



# POWER

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# LIFE

WHY EVERY BELIEVER NEEDS TO BE BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

J E F F   L E A K E

foreword by

G E O R G E   O .   W O O D

# POWER FOR LIFE

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IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

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CHAPTER ONE

# *IT'S MORE THAN ENOUGH!*

Take the Holy Spirit out of the equation of my life, and it would spell b-o-r-i-n-g. Add him to the equation of your life, and anything can happen.<sup>1</sup>

— MARK BATTERSON

**W**hat we have without the baptism in the Holy Spirit is simply not enough!

This is the conclusion Jesus' disciples would have reached when they heard Him make this statement: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4–5). Consider the whirlwind of change that Peter, James, John and the others had just been through.

Only weeks earlier, they had watched their leader as He was nailed to the cross. For three years, they had followed this revolutionary leader, Jesus of Nazareth. While Jesus had predicted the moment of His death, biblical history reveals that the disciples were personally and emotionally unprepared to face it. Their Messiah was crucified. He died. Friends took His body down from the cross and buried Him in a tomb.

All seemed hopeless. Nothing made sense. The disciples hid away, afraid that their own lives were in danger.

Then came Sunday!

Jesus rose. The stone was rolled away. The dead body of their Master came back to life, and they saw Him in His resurrected

form. Talk about a game-changer! If this was possible, then anything was possible! People don't just come back from the dead! But Jesus did. He conquered death. He overcame the grave, and in so doing He proved that He was who He said He was.

Acts 1:3 tells us, "After his suffering, he presented himself to them [the disciples] and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." During this forty-day period of time, Jesus began to unfold to His disciples what He wanted them to do next. His mission for them, should they accept it, was to take the message of His resurrection to the entire planet. Every person, every race, every nation was not only to hear about what had happened but was to be invited into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20).

Can you imagine? If you have listened to teachings from the Bible, you have probably heard these famous verses. The challenge Jesus gave to His disciples is often referred to as the Great Commission. But when you think of the implications of this commission it seems to be more like a *huge impossibility*.

- Most of these disciples weren't formally educated.
- Many of them were in their early twenties—some in their late teens.
- All of them lived in a very poor region under the domination of Roman rule.
- For most of the three years they had walked with Jesus, the twelve disciples hadn't gotten along very well.

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- Several of them were rivals and were battling for top position in this discipleship group.
- None of them had traveled more than a few hundred miles from home.
- All this took place in an era of limited technology. Travel was by horse or by foot. There were no phones, tweets, emails, or even an established pony express.

Now Jesus expected them to take over the world!

By the way, we should mention that He wanted them to do all of this *without Him*. Just after He gave this commission, He disappeared. “After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight” (Acts 1:9).

What we have in our lives without the power of the Holy Spirit is simply *not enough!*

Can you identify with that reality? Everyone one of us faces things in our lives that cause us to admit, “What I have right now is simply not enough!”

- Addictions we have tried and tried to overcome
- Depressing circumstances that constantly drag us down
- Complications with our family relationships that leave us frustrated and confused
- Habits we just can't seem to break
- Needs we just can't meet
- Visions and dreams we want to pursue but can't see how they'll become a reality

Even our attempts to follow Christ faithfully often feel hollow and lacking; we feel like we don't measure up. We slot the life we want to live into the “huge impossibility” category and feel powerless and inadequate to do anything about it.

If you have felt that way, I have some really good news for you: God knows you aren't adequate for the task *in your own strength*. Your

inadequacy doesn't surprise Him. It doesn't shake His confidence in you or in His plans for your life. It doesn't limit what He can do in and through you.

In fact, becoming aware of our own personal inadequacy *must* happen before God can do powerful things in our lives. Jesus taught this principle in His famous Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). We could paraphrase that statement like this: Nothing changes in my life until I'm willing to admit that I need help.

Before we go on in this chapter, why don't you stop and read that last sentence out loud to yourself. How did you feel? Do you agree with what you said? Did you resist this thought? It's critically important that we accept this truth before we can move forward to make changes in our lives.

