

THE POWER AND THE WISDOM OF GOD

“By One Spirit, into One Body”

by Andrea Burke

+

I live in football country. The kind of football country where people swap out their American flags for their team flags come September. Where the grocery stores are half food, half NFL-themed meals. Cereals, cookies, ice cream, you name it. You can't turn a corner around here without the greeting of the regional team, and you'll be sure to stand out if you're not planning your weekends around the fall and winter schedule.

Last season, I wore a team hat to church. It was a big game day, and I donned our team's colors, proudly walking into our church knowing that I was in good company with (most of) the church. What I didn't expect was what happened as I took my seat. An older woman approached me. She was eager, excited, and tucked her gray hair behind her ears before speaking.

“Oh, I'm so glad to see you wearing that hat,” she exclaimed. “I just had to sit and talk with you because now I know I can trust you.”

At first, I thought she was joking, but as it turns out, she was not. The team hat had indeed not only communicated team spirit, but it had apparently communicated a deeper sense of safety that she was searching for.

It struck me as so odd. Here we were in church. The place where we gather each week to worship Christ and lift His name high, proclaiming that we are the sinful wretches He saved. We are the ones who needed rescuing! That's why we're all here! This should be the most unifying thing of all, and yet that wasn't what pulled my sister in Christ toward unity that day. It was, in fact, a sports team.

THE WISE WORLD OF SPORTS?

The thing is, maybe we have something to learn from the world of sports in the church. I attended my first NFL game last year, and it was nothing short of a secular worship service. As soon as I entered the parking lot, it was clear that this team was family. We united under one name. It was the same camaraderie I felt every time I wore my hat or hoodie locally. Once people saw me in the team's colors, complete strangers would light up. I was no longer a stranger but something closer to a friend.

We all believed the same thing—a win was what we needed. Our team could do it. Our team was capable. We sang the songs. We cheered and hugged strangers. We shared the same food and drinks. A communion of sorts. We had one purpose, and at times what felt like one voice as the stadium thundered

and roared after the opening kickoff was returned for a touchdown.

There was no politics. No “us” and “them.” No competing for status in the crowd. No one comparing clothes, wallets, checkbooks, what kind of cars we drove. We parked next to luxury vehicles and rusted out farm trucks. We cheered with the rich and the poor. We had no language barriers between us. The stadium was one of unity, entirely.

Christ is building something that swallows our worldly identities whole.

And to imagine that this is just a mere shadow of what Christ desires to bring to His church. Christ, the power and wisdom of God—the one whom we can trust with all things, who is in all things, and in whom all things are held together—levels the field entirely.

There’s no VIP seating in Christ’s church. No political parties for us to rally and take sides on. No status that a bank account can secure, and no low place that removes us from the safety of His hands. Our defining characteristics shouldn’t fit into a specific nationality, socio-economic, or even an ethnic box. Christ isn’t building a church of people who argue about secondary doctrinal issues as though our salvation depends on who can get in the last snarky word.

Christ is building something that swallows our worldly identities whole. In His power and wisdom, He is saving a people for Himself. A people who will roar in exultation on that final day. A people who do not walk in on a Sunday morning and look for team names and tribes to associate with. We are a people changed, convicted, and welcomed by the gospel of Christ alone. The sigh of relief we should feel and extend toward our brothers and sisters is not because we

finally fit in. It’s that we never belonged anywhere else truly until we belonged to Christ.

ONE KING, ONE FAITH, ONE LAW

My husband’s family crest, which dates back to AD 1193, has an ancient motto etched across it: Ung Roy, Ung Foy, Ung Loy, which translates now to “One King, One Faith, One Law.” After we were first married, I had these words printed and hung on our living room wall. This was meant to serve as a reminder to us and our children—this house is ordered differently. Regardless of how the world spins and how culture tells us to live or what to believe, we know that we’re not truly and wholly citizens of this land. We have a different King, one true faith, and a whole different belief system that overrides anything this world writes up. One King, one faith, one law. This is what Paul was pointing to in Ephesians 4:4-6 when he referred to there being only one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and in all.

