

Miracles



LET HIM BE KNOWN

**MIDYEAR PRAYER, FASTING, AND CONSECRATION
JULY 5–7, 2023**



VICTORY

Honor God. Make Disciples.

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Preparation for the Fast

Expecting Miracles Every Day

The 2023 theme for Every Nation is miracles. In January, we reflected on some of the miracles in the book of Acts and focused on their results: empowerment, healing, provision, guidance, deliverance, and protection. In this devotional, we continue with the theme of miracles as we reflect on other accounts of other miracles in Acts, focusing on how God empowers all believers to be channels of His miracles, so that He may be known in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Why Fast?

Fasting is a spiritual tool God uses to advance His kingdom, change the destiny of nations, spark revival, and bring victory in people's lives. At the start and middle of each year, we take time to pray and fast in order to humble ourselves before God, seek Him, consecrate ourselves to Him, and corporately agree for breakthroughs.

Jesus fasted.

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Matthew 4:1—2

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. **Luke 4:14**

Jesus knew He was going to need spiritual strength to fulfill His purposes. Fasting makes us spiritually strong and prepares us to do God's work.

Fasting is an act of humility and consecration.

Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. **Ezra 8:21**

As we humble ourselves through prayer and fasting, we receive God's answers to our prayers.

Fasting helps us become sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Acts 13:2

When we deny ourselves of natural cravings and worldly distractions, we become more sensitive to God's voice. Then we are better able to focus on God and submit to His will.

Fasting brings revival.

"And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in." **Isaiah 58:12**

Throughout history, God has brought revival and delivered nations from destruction in response to prayer and fasting. Fasting helps us prevail in prayer and intercession.

Fasting is healthy.

Fasting cleanses your digestive system from toxins. Doctors consider fasting a cure for certain allergies and diseases. The discipline of fasting helps break unhealthy addictions in our lives.

Planning Your Fast

Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” **Joshua 3:5**

Pray—Spend time reading the Bible before the fast. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in your prayers. In the succeeding pages, write down your faith goals and specific prayer requests for your family, friends, church, and nation.

Commit—Pray about the kind of fast you will undertake and commit to it ahead of time. Record your plan and ask God for grace to help you follow through with your decisions.

Act—Start eating smaller portions a few days before the fast. Avoid food high in sugar and fat. Plan to limit physical and social activities for the week of the fast. Ask someone to be your prayer partner throughout the fast and share your faith goals and answered prayers with him or her. Continually pray for each other even after the fast.

NOTE: Consult a physician, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or taking medication. If your situation does not allow you to do a full fast, determine what will work best for you.

While Fasting

[Jesus] answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” **Matthew 4:4**

Focus—Set aside time to work through the devotionals. Be ready to respond to God’s word and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Pray—Join at least one prayer meeting in your local church. Intercede for your family, church, pastors, nation, campuses, and missions throughout the week.

Replenish—During mealtime, read the Bible and pray. Drink plenty of water and rest as much as you can. Be ready for temporary bouts of physical weakness and mental annoyances like impatience and irritability.

Breaking the Fast

Eat—Reintroduce solid food gradually. Your body will need time to adjust to a normal diet. Start with fruits, juices, and salad, then add more vegetables. Eat small portions throughout the day.

Pray—Don't stop praying! Trust God's faithfulness and timing. Carry your newfound passion for God throughout the year. Be in faith for God to answer your prayers.

¹⁴And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

1 John 5:14–15

My Plan

DAY 1

Water only Liquid only One meal only Other:

Prayer meeting(s) to attend:

DAY 2

Water only Liquid only One meal only Other:

Prayer meeting(s) to attend:

DAY 3

Water only Liquid only One meal only Other:

Prayer meeting(s) to attend:

“...if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.” **Matthew 18:19**

My Prayer Partner:

I am thankful to God for . . .

Answered Prayers

List highlights, answered prayers, and lessons learned so far in 2023.

A large grid of dotted lines for writing.

For the rest of 2023, I am seeking God and trusting Him in these areas:

Personal Faith Goals

Spiritual Revival • Physical Healing • Prosperity and Abundance • Rich Generosity ...

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My Family

Restoration of Relationships • Household Salvation ...

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My Education/Career

Excellence • Promotion ...

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My Ministry

Small Group Growth • Salvation of Colleagues and Classmates ...

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I am committing to pray for . . .

My Church

Church Leadership • Provision • Discipleship Ministry . . .

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My Community

Campuses and Educational Institutions • Local Government •
Outreach Opportunities . . .

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My Nation

Government Officials • Spiritual Revival • Economic Prosperity •
Peace and Order . . .

