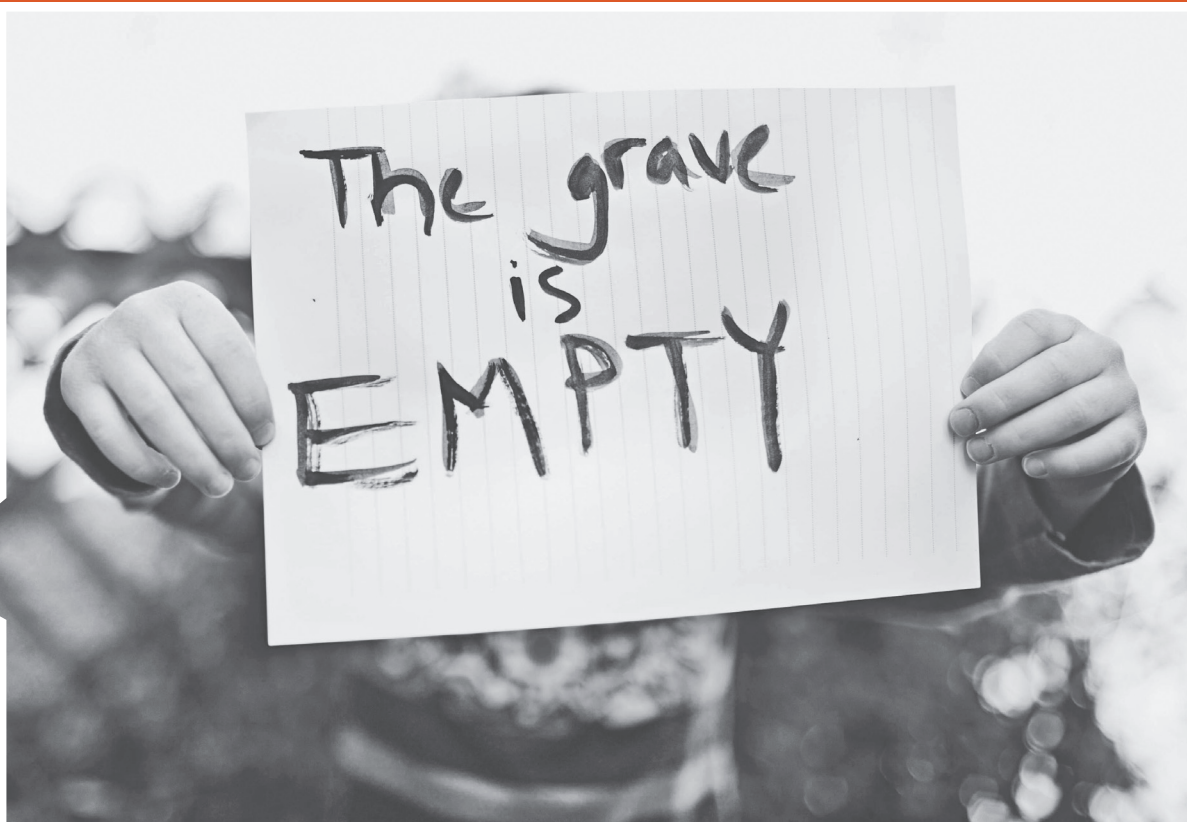


UNSTOPPABLE GOSPEL



Nothing stops our God. *Nothing stops His gospel.*

Don't write off the church.

Some people already have. They say they like Jesus, but there's no point to the church. As far as they're concerned, the church is a failed institution.

I disagree.

The church is far from a lost cause! In reality, the church is unstoppable because the followers of Christ have been given an unstoppable power—the very Spirit of God. Even more, they've been given an unstoppable mission and message.

Come with me on a journey through the exciting early days of the church. We'll discover what made the early church so powerful—so *unstoppable*. As the Book of Acts opens, we'll see a room full of huddled, scared disciples who were completely powerless and uncertain of the future. But we'll also see these same followers become empowered and effective men and women advancing throughout the world, proclaiming the unstoppable gospel that turned the world upside down.