Christ—the One who is over all and through all and in all—is the ultimate unifier through His power and wisdom. There is no unified church without Him. There is no unifying gospel without Him. There is no change or redemption without Him. Let us be a people who raise our voices in one rallying cry—Christ alone.



CHANGED BY THE GOSPEL



+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. The Lord provides peace to His church (Acts 9:31).
2. The Lord brings healing through His church (Acts 9:32-35).
3. The Lord restores life within His church (Acts 9:36-43).

Background Passage: Acts 9

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

The miracles of Peter were done in the name of Jesus Christ so that people would believe in Jesus for salvation.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

The miracles that Peter performed were done by the power of the Holy Spirit and resulted in people turning to the Lord for salvation, echoing the earthly ministry of Jesus. During His time on earth, Jesus performed many miracles to reveal that He is the Son of God, culminating in the miracle of the resurrection, which confirmed that salvation had come.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we have experienced the great miracle of our salvation through Jesus, we proclaim Christ to the nations with boldness and joy so that others might come to trust in the Lord.

GROUP TIME

Group content found in the Daily Discipleship Guide is included in the shaded areas throughout the session.



SCRIPTURE HANDOUT

Scan this QR code for a reproducible handout of this session's Scripture passages.



INTRODUCTION

ASK: As participants arrive, ask: **What are ways we can measure growth within our church?** (most will likely point to numbers: baptisms, professions of faith, church membership, etc., but there are plenty of ways to measure growth that don't involve numbers; members sharing their faith for the first time; healing of hurts and reconciliation between church members; more members finding areas to serve; individuals confessing sin, forsaking old patterns of life, and walking forward in obedience)

TRANSITION: God was moving in the early church through signs and wonders as He worked through the apostles. The church was growing because the Spirit was moving and the people feared the Lord and trusted in His plan. Instead of becoming weak and fearful because of persecution, the church became strong and bold.

SUMMARIZE: Help your group understand the **setting** for this session.

- In the book of Acts, the first part primarily focuses on the apostle Peter, and all God did through His ministry to propel the gospel to the ends of the earth. After a quick detour to demonstrate the power of God through the conversion of Paul, Luke turns his attention back to Peter, here in Acts 9, for a few more episodes before he pivots completely toward the telling of the ministry of Paul.



Listen to session-by-session training every week on Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, or Spotify:
ministrygrid.com/gospelproject | gospelproject.com/leader-training.

POINT 1

THE LORD PROVIDES PEACE TO HIS CHURCH (ACTS 9:31).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Acts 9:31** from his or her Bible.

31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

INTERACT: In groups of 3-4, list out characteristics of the church from **Acts 9:31**, and ask, “How do you see our church living out these characteristics and how can we grow more in these characteristics?” (had peace, strengthened/built up, lived in the fear of the Lord, encouraged by the Holy Spirit; grow more by: staying unified, studying the Word more, serving the communities around us, serving each other, praying together)

EXPLAIN: Here in Acts 9:31, we have a summary from Luke, meant to remind us of Jesus’s last words to His followers before He ascended to heaven. Even amid opposition, the gospel penetrated Jerusalem. Next, the message of Christ was propelled throughout Judea and Samaria, and would soon begin its move toward the ends of the earth. Discuss **verse 31** and the main idea below (Daily Discipleship Guide [DDG] p. 66):

When the church walks in the fear of the Lord and in the midst of the Holy Spirit, it will have peace and grow.