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INTRODUCTION

Miraculous Power through the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:1–8

¹In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ²until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” ⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Additional Reading: **Luke 24:44–48; Acts 2:1–21**

Could you imagine what the disciples may have felt after Jesus' resurrection? Jesus, their Master, who they knew had been crucified and buried, appeared to them over a period of forty days. He showed them many convincing proofs that He was indeed alive and that everything that had happened to Him had been prophesied in Scripture, including His suffering and resurrection.

Over the course of forty days, He spoke to them once more about the kingdom of God, which is God's reign and rule in people's hearts and lives, bringing about transformation and renewal. Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was already at hand and that it would be fully established at the end of time when He returned in glory to judge the world and renew all things.

The disciples asked Jesus if it was time for Him to restore the kingdom to Israel, which the Jews understood as part of the consummation of the kingdom of God when Christ would establish a political kingdom on earth and through which He would rule the nations. However, Jesus sidestepped their question by telling them that it was not for them to know when this will be. Jesus would be going away for a while and they would not know when He would return. Instead, their business was to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. This meant that they would continue to take part in advancing God's kingdom on earth through its proclamation and demonstration.

They may have felt nervous as Jesus was going away, since they would have to travel across unfamiliar lands, meeting different people from all sorts of cultural and religious backgrounds. They probably had their own excuses: many may not have travel experience beyond Judea and Samaria; many had abandoned Jesus and fled in fear; many had not received the advanced religious training of the scribes and Pharisees. Bringing the gospel to the end of the earth would be a daunting task for them. (Imagine how you would have felt if you were in their shoes.)

However, Jesus assured them once again that He would be sending the Holy Spirit. They would never be alone because the Spirit would come upon them. His presence would be more than enough to give them the power and boldness to be His witnesses. The Greek word for "power" is *dunamis*, which has been translated many times in the Gospels and Acts as "miracles," "mighty works," and

“miraculous power.” The Spirit would work through them in the same way He had worked through Jesus, so that they could proclaim Him to the world.

Days later, Jesus’ promise came to pass. The Holy Spirit came upon them in power, and they spoke in foreign languages they had not previously learned. This opened the door for Peter to proclaim the gospel to a multitude of Jews from different parts of the Roman empire. God indeed worked in them to proclaim the gospel, and His miraculous power was displayed through them.

This week, as we reflect on how disciples of all sorts were empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel of God’s kingdom and be channels of His miracles, let us expect God to build our faith. As we see God move, our hope is that we too can be conduits of His power, so that Christ may be known in all the earth.

Pray that you would hear God clearly when He speaks to you as you pray, fast, and seek Him this week.

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Write down at least ten of your perceived limitations and inadequacies to being a witness of Christ. When you are done, cross each one out and write across each, “Can be overcome by the presence and power of the Spirit.”

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List three to five people you know who need a miracle and to whom you can present the gospel. Ask God for an opportunity to pray for their needs and minister to them this week. Trust that God would meet their needs in a powerful way.

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Father of glory, may Your Spirit enlighten the eyes of my heart to know You, the hope to which You have called us, and the immeasurable greatness of Your power toward and through us who believe in You. Grant that I may continue to speak Your word with all boldness, while You stretch out Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of Your holy servant Jesus. I thank You that Your Spirit is always with me.

A M E N .



DAY ONE

In Jerusalem: Extraordinary Miracles through Ordinary People

Acts 5:12–16

¹²Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. ¹³None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Additional Reading:

Acts 1:8; 4:13

The book of Acts is distinct among the New Testament writings because it deals with the birth of the Church and its life in the age of the apostles. The role of the Holy Spirit is a significant emphasis of God's involvement and providence in Acts. God's divine work through the Holy Spirit was made aware of the early church community.

Since the signs and wonders of the apostles were demonstrated through the work of the Holy Spirit, scholars have suggested that "the Acts of the Holy Spirit" would be a more appropriate title of the book.

Doctor Luke gives us a snapshot of the everyday life of the church. At this point, the early church had witnessed and experienced God's signs and wonders through the apostles. Though they were ordinary men and unschooled in the advanced religious training of the Pharisees, they were esteemed by the community because of the work of God that has been seen through them. Through the preaching of the gospel and manifestation of the Spirit, multitudes came to believe in Jesus. As a growing Christian community, their lives were defined by prayer, the word, and fellowship. They exercised faith and did not remain eyewitnesses and recipients of miracles. They became channels of faith and miracles by being in faith for others to receive miracles and ministering to the sick, afflicted, and unclean. When the church came together in fervent prayer and faith, amazing things happened among them and through them on a regular basis.

