

The Amazing Force

Inheritance: Unprecedented Opportunity

The Purpose of This Series: God wants us working together in His Kingdom, not just live independently simultaneously. These four messages are to assist us in aligning the believer with God's purpose for our lives in His service as