- Right before He ascended to heaven, Jesus proclaimed that His believers would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Until the stoning of Stephen, the gospel had been primarily preached in Jerusalem. Stephen’s death caused the church to scatter out of Jerusalem and into the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria. A horrific tragedy became the catalyst for the spread of the good news.
- Throughout the Gospels, we can clearly see the evil schemes of men and their attempts to take down Jesus. Ultimately, those schemes did not prevail. Indeed, they backfired. Unbeknown to Jesus’s enemies, their hate-fueled actions that led to Christ’s crucifixion were actually part of the divine plan all along. Here in Acts, we see the same truths: through persecution, the church “had peace” and was being “built up.”
- Luke describes two characteristics of the church that made it grow: the church lived “in the fear of the Lord” and lived “in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.”
- The Greek word for “in the comfort of” in Acts 9:31 is a noun which connotes a message of consolation and encouragement for the people of God, through the gospel message. This is more than a mere encouraging, happy thought meant to brighten our day. This is the everlasting ministry of the Holy Spirit—through the powerful gospel

of God, to the needy people of God—to enable them to walk through affliction with hope. (See also: Rom. 15:4-5; 2 Cor. 7:4; 2 Thess. 2:16; Heb. 6:18.)

ASK: (DDG p. 66):

How did the Holy Spirit help build the church? (the Holy Spirit is our Helper [John 14:15-18], teaches us [14:26], and gives us strength [Eph. 3:16] and wisdom [1 Cor. 12:8]; the Holy Spirit, as God, is in control of all things and directs things for His purposes; the Holy Spirit, as part of the triune God, is always active in building His church)

HIGHLIGHT: Invite a volunteer to read the key doctrine “Deity of the Holy Spirit” (DDG p. 66):

Key Doctrine #62: Deity of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, possessing the fullness of deity like the Father and Son. His deity can be seen in the fact that He is eternal (Heb. 9:14), omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-8), the creator and giver of life (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30; John 3:5-7), and directly identified with the Triune God (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

- The Holy Spirit is not a thing or force, nor is He ancillary to the Father and Son. He is fully God—just as the Son and the Father are. The Spirit is in perfect unity with the Father and the Son. All three Persons of the Trinity are equal in power, knowledge, and activity.
- The Holy Spirit is active in the world—building believers, building His church, and building His kingdom.

DISCUSS: (DDG p. 66)

Why do you think it’s difficult to depict the work and personhood of the Holy Spirit? (it’s easy to get a mental picture of the Father and the Son, as we have fathers and sons around us to help us identify the roles and relationship between the two, but the Spirit’s role is more difficult to comprehend; the lack of earthly concepts that can help us understand the Spirit of God hinders our ability to fully grasp Him; all earthly concepts fall short of how the Spirit truly exists within the Trinity)

TRANSITION: Despite disruption and persecution, the Holy Spirit built up new believers in Christ into a growing, thriving church. The momentum of this movement migrated to the surrounding areas, where the powerful work of God would continue.

POINT 2

THE LORD BRINGS HEALING THROUGH HIS CHURCH (ACTS 9:32-35).

INTERACT: In groups of 2 or 3, ask, “Have you or someone you’ve known ever been bedridden before? What words would you use to describe that experience?” (ask the group if anyone is willing to share their experience; there may be many raw emotions from their experience: fear, despair, anger, helplessness, frustration, etc.)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Acts 9:32-35** from his or her Bible.

32 Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. **33** There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. **34** And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.” And immediately he rose. **35** And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

INSTRUCT: Aeneas had likely given up any hope for change in his physical situation. Yet, without receiving an appeal, Jesus instantly and completely healed this paralytic through Peter’s mere words. Discuss **verses 32-34** and the following main idea (DDG p. 66):

When miracles happen, the church gives credit to Jesus as He is the source of the power every time.