The story of the unstoppable gospel continues today. It is our story as members of the church.

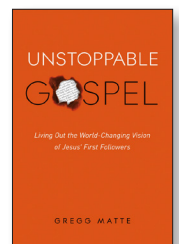
In Christ, we are unstoppable.



Gregg Matte

Gregg Matte is the senior pastor of Houston's First Baptist Church, a multi-site church with five campuses. Before coming to Houston's First in 2004, Gregg founded Breakaway Ministries at Texas A&M University, a weekly gathering that grew to more than 4,000 students.

Gregg is the author of *Unstoppable Gospel* (Baker Books, 2015), the book that is the basis for this study.



Unstoppable Gospel

Session 1 ***Unstoppable Mission*** Acts 1:4-8,12-14

Session 2 ***Unstoppable Message*** Acts 2:22-24,32-33,36-38

Session 3 ***Unstoppable Love*** Acts 2:41-47

Session 4 ***Unstoppable Opportunities*** Acts 3:1-10

Session 5 ***Unstoppable Courage*** Acts 4:1-3,8-12,19-20

Session 6 ***Unstoppable Impact*** Acts 17:16-18,22-23,30-31

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UNSTOPPABLE MISSION



When has something definitely been worth the wait?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLunstoppable

THE POINT

The Holy Spirit empowers us to spread the gospel.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We don't like to wait. Chalk it up to impatience, or maybe it's because we live in a world of instant gratification. But we want what we want when we want it.

- ▶ Two minutes waiting behind another customer at the fast food drive-thru? Too long.
- ▶ Sixty seconds to heat up food in a microwave? Too long.
- ▶ Fifteen seconds waiting for a movie to stream to your TV? Way too long!

At the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus told His disciples to wait. He was going to give them—and us—an incredible gift: the presence and power of His Holy Spirit. The disciples couldn't have fully appreciated what all that meant, but they waited nonetheless.

When the Holy Spirit came, He empowered Jesus' followers for a mission that was unstoppable. From that single location, their mission spread across the world—and continues today.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Acts 1:4-5

⁴ While He was together with them, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "This," He said, "is what you heard from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

The life of a Christian is not hard; it's impossible. Following Jesus means:

- ▶ Loving people—even the people who hate you.
- ▶ Doing the ethical thing at work even it means putting your career on the line.
- ▶ Forgiving people who don't deserve to be forgiven.

The One who called us to this impossible life never sugarcoated how difficult it would be. In fact, Jesus said: "If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). He also made this troubling promise: "You will have suffering in this world" (John 16:33).

Jesus, the Son of God, never expected us to live this impossible life in our own power. Indeed, Jesus Himself lived His life on earth in union with and empowered by the Holy Spirit. That same Spirit is the secret to the power we need to live and follow Jesus today. In other words, living the Christian life is only possible with the power of the Holy Spirit living through us.

In Acts 1:4-5, Jesus reminded His followers they soon would receive the gift He had promised earlier: the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, the Spirit would descend on believers to empower them to preach the gospel. From that moment forward, God's people would be forever changed in how they related with Him.

What do you find difficult about waiting on the Lord?

QUESTION #2

Apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing of importance in our lives. But once we receive His power at salvation, we can do *anything* He calls us to do.

A little boy once heard that if he asked Jesus to be his Savior, God would come live inside his heart. So he asked his parents, “How can God live inside my heart? He’s so big! He made the whole world! If He lived inside my heart, He’d stick out!”

That little boy was right. If God truly lives in our hearts, He’s going to stick out. His love will stick out. His forgiveness will stick out. His power will stick out.

And the world will know.

Acts 1:6-8

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked Him, “Lord, are You restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

God sent the Holy Spirit to work through us to continue the work of bringing His children home. In verse 8, Jesus laid out God’s agenda succinctly. His mandate in this verse laid the foundation for the rest of the Book of Acts, which is largely about how the early believers carried out this mandate.