You must recognize your need for something more before God can release something amazing in and through your life. Self-dependency is the enemy of a supernatural life, the life God has in mind for you. Think about that word *supernatural*. It means "above and beyond what is naturally possible." It involves accessing a power that is not within our natural selves. It describes what happens when God gets involved with people who are willing to trust Him.

## THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CHANGED PETER'S LIFE

Consider Simon Peter, one of the disciples. He was part of the inner-circle of Jesus' discipleship group. There were twelve disciples, and Jesus spent the most time with three of them: Peter, James, and John. Peter's life serves as a picture of what God wants to do in our lives.

### *I. Peter tried to serve God in his own strength.*

There's probably no better moment that defines Simon Peter than the moment he promised Jesus undying loyalty. It was just after the Last Supper. Jesus had predicted that He would be betrayed and

that everyone in the room would forsake Him at His moment of greatest need. Simon Peter spoke up with all the self-confidence he could muster: “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will” (Matthew 26:33). And again he pledged, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Matthew 26:35).

When Simon Peter made these promises to Jesus, I believe he was serious. He truly meant to follow through, but he had no idea how weak he actually was and how strong his desire for self-preservation would be. When the moment of truth came, Peter denied even knowing Jesus, not once but three times.

### *2. Peter was inconsistent in his efforts, at best.*

This wasn't the first time Simon Peter had demonstrated his good intentions and inconsistent results.

- One minute he was walking on the water with Jesus; the next moment he was sinking in the waves, overwhelmed by fear.
- One minute he was making the greatest confession ever (that Jesus is the Son of God); the next minute he was rebuking Jesus to His face for even considering the mission of dying on the cross.
- One minute he was standing boldly in the garden of Gethsemane, sword in hand, attacking the men trying to arrest Jesus. The next minute, he was calling curses down on himself while he denied ever knowing Jesus.

Don't you just love this guy! I appreciate Simon Peter because I see so much of myself in him. He meant well. He even did well from time to time. But then his own sinful, selfish nature took over and he couldn't sustain the forward momentum in his life.

### *3. Eventually, Peter failed miserably and despaired of life.*

The Bible tells us that when Simon Peter uttered his third denial, a rooster crowed. It was just as Jesus had predicted. “This very night, before

the rooster crows, you will disown me three times” (Matthew 26:34).

What a terrible moment! Can you see it? Peter insisted to the servant girl who inquired of his connection to Christ, “I swear to you, I don’t know the man!” Right at that moment, as the dawn was ready to break, the rooster cried out. Peter looked up, remembering what Jesus had predicted. He glanced over to where Jesus was on trial for His life. There, Peter’s eyes met the eyes of his friend and master. What deep sadness he must have seen in Jesus’ eyes. Luke 22:62 tells us that Simon Peter “went outside and wept bitterly.”

Have you been there? Face to face with your own failure? Overcome by the sorrow of your own selfish behavior? Despairing of life because you see the despicable nature of your own heart?

Simon Peter sobbed. You know the kind of emotional response where the tears flow from deep inside your being. Tears ran down his face, out of his eyes and nose. Deep sobs. Gut-wrenching groans. Uncontrollable tears. Everything seemed over. Nothing had meaning. He never ever imagined that he would fail in this way. Not only had he failed his friend at this time of greatest need; he had failed in front of the entire world. What humiliation . . . embarrassment . . . shame . . . and despair!

Unlike Judas, another disciple who had failed, Simon Peter decided to move on from this moment. Judas felt there was no hope for his life after he betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Judas believed he could never be forgiven, that he was beyond redemption; so he took his own life. Somehow, Peter pushed beyond his despair and kept moving forward.

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4. *Fear and disillusionment stole Peter's confidence and reduced his vision for the future.*

Simon Peter didn't take his own life like Judas did. But the gospel of John records Peter's struggle with shame and despair:

- He hid in fear—afraid that the Jewish religious leaders would kill him too (John 20:19).
- He decided to leave “ministry” and return to his known trade of fishing (John 21:3).
- His confidence was shaken. When the resurrected Jesus asked him, “Simon, do you love me?” Peter could hardly muster an answer, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you” (John 21:16).