- The summary in verse 31 served as a transition in ministry focus, from Jerusalem to Judea. This story begins a new section in the book of Acts, where Luke provided a portrait of Peter’s ministry in the region of Judea.
- It’s tempting to skip over small stories, but every episode is purposeful in the narrative. We must consider, “Why is this small story here?”
- In verse 33, Aeneas was simply mentioned as a man. This could be an indication that Aeneas was not yet a believer.¹
- This scene parallels the account in Luke 5:24 of Jesus healing the paralytic, in which Jesus declared, “but that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” Here in Acts, just as He did in Luke 5, Jesus, through Peter, healed Aeneas to demonstrate His authority over both physical and spiritual ailments.
- Through His almighty power, God can change even the most hopeless situation. Our most dire need is that of forgiveness, not physical rescue. Through Christ, God has provided hope for eternity—regardless of our physical status—for those who will trust in Him for salvation.
- In this straightforward and brief story of healing, Luke documented an act of God. Peter made this clear through his words: “Jesus Christ heals you” (v. 34). The apostle was merely a conduit of Christ’s power.

LYDDA

Known as Lod in the Old Testament (1 Chron. 8:12), it was a regional capital city in Samaria. It lay on the route from the seaport town of Joppa to Jerusalem.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Assurance grows by repeated conflict, by our repeated experimental proof of the Lord’s power and goodness to save; when we have been brought very low and helped, sorely wounded and healed, cast down and raised again, have given up all hope, and been suddenly snatched from danger, and placed in safety; and when these things have been repeated to us and in us a thousand times over, we begin to learn to trust simply to the word and power of God, beyond and against appearances.”²

—John Newton
(1725–1807)

DISCUSS: (DDG p. 66)

From Day 3 in the DDG: **What would happen if you gave credit to people for miracles instead of Christ?** (we would trust and follow man not God; the church would be misled; false religions would pop up)

ILLUSTRATE: Tell a personal story of a situation where you witnessed someone “steal the show.” (a wedding where a family member made the day all about them; someone who steals the mic at an event; a play where a side character outshines the lead) Peter did the proclaiming; Jesus did the healing. Peter made it clear that Christ was the Savior and source of this miracle.

EXPLAIN: Using **verse 35**, explain the following (DDG p. 66):

All true acts of God will turn people’s attention to Him.

- Luke explains the result of Jesus healing a man through Peter: “all” the residents of the region turned to God. Notice that it wasn’t just in the town of Lydda but Luke mentions Sharon as well. The coastal plains of Sharon lay to the northwest of Lydda. Many beyond Lydda turned to the Lord because of this one man’s healing.
- There are many today who do things “in the name of God,” but the fruit of their actions lead people to turn to glorify the man or woman. All true acts of God will turn people’s attention to Him.
- We get to partner with God to help spread the gospel to the lost, but without the saving power of God, our actions mean nothing. And if we try to take the credit and not give it to God, we fail to help others turn to God.

DISCUSS: (DDG p. 66)

What are ways we can more clearly demonstrate that Christ is the one working through our church, that people may turn to Him? (we can verbally re-direct glory to God; we can go out of our way to share “God stories” of how He is working; we can be careful in the way we communicate those stories to be sure we are giving all credit to Christ and not man)

TRANSITION: The power of God was clearly displayed through this miraculous healing and through the subsequent conversion of many. Through the church, God gave ample displays of His superior sovereignty—even over death.

POINT 3

THE LORD RESTORES LIFE WITHIN HIS CHURCH (ACTS 9:36-43).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Acts 9:36-43** from his or her Bible.

36 Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. **37** In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. **38** Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, “Please come to us without delay.” **39** So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. **40** But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. **41** And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. **42** And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. **43** And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

TEACH: As long as there is breath in our lungs, there is always hope for change in our circumstances. But when a heart stops, hope for a physical rescue seems to cease with it. The miracle of Aeneas demonstrated power over disability. This next event took things up a notch. Call attention to **PACK ITEM 2: EARLY CHURCH EXPANSION MAP** to note where Peter was in healing Aeneas as well as resurrecting Tabitha. Discuss the following, referring to **verses 36-41** (DDG p. 67):

The early church thrived as God, through His apostles, did miracles—even raising people from the dead—to show Jesus’s power and authority.