The apostles were regular people like us—empowered by the Holy Spirit to do mighty works to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel of the kingdom. The same power that was in the apostles to do signs and wonders also resides in every Christian. Acts 1:8 tells us that God has given us His Spirit to empower us. The declaration of the gospel is accompanied by the demonstration of the Spirit's power—here and to the end of the earth.

Each of us have people in our immediate sphere of influence who need a miracle from God today. Each of us is sent with God's Spirit to be His witness. We stand on the authority of Jesus to be channels of God's signs and wonders to others.

Who among your loved ones needs a miracle today? Go and be a channel of God's miracle to them. We are empowered and sent to proclaim Jesus to the world.

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What seemingly impossible prayer request have you been waiting to be answered? Be in faith—we serve a miracle-working God.

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Holy Spirit, living Breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul;
Let the presence of the risen Lord,
Come renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
Give me faith for what I cannot see.
Give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within,
May Your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin
In each thought and deed and attitude.
Kindness to the greatest and the least;
Gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my strivings into works of grace;
Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
Giving life to all that God has made.
Show Your power once again on earth,
Cause Your Church to hunger for Your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise;
Lead us on the road of sacrifice,
That in unity the face of Christ
Will be clear for all the world to see.

"Holy Spirit"
(a song by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty)

DAY TWO

In Judea and Samaria: Door-Opening Miracles through Persecuted People

Acts 8:1, 4–13

¹And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.... ⁴Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸So there was much joy in that city. ⁹But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. ¹⁰They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” ¹¹And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹²But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

Additional Reading: **Acts 1:8; 8:25; Isaiah 55:3–11**

In this part of the book of Acts, there was a great persecution against Jesus' followers. Stephen, their fellow disciple, had been stoned to death. The disciples were being targeted and dragged to prison, and they were scattered to different regions. However, instead of lying low, they continued to preach the gospel. Despite threats to their lives, they faithfully and boldly proclaimed Christ. One of them was Philip. He was neither an apostle nor a teacher; he was one of the seven men of good reputation mentioned in Acts 6. Philip was a deacon, full of the Spirit and wisdom, and was appointed to take charge of distributing food to widows.

Philip went to Samaria, a place no Jew would usually stumble upon, preaching the word and performing miracles. He is recorded as the first to minister to the Samaritans and, therefore, the first to minister outside Jerusalem.

This was quite a big deal because culturally, the Samaritans were regarded as lower than the Jews. Even though they had Israelite blood, they were not of pure Jewish descent and were mixed with other races. God, in His compassion and wisdom, also wanted them to experience the salvation and freedom that can be found in Jesus. So Philip maximized the opportunity to preach the gospel with them and they witnessed many signs and wonders, including casting out unclean spirits and healing the sick. It was unimaginable! There was much joy in that city because of it.

Philip was not alone in performing miracles there. There was another named Simon performing magic in Samaria. Because of the spectacles, people regarded him as the power of God. Unlike Simon, Philip was not trying to display power; he was pointing to a bigger truth, a bigger miracle: Jesus Christ, who came to save us from our sins and restore us to a right relationship with God. Philip's main goal was to exalt the name of Jesus and make Him known, and through this, many believed and put their faith in Christ alone.

The work of the Holy Spirit in performing signs and wonders is to be accompanied by the preaching of God's word. This is what calls people to see and experience who God truly is, in spite of persecution, the culture, and the atmosphere.

Take some time to meditate on Isaiah 55:3–11. What do you think the Holy Spirit is speaking to you today?

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Think of one or two things that you think hinder you from being used by God to be a channel of His miracles to others. In what ways can you overcome these hindrances? Believe that He will do extraordinary things through you today and in the weeks and months to come.

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Are there people around you, who have a different background or culture and you may not necessarily like being around, who need to experience God's miracles and to hear the gospel? Ask God for compassion for them and for boldness to be a witness to them.

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O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made;
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing;
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation,
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart.
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration,
And then proclaim: "My God, how great Thou art!"

"How Great Thou Art"
*(a song by Carl Boberg and translated
by Stuart K. Hine)*

DAY THREE

To the End of the Earth: Eye-Opening Miracles through Reluctant People

Acts 9:10–19

¹⁰Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” ¹¹And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹²and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” ¹³But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” ¹⁷So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; ¹⁹and taking food, he was strengthened.

