I'm heading back to the church and unload tables. And somebody says, hold it. Let's go over and talk. We got to go one more place. No one wants to hear that.

[40 : 48] We're tired and hot and bothered. That's what they were experiencing. Tired, hot, and bothered. But I guess you convinced them to go with you. And they go back to the village.

And the whole village is waiting for them. Waiting. It's nighttime now. I think it was dark at that point. They're waiting. All day, probably been waiting for them to come back. And the men believed.

And the village came to Christ. Oh, Lord. Can we get some of this? Can we get some of this?

Show up, your presence. Are you praying for his fearsome presence among us? Are you praying for revival that we would value what he values? The apostles' doctrine. The fellowship.

The breaking of bread. The prayers. Are you praying? Are you seeking? Are you doing everything you can to lay before God and say, Lord, teach me your word? Lord, make me a part of the fellowship. Show me how I can serve.

[41 : 49] Are you asking God for that? Are you waiting for somebody to ask you? Lord, are you being a little proactive? We need to be more proactive as elders.

Amen. We want to pull you in. But can you help us a little bit? Is your heart burning to be a part of the fellowship as we see in the scriptures? Is your heart burning to use your gifts for the glory of God?

Is your heart burning to share with your brothers and sisters who may be in need and to encourage them? Is that your heart? That's what I see here in Acts 2. I see all of that.

And then I see joy. Because we're praising God together. You know, it's hard for me to praise God and curse you at the same time.

It really is. It really is. It's hard for me to praise God and complain about you. It really is. I can try. I'll try. But it's not going to work too easy. It's very hard.

[42 : 46] I want the joy of the Lord to be my strength. You don't know how much I'm calling upon him on that one. I want that joy. And I want it to seep out of my soul.

When I go down the street, I want to be so full of Jesus that I'm preaching to myself. Out loud. Out loud. Out loud. Is this what you want?

Do we want this, saints? New City Fellowship. Do we want this? Do we want him? Father, help us. You show us something in your word that, Lord, we have to admit. And I think every church probably around this country will probably admit, that ain't us. But we want it to be us.

So please come and pour out your spirit. And do the work that only you can do. And we'll give you the praise. We won't take it. We will not take credit.

[43 : 46] We will not say we made a program. We will not say we wrote a vision statement or a mission. We will not take any credit. We will know it's you and you alone. Because your spirit is the only one that can change our messed up hearts.

So come. If you don't come, we're in trouble. Come. We trust you. We are your people. This is your church.

We are yours. We preach your gospel. We live your gospel. You are everything to us. So, Lord, we know you're with us. We just want to surrender more to you.

We just want to surrender more. Help us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Help us.

And he sends help. Here's help. It's not all of the help. But here's help. You want to be reminded that Jesus is real.

[44 : 49] You want to be reminded that he had a real body and real blood. That's what this does. Sense this.

You can taste, touch, and feel. Right? You can taste and touch. You can see. You can see the body of Christ. No magic here. Doesn't become the actual body and blood of Christ.

He didn't mean that. But he meant for you to come to this table and remember him. And know his presence. He is present at this table by his spirit to bless us.

Come to the table today in faith in Jesus, saints. And let him bless you. Let him feed you. Let him strengthen you. This is his meal for his people. For his people.

If you're not one of his, please don't take these elements. For the Bible says you eat and drink judgment upon yourself. Don't do it. Here's what you need to do. Cry out to Jesus for forgiveness of sins.

[45 : 48] And let him. He will transform your life. We want to pray with you. If you do that today, we want to pray with you afterwards. Just let us know. Our elders are here. Please, just come down front.

If you want prayer, come down front as well after the service. But to you who are the household of faith, whatever church you go to, if it's a church that believes the gospel of Jesus and the word of God, listen, you are welcome to this table.

Come and feast upon Jesus. Let's eat and drink together. Father, in the name of Jesus, we come to this table. And we ask, oh Lord, that you once again unite our hearts to fear your name.

With you there is forgiveness that you may be feared at this table. You show us forgiveness that we might know what it means to truly reverence and stand in awe of you and seek your glory.

So come please, minister to us now. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.