- Joppa, a port city, was about ten miles northwest of Lydda. Beyond connecting by proximity and chronology, Luke linked the previous miracle through Peter with this one through the rare use of the word “saints.” Luke utilized this word four times in Acts to refer to Christ-followers, twice here in chapter nine (vv. 32,41). Additionally, in each miracle, the narrative reported the usage of the command to “get up” (vv. 34,40).
- Other stories of healings did not typically provide names of the healed. Commentators suggest this is indicative of the depth of fellowship that existed in the early church.³
- The washing of a dead body to prepare it for burial was a typical Jewish custom and solely performed by women.⁴
- There are many similarities between Jesus’s raising of Jairus’s daughter (Mark 5:35-43) and Peter’s raising of Tabitha. For one, they both sent people out of the room. After Jesus did so, He took the girl by the hand



and commanded her to get up. Peter, however, did not proceed until he knelt and prayed. Once again, we see Peter's clear dependency on God for healing power. He knew he couldn't heal on his own power, but it was Christ's power alone that can heal and resurrect.

- In verse 40, Peter instructs Tabitha to "get up." In Mark 5:41, Jesus proclaims the same phrase to Jairus's daughter. The original Aramaic (which the language spoken in Judea at the time), within the Mark 5:41 quote is: "Talitha koum." Peter's command is almost identical: "Tabitha koum." The original audience would not have missed this similarity.

ASK: (DDG p. 67):

Why did Jesus need to demonstrate His great power and authority through His apostles? (to establish His authority; to empower His apostles; to build His church; to encourage believers)

HIGHLIGHT: Using **verses 42-43**, discuss the following (DDG p. 67):

In response to Jesus restoring life, many believed in Jesus Christ as Lord.

- At the formation of the early church, even as Jesus had already ascended into heaven, He worked through His apostles to restore life, physically and spiritually.
- The book of Acts describes the early church and the power of Christ as He worked through His people to build His church. Jesus set a precedent by displaying His power in miraculous ways for the growth of His kingdom.

DISCUSS: (DDG p. 67)

What truths can we learn from these miraculous events? (God is the source of all healing; He has power over all—even death; God uses His people to accomplish His work; Jesus modeled to His disciples how to do ministry; God uses powerful acts to demonstrate His power in order that many would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ)

TRANSITION: Throughout history, Jesus has changed individuals, the church, and the world in miraculous ways. And He passes on this baton to us, to change and heal what is broken to draw people to Christ Himself. That was His purpose and that should be ours as well.

MY RESPONSE

SAY: The miracles that Peter performed were done by the power of the Holy Spirit and resulted in people turning to the Lord for salvation, echoing the earthly ministry of Jesus. During His time on earth, Jesus performed many miracles to reveal that He is the Son of God, culminating in the miracle of the resurrection, which confirmed that salvation had come. Because we have experienced the great miracle of our salvation through Jesus, we proclaim Christ to the nations with boldness and joy so that others might come to trust in the Lord.

HEAD:

Jesus is all-powerful. No matter what this world throws our way, He is able. We may not always understand why He allows disability and death. But we can trust that when He does—no matter how bleak the horizon may seem—God can use our pain-filled circumstances to bring many to faith in Christ. If He can heal the lame and raise the dead, He can enable us to overcome whatever obstacle we face.

What characteristics of God learned from this session do I need to remind myself of this week?

HEART:

God is always in control. Remembering His power demonstrated in the past can help us trust Him with our future. There is nothing that passes His notice. There is nothing He cannot redeem. And though we may struggle with physical problems while on this earth, we have a glorious eternal future to look forward to. Even if we do not personally experience a miraculous healing, through faith in Christ, God will give us a perfect body—without ailment—to enjoy for eternity.

What are some physical pain points or earthly situations that tempt me to doubt God's ability to save?