Jesus told His followers to remain in Jerusalem and wait, because they would soon receive the power the Father had promised (see v. 4). When they were filled with the Spirit, they would be His “witnesses” telling what they had experienced with Jesus. They would do this with His power, not their own—the power of His Spirit.

What do these verses teach us about God’s mission?

QUESTION #3

BE MY WITNESSES

Use the space below to make a prayer list based on Acts 1:8. Fill out the different categories with specific requests you can echo throughout the coming week.

Lord, I'm praying this week that You do the following in my city:

Lord, I'm praying this week that You do the following in my nation:

Lord, I'm praying this week that You do the following in my world:

Lord, I'm praying this week that You do the following in my heart:

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep
to gain that which he cannot lose!"

—JIM ELLIOT

The Greek word for “power” is *dunamis*, from which we get our English words “dynamo,” “dynamite,” and “dynamic.” The Spirit empowers His church to do amazing things. By the power of the Holy Spirit, a tiny handful of believers turned the world upside down as the “gospel earthquake” rumbled from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

“Jerusalem ... Judea and Samaria, and ... the ends of the earth.” Jesus laid out a deliberate plan of expansion that began at home and moved outward geographically to include all people. The same Spirit who descended on believers at Pentecost and turned the world upside down for Jesus is alive today in every person who has placed faith in Christ. He is sending you and me out on a mission.

- ▶ We can obey Acts 1:8 by hopping on a plane and flying to the ends of the earth.
- ▶ We can carry out Acts 1:8 by sending the good news out to the ends of the earth over the Internet.
- ▶ We can fulfill Acts 1:8 right at home, because the world is literally coming to our cities. Whenever you go to work, school, the store, or anywhere else in your town, you are likely to hear unfamiliar languages being spoken. We can carry the Lord’s message to the ends of the earth in our own neighborhoods even as we also go to the ends of the earth.

We are empowered to be on mission to our city, nation and world.



Acts 1:12-14

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³ When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

¹⁴ All these were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.

What do you do when you find yourself waiting on the next thing God has for you? So many of us just try to stay busy. We fill the waiting with activity. Not these disciples. They went to a single upstairs room and *prayed*. In fact, they “were continually united in prayer” for ten days.

Let me share what I see in the disciples’ ten-day prayer meeting:

- ▶ **Prayer is primary.** For many of us, prayer is often a last resort. “When all else fails, pray.” But prayer was not the last resort for the early church. It was the main agenda.
- ▶ **Fear can be a great motivator.** For all the disciples knew, the same people who crucified their Lord might come for them, as well. It was fear, not piety, that drove the early church to its knees. In times of anxiety and fear, remember this: *If you go to your knees in fear, you’ll rise up in faith.*
- ▶ **Prayer unites us.** The disciples “were continually united in prayer.” They were single-minded, joined together as one. Why? Because prayer unites us.

Prayer maximizes “Thee” and minimizes “me.” Prayer says, “My agenda is unimportant, Lord, but Your agenda is all-important.” The reason for so much disunity and disharmony in the church is because many Christians contend for their own agendas, not God’s agenda. When we pray and seek God’s will together, He will unify us and keep us focused on our common center: Jesus the Lord.

What are some of the benefits of praying together as a group?

QUESTION #4

What common mission can our group pray for together?

QUESTION #5

LIVE IT OUT

Acts 1:8 is our mandate. It's mine, and it's yours. Therefore, consider taking one or more of the following steps toward fulfilling that mandate in the days to come:

- ▶ **Accept the mission.** Recognize that Jesus has commanded you to be His witness wherever you go and wherever He sends you. Verbally commit yourself to His service.
- ▶ **Embrace the gift.** Begin each day by submitting to the Holy Spirit as your only source of strength and guidance. Pray that He would give you wisdom and power to accomplish God's mission in your life.
- ▶ **Pray together.** Gather an extra time as a group this week. Make prayer the sole focus and action of that gathering.

God's mission is unstoppable—and so is the Spirit He's placed within you. Remember that you have a part to play in that mission. Remember also that it all begins with prayer.



My thoughts