Coming face to face with our own selfishness and sinfulness is life-altering, but it's a necessary step to be used by God. Can you imagine the great loss to the church if Simon Peter had remained lost in despair? Thankfully he moved on, and Jesus forgave him. If you read John 21, you find amazing grace and acceptance as Christ gave Peter a second chance. Jesus assured the disciple that his life still counted; that there was a purpose for his life and God still wanted to use him. However, it wasn't until the day of Pentecost that Simon Peter truly stepped into his new day.

5. *When Peter was baptized in the Holy Spirit—his life radically changed.*

Acts 2 provides the record of Simon Peter's transformation. He was in the upper room praying with the other 120 when God poured out the Holy Spirit upon them all. Along with the others in the room, Peter heard the sound of a rushing wind and saw the huge flame of fire that came into the room and broke into 120 smaller flames that came to rest above the head of each person.

God's Spirit so impacted these people that they all began to speak out in prayer. Peter was right there in the middle of it all as the Holy Spirit filled them to overflowing. The noise was so loud and the

commotion so great that the people gathered in the streets outside the house were bewildered about what was going on.

About that time, “Peter stood up . . . and addressed the crowd” (Acts 2:14). Simon Peter, the disciple who had denied Jesus just a few weeks before, took the lead! This was the same guy who could hardly speak when Jesus asked, “Do you love me?” The same guy who had been hiding in a room, terrified that the religious leaders would arrest him.

There he was standing boldly in front of several thousand people declaring to them that Jesus was alive. Remember, this was the same city where Jesus had been crucified. Peter was speaking just a mile or two from the place where the crucifixion had occurred. He was preaching to some of the same people who had yelled, “Crucify Him,” when Jesus was on trial before Pilate. Simon Peter was risking his life by taking a stand at that moment.

But because he had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, he had the strength and courage to do what had not been possible for him to do before.

*6. Not only was Peter restored from his past—he was filled with God’s overcoming power.*

It could have been the end for Simon Peter: the moment we read about in Luke 22:62. The moment he wept bitterly after the denials could have been the final word regarding his life. If he had remained overwhelmed by his shame, we would never have read another word about his life. He wouldn’t have been one of the pillars of the early church. He would have stayed stuck in the shame of his past.

But Simon Peter didn’t allow his failure to become final!

When Jesus rose, He made it His mission to forgive Simon Peter. Jesus pursued Peter and made sure the disciple knew that the past was in the past, and that the past didn’t limit the potential or purpose of his future. Peter was forgiven. Peter was restored. He didn’t have to live in shame. He had a future; he had hope.

But even that wasn’t enough!

God couldn't have used Simon Peter like He did in Jerusalem (in Acts 2) if Peter hadn't been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Forgiveness was critical to Peter, but it wasn't enough. He needed restoration, but that wasn't enough. Simon Peter needed more. He needed to be infused with and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

*7. God released supernatural power through Peter's life.*

Supernatural things started to happen for Peter and through him.

The book of Acts records how the Holy Spirit impacts the life of someone like Simon Peter. In fact, the official title of the book is *The Acts of the Apostles*, which we might rephrase as *The Acts of the Holy Spirit—Through the Lives of the Apostles*. Peter was baptized in the Holy Spirit, and this marked the beginning of the supernatural in his ministry.

- He preached with great power, and 3,000 people were saved in one day (Acts 2).
- He prayed for a crippled man who was healed (Acts 3).
- He spoke boldly while on trial in front of the Sanhedrin, the same court that had so terrified him before (Acts 3-4).
- Mighty miracles happened as crowds brought their sick to him for prayer (Acts 5).
- He prayed for a crippled man who began to walk (Acts 9).
- He prayed for a dead woman and she came back to life (Acts 9).
- He received a vision during prayer that changed the way the church leaders thought about the Gentiles who needed the gospel (Acts 10).
- God sent an angel to break him out of prison (he was there for preaching about the resurrected Jesus) (Acts 12).

Remember, this was the same guy who denied Jesus and cowered in fear. On his own, he was inconsistent and ineffective. He was full of pride and self-consumed, but Jesus changed all that. Jesus forgave him and restored him. And when the Holy Spirit came upon Peter,

he was transformed into a man who was bold, powerful, consistent, and filled with joy.