HANDS:

The stain of sin has touched every bit of this world and filled it with suffering and death. As Christians, even if we never see physical healing on this earth, we can look forward to the absolute abolition of sin and dissolution of death for eternity.

Who in my life still needs this rescue and how can I show them the power of Jesus through my life today?

PRAY: Lord, we praise You for Your saving power. Show us how we can point souls to the saving power of Christ for Your glory. Amen.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Vile and weak as our body may seem, it is a body which the Eternal Son of God was not ashamed to take upon Himself, and to take up to heaven. That simple fact is a pledge that He will raise our bodies at the last day, and glorify them together with His own.”⁵

–J. C. Ryle (1816–1900)

POINT 1: THE LORD PROVIDES PEACE TO HIS CHURCH (ACTS 9:31).

+ **COMMENTARY**

“Despite the opposition raised against Paul, active persecution of the church ceased with his departure from the scene, and for the time being the church enjoyed a period of peace. By this time it had spread throughout the whole of what we call Palestine. No specific mention has been made of evangelism in Galilee; Luke no doubt reckoned that the disciples of Jesus during his earthly life became members of the church and evangelized in their own neighbourhood. It is interesting that Luke speaks of the church throughout this whole region. The church could think of itself as one organism, or as a set of local groups in union with one another (cf. Gal. 1:22; 1 Thess. 2:14). It was being strengthened as it lived in the fear of God and with the strength given by the Holy Spirit, and so it continued to grow in numbers.”⁶

+ **ILLUSTRATION**

Hidden in plain sight, many designers and artists include Easter eggs in their work. With a nod to yearly egg hunts—where children look for as many candy-filled plastic eggs as they can—there are symbolic items to be found throughout movies, art, architecture, video games, and theme-park displays. Like many of those plastic eggs, they are hard to find. They are cleverly placed by the artist and are often missed by the everyday viewer. When a person is on the lookout, these Easter eggs are easily identified. Once you encounter the artist’s treasure, you will never view that scene the same again,

The narrative within the book of Acts is not merely a collection of tales from the early church. It is a purpose-filled presentation of the ministry of Jesus after His resurrection. Throughout this writing, as we see here in Acts 9:31, Luke placed specific wording, stories, and imagery throughout the text. These are meant to be reminders of previously proclaimed truths, and the harmony of the book’s message.

The Bible is one magnificent story. Each scene, sermon, and silhouette presented is there with purpose. Every verse, chapter, and book proclaims the message of the gospel and the glorious God who redeems mankind. When we look for it, we can see the fingerprint of God on every page of Scripture.

EXTRA

POINT 2: THE LORD BRINGS HEALING THROUGH HIS CHURCH (ACTS 9:32-35).

+ COMMENTARY

“Peter spoke to this man with the assurance that surely came from the Holy Spirit: ‘Aeneas, Jesus Christ is healing you. Rise and make your bed.’ This was a command calling for immediate action. Aeneas must get up off his mattress immediately, and make his own bed, which probably meant he should roll it up and put it away. (‘Make your own bed’ is a phrase that in Greek can be used of either making a bed or preparing a meal. In Mark 14:15 and Luke 22:12 it is used of preparing the Passover meal in the Upper Room. Thus, another possible meaning here is that Aeneas should immediately prepare himself some food to be strengthened.) His healing was instantaneous. The fact that he arose immediately showed that Peter was speaking with the authority of Jesus when he used the present tense and said, ‘Jesus Christ is (now, at this moment) healing you.’ Notice too that Peter made it very clear that Jesus was the One who was doing the healing. He is the Great Physician, and all the credit, all the glory belongs to Him.”⁷

+ ILLUSTRATION

Some have referred to their electronic devices, such as a smartphone, as a “brick.” Typically, this is not a good thing! When a phone reaches brick status, it’s essentially an expensive paperweight. Whether the device was ruined by water, destroyed by smashing, or simply stopped working, once it became a “brick,” that is all the phone is useful for.

