

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 1st November 2009

## Kingdom, Power and Glory – Signs and Wonders

### Acts 5:12 - 16



#### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

When the Holy Spirit came on the disciples at Pentecost they received God's power and they were able to do works of power and preach the good news of the risen saviour with power. Everywhere they went there were signs and wonders which gave direct evidence to their proclamation.

There are recorded in the book of Acts at least 10 kinds of sign phenomena that produced evangelistic growth in the church. On 9 occasions they are specifically called *signs and wonders*. They include healing, raising the dead, speaking in tongues, expelling demons and in the case of Phillip being transported from one place to another. As the apostles began their ministry Luke records for us that they performed many miraculous signs and wonders. If we look at Acts 2:41, we see that on the day of Pentecost at least 3000 were added and in Acts 2:47 *the Lord added to their number daily*. The demonstration of the Spirit's power had an amazing effect on the proclamation of the good news. The results of their ministry, Peter's in particular, were quite extraordinary, cf. Acts 5:15. In the book of Acts there are 14 instances where both the apostles and others such as Stephen preached, performed works of power, and saw significant church growth. (See the attached chart)

John Wimber contrasts the ministry of Paul's evangelistic results in Athens and of his work in Corinth. The effect of his ministry in these two places is quite revealing. Cf. Acts 17:16–34 and Acts 18:8. Whilst there are several reasons that explain the different responses, particularly the degrees of receptivity found in each of these two cities, it's important to see and note Paul's attitude and demeanour as he came to the city of Corinth. (Read 1 Cor. 2:1-5). It seems clear that at Corinth Paul combined proclamation with demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power, as Jesus had done in his ministry. The word and works of God were coupled in an expression of God's divine will and mercy, which culminated in the conversion of individuals as well as groups.

Signs and wonders, when they become an integral part of evangelism, can make all other approaches to evangelism so much more effective. John Wimber defined *power evangelism* as a *presentation of the gospel that is rational but which transcends the rational*. John who became such an exponent of this truth of the gospel was very clear in pointing out that signs and wonders do not in themselves save; it is only Jesus who saves. The power for salvation in power evangelism is through the gospel alone. (Read Rom.1:16)

In power evangelism we don't need to add to the gospel, nor do we seek to add power to the gospel. But we do turn to the third person of the Trinity in our evangelistic efforts, consciously cooperating with his anointing, gifting and leading. As we read the gospels, we see that the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus, came upon his first disciples at Pentecost, and they in turn prayed for the next generation of disciples, who continued to both preach and demonstrate the gospel. Preaching and demonstrating the gospel are not mutually exclusive activities; they work together, reinforcing each other. The next generation of disciples included men like Stephen and Philip. They were chosen to ensure that the Greek widows were not overlooked in the distribution of food. They were chosen to wait on tables, but they were also chosen because they were *known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom*. It's a lesson to us all that whatever we are called to, whether in a worldly sense it's viewed as insignificant or not, we still need to be men and women *full of the Spirit and wisdom*. (Read Acts 6:8)

Power evangelism is practiced by people who are open to God's power, because Spirit-empowered Christians are living demonstrations of the gospel. God is preparing us for 'the new thing he wants to do among us,' but we have to have a thirst for His word, a willingness to obey His voice, to seek Him in prayer, a desire for the spiritual gifts and to be men and women *full of the Spirit and wisdom*.



#### Witness: questions to discuss

Before discussion, read the Bible passages and ask God to help you discern what the Spirit wants to say to your group. Consider one or two questions below – don't feel you have to use them all but do consider the key question! Make sure there's plenty of room for prayer and ministry.

**Some key passages:** Acts 1: 1-11; 2: 1-13; 2:14-21, 41, 47; 6:8; 17:16 -34; 18:8; 1Cor 2: 1-5; Rom 1:16.

- 1.Has our evangelism to date been limited because we are fearful of signs and wonders? How do we overcome our fear and find a new place in God in which we are able to trust in a God of miracles?
- 2.Share out some of the illustrations in the attached list for members of the group to study. What lessons do you discern they may have for us today?
- 3.Do we underestimate the contribution of the 'table waiters' amongst us?
4. What do we need to do to ensure that we are all full of the spirit and wisdom?
- 5.Share together any experience you have had of God moving in a miraculous way. What effect did this have on your faith?

**Key question:** *This all sounds a bit scary and way out of my comfort zone. I have heard lots of talk about signs and wonders but I haven't really seen any evidence at St Pauls. Is this just brave talk?*

## **PROCLAMATION and DEMONSTRATION of the GOSPEL**

**The following summarises these instances in the Book of Acts**

<b><i>Works of Power</i></b>	<b><i>Preaching</i></b>	<b><i>Church Growth</i></b>
Pentecost (2:4)	Peter (2:14)	3000 added (2:41)
Cripple healed (3:1–10)	Peter (3:12)	5000 believed (4:4)
Miraculous signs (8:6)	Philip (8:6)	Men & Women believe (8:12)
Angel appears (8:26)	Philip teaches (8:35)	Eunuch baptised (8:38)
Angel appears, vision, Spirit falls (10:3, 11, 44)	Peter (10:34)	Gentiles baptised (10:47)
Lord's hand with them (11:20-21)	Men from Cyprus (11:20)	Many believe (11:21)
Evidence of God's grace (11:23,24)	Barnabas (11:23)	Great numbers believe (11:24b)
Holy Spirit falls (13:1-3)	Barnabas, Saul (13:1)	Churches in Asia, Europe
Miraculous signs and wonders (14:1-7)	Paul and Barnabas (14:3)	People divided (14:4)
Cripple healed (14:8-10)	Paul and Barnabas (14:14)	Disciples gather (14:21)
Cast out demon (16:16-18)	Paul and Silas (16:14)	Believers gather (16:40)
Earthquake, prison doors open (16:25-26)	Paul and Silas (16:31-32)	Jailer and household saved (16:34)
God's power (18:1; cf 1 Cor 2:1, 4-5)	Paul (18:5)	Many believed (18:8)
Extraordinary miracles (19:11-12)	Paul (19:10)	Churches in Asia

Acknowledgements:

*Table taken from John Wimber's book 'The Dynamics of Spiritual Growth' Chapter 31 page 209*