We simply can't overestimate the value of Simon Peter's experience with the Holy Spirit. He was never the same after he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. What he had before Acts 2 wasn't enough! He needed more. He needed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. God took him from ordinary and inconsistent, and transformed him into someone who stepped into supernatural miracles that affected the entire world.

This is the will of God for your life!

What you have today is not enough, but the power of the Holy Spirit is enough! God has called you to so much more. His plan for you is to do so much more than just survive another week. He wants to use you to do the supernatural. Yes, you! He wants the Holy Spirit to be manifest in and released through your life. What you have been doesn't have to determine what you will be. Your past doesn't define your potential.

But what you are in yourself just isn't enough. You need more. You need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. He provides the power you need for your life, and that power is more than enough!

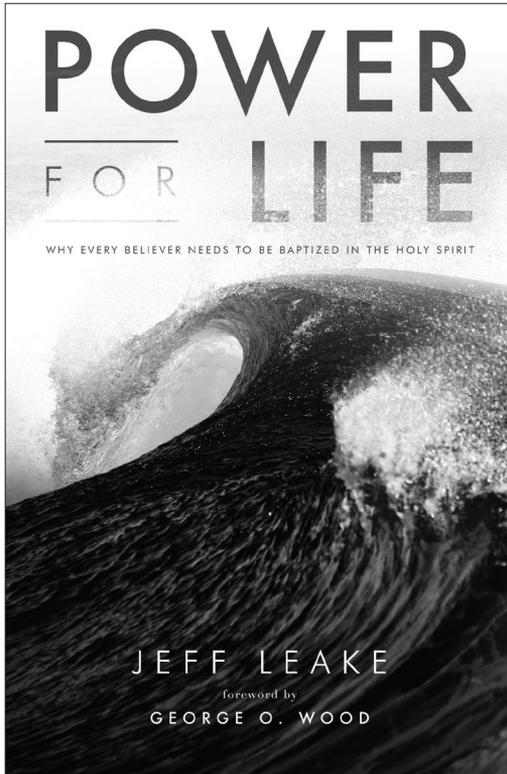
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. Describe a time in your life when you knew that what you had just wasn't enough.
2. Can you imagine what the disciples felt when Jesus unexpectedly ascended into heaven and left them here without Him? What words would you use to describe that emotion?
3. When you see someone who turns their life around, how is that motivating to you? In what ways does that give you hope?
4. When you consider the life of Simon Peter, what role did the Holy Spirit play in the radical transformation of his life?
5. In what area of your life do you most need the help of the Holy Spirit?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Leake has served as the lead pastor of Allison Park Church for twenty-five years. He is also the leader of Reach Northeast, a church planting movement that has planted more than 120 churches. Jeff holds an MA in missiology from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. He is the author of four books: *God in Motion*, *The Question That Changed My Life*, *Learning to Follow Jesus*, and *Praying with Confidence*. He and his wife, Melodie, reside in Allison Park, PA. They have been married for over twenty-eight years and have five children and one grandchild.

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*“The baptism in the Holy Spirit  
is truly the gateway to living a  
supernatural life.”*

*—Jeff Leake*

Many people are curious and yet confused about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It involves a discussion about “speaking in tongues” and raises all sorts of questions:

**WHAT IS THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

**IS IT NECESSARY?**

**IS IT AVAILABLE FOR EVERY BELIEVER?**

**IS IT STILL RELEVANT?**

Based on a solid biblical foundation, and written in an easily accessible style, *Power for Life* answers those questions and many more. It helps every believer understand who they are in Christ and who the Holy Spirit is within their lives.

Don't read this book to resolve a controversy or solve some sense of awkward confusion. Read this book to come to grips with the supernatural potential of your life. Read it with a hunger to see God do all He is able to do through your life.



For the past twenty-four years, Jeff Leake has served as the lead pastor of Allison Park Church, a multi-campus church in the city of Pittsburgh, PA. He is the founder of The Network of Hope and The Northeast Ministry School. He holds an MA in missiology from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and is the author of four books: *God in Motion*, *The Question That Changed My Life*, *Praying with Confidence*, and *Learning to Follow Jesus*. He and his wife, Melodie, reside in Allison Park, PA.

  
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