Additional Reading:

Acts 9:1–9; 26:12–18

Imagine yourself in Ananias's shoes. He was a disciple, not an apostle, a church leader, or a deacon. Yet the Lord Jesus appeared to him in a vision and called him to a daunting task—visit and lay hands on Saul, the notorious persecutor of the church, in order that Saul may regain his sight. This was the same Saul that had assisted those who murdered Stephen, was making murderous threats against the Lord's disciples, and had been on his way to Damascus in order to arrest, bind, and bring them to Jerusalem. Ananias was probably hesitant and confused. Why was God sending him to such a man? Ananias could have considered his safety and refused to go to an enemy. But God told him that Saul was waiting for him.

So Ananias obeyed God, laid his hands on Saul, and a miracle happened. Saul was able to see and was then filled with the Holy Spirit. This became a turning point in his life in becoming the apostle Paul, who would be sent by God to the Gentiles all over the Roman empire so that their eyes would be opened and they would turn to God. He would be instrumental in the effort to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth.

This story shows that God can use anyone, regardless of a person's background or status in life. Even if Ananias was not a prominent figure in the church, God chose him to do something significant. Similarly, God can use any of us to make a difference in others' lives, including those we may be in conflict with. We may have our own excuses: not considering ourselves as capable to minister, thinking that someone else is better suited for the task, or feeling reluctant, fearful, uncomfortable, inadequate, or intimidated. Our reputation and even our safety may be at stake.

But, when this happens, will we choose to be available and obey God and His word? By faith, will we step out of our comfort zone? When God speaks, leads, and guides us, may we respond in faith, trusting Him to work through us and fulfill His plans and purposes for His greater glory. May we always be reminded that His Spirit is in us to empower us so that when God calls us, we can readily say, "Here I am, Lord." And when we do, we can be willing channels of God's eye-opening miracles, bringing salvation and healing to those in need.

At first, Ananias described Saul as someone who had done much evil to Christ's people, but later on addressed and accepted him as his "*brother Saul.*" In what ways can you relate with Ananias's initial confusion and hesitation to minister to Saul? How do you think you can overcome your doubts and fears in such circumstances for the sake of the gospel?

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What do you think God is teaching you about His power to transform even the most unlikely individuals and fulfill His purposes? How can you trust God's ability to work through you, despite your own limitations and weaknesses?

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How can you be more willing to step out of your comfort zone and obey God's call to engage and reach those around you, in spite of the difficulty and discomfort? What can you do to be more open and responsive to God's leading in your life today?

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Lord, make me
an instrument of your peace.
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that
I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to
eternal life.

Amen.

“Peace Prayer” of Saint Francis



CONCLUSION

Miracles through Us Today

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Additional Reading:

Mark 16:15–20; Romans 15:18–21; Acts 28:26–30

The kingdom of God is not a physical place or political entity. Rather, it is the spiritual reality of the rule and reign of God that is manifested in the lives of those who have put their faith in Jesus and are living in obedience to Him as their King. The kingdom of God is characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy. This can be experienced more and more as people submit themselves to the benevolent rule of the Lord Jesus.

This week, we reflected on how we are called to take part in advancing God’s kingdom by proclaiming the gospel to those around us. Acts 1:8 shows us the blueprint for how this is to be carried out: the Holy Spirit will come upon believers and empower them to be witnesses of Christ where they were, in the surrounding areas, and even to the end of the earth. This mission and promise is not limited to a select few, but is for every believer, regardless of background or status. In the three days of the fast, from Acts 2–9, we saw how God used the apostles, a deacon, and a disciple to proclaim the gospel and perform signs and wonders, which resulted in many coming to Christ.

By the end of the book of Acts, we find that the gospel had indeed spread in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and among the Gentiles. But the mission was far from being completed. There was a lot of hardship, resistance, and even persecution as the believers proclaimed the gospel. Still, nothing could stop the kingdom of God from advancing. In the last verses of Acts, even while Paul was under house arrest in Rome, he continued proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus with all boldness and without hindrance.

Many say that the book of Acts is open-ended. Indeed, the story continues today as believers, empowered by the Spirit, continue to proclaim the gospel of God’s kingdom and make disciples in our locality, in the neighboring areas, and among the nations. Therefore, let us all seek to take part in advancing God’s kingdom through the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel, as we live in obedience to Christ. As we partner with the Spirit, the kingdom will continue to grow and expand, bringing salvation, healing, and transformation to all who believe, until God’s kingdom fully comes and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Spend some time in prayer, asking God to reveal to you ways that you can advance His kingdom in your daily life—on your campus, in your workplace, at home, in your church, and in the community and nation.