Manufacturers have filled these sophisticated devices with technology beyond most of our comprehension. Men and women have labored to write code and fashion hardware to provide the modern miracle to the palm of our hands. Though our devices enable users to accomplish incredible digital feats, we are merely putting into practice the provision of others.

Furthermore, we must keep these marvels plugged in. If we don’t charge our devices, we cut off our means of communication, entertainment, and productivity. We are utterly dependent on a plug and a socket—in perpetuity—if we want to enjoy the benefits of a smartphone.

When it comes to living this life, we ultimately have little to offer compared to the creative, substantive, and purposeful provision of God. Yes, we have choices. Yes, Scripture calls us to kingdom productivity. But it is all accomplished in dependence on the One who has added to the equation what can only come from Him. Just like our devices, with the most magnificent plan and impressive inner-workings, we cannot actually use what God has given us without staying continually connected to our Source. God provides the pathway and the power that leads to eternal life. We merely point people to the plan, work, and character of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

POINT 3: THE LORD RESTORES LIFE WITHIN HIS CHURCH (ACTS 9:36-43).

+ COMMENTARY

“At Peter’s declaration, Dorcas (Tabitha) came to life! Peter had never done this before, and we wonder what went through his mind when he saw her eyes open and her lungs expand to take in air. Peter, as in Jesus’ raising of Jairus’s daughter, had sent everyone out of the room. But unlike Jesus, Peter had fallen on his knees and prayed. He could not, as his Lord had done, merely speak the word as though this power were native to him. Peter was but a man, and Jesus was God incarnate. Peter’s powers were a gifting of the Savior’s, and his ability to perform miracles was dependent on the will of his Master. As Tabitha’s eyes opened, Peter’s heart must have flooded with joy and certitude, reassuring him of his calling as an apostle and plenipotentiary of the Lord, and on a more basic level, reassuring him as to the veracity of the Christian faith founded on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus really was the Messiah, and faith in Jesus was decidedly not a delusion!”⁸

+ OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

“But wait. There’s more!” This phrase became well known in the early 2000s through a series of infomercials selling various home cleaning brands or house products. The host would exuberantly demonstrate the mind-blowing effectiveness of a product in both everyday and extreme situations—after which he revealed the unbelievable pricing. Upon capturing the attention of the consumer, through the reasonable cost and astonishing capabilities of the merchandise, the infomercial host delivered the clincher: for a limited time, they’ve added deeper discounts and additional goods to the amazing bargain!

This sweetening the deal is a common marketing tactic which attempts to make this a no-brainer purchase for the consumer. The phrase, “But wait. There’s more!” encapsulates perfectly this marketing maneuver. Just when you think something is a good deal, they make it too good to be true.

The book of Acts is the second of a two-volume work that presents the ministry and life of Christ. The first volume is the Gospel of Luke. In his introduction, Luke states that he labored on this work “so that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:4). Story after story, miracle after miracle, Luke presents a case for believing in Jesus as the Christ—who is still at work through His bride, the local church. He demonstrates His power, mercy, and grace over and over again. These episodes in Acts are a perpetual, “But wait. There’s more!” meant to convince us that this Jesus is who He said He was. All in hopes that we “buy in” to the greatest deal of all and place our trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

References

1. John F. MacArthur Jr., Acts, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 281.
2. John Newton, quoted in Tony Reinke, *Newton on the Christian Life: To Live Is Christ*, ed. Stephen J. Nichols and Justin Taylor, *Theologians on the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 220.
3. John B. Polhill, Acts, vol. 26, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 246.
4. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Ac 9:37.
5. J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on John*, vol. 1 (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1879), 27–28.
6. I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 186–187.
7. Ralph W. Harris, ed., *Acts*, *The Complete Biblical Library: Study Bible* (Springfield, MO: World Library Press, 1991), 229–231.
8. Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, *Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 276–277.