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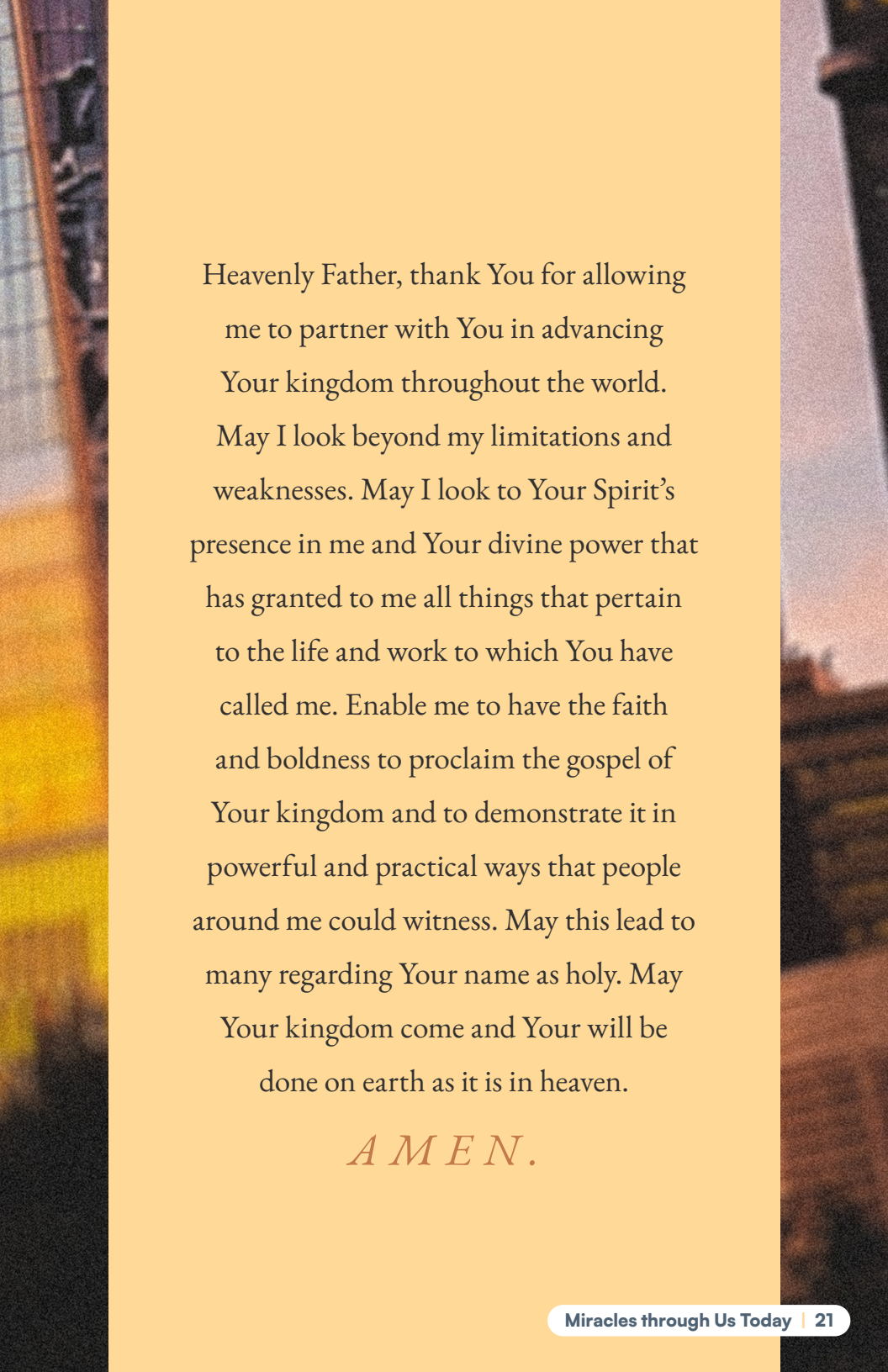
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Write down the names of five people in your life who need to hear the gospel. Commit to pray for them and look for opportunities to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel to them. Identify and list how you can demonstrate Christ's love specifically to them.

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Memorize Acts 1:8 and commit to using it as a reminder of your role in advancing God's kingdom.

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Heavenly Father, thank You for allowing me to partner with You in advancing Your kingdom throughout the world. May I look beyond my limitations and weaknesses. May I look to Your Spirit's presence in me and Your divine power that has granted to me all things that pertain to the life and work to which You have called me. Enable me to have the faith and boldness to proclaim the gospel of Your kingdom and to demonstrate it in powerful and practical ways that people around me could witness. May this lead to many regarding Your name as holy. May Your kingdom come and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

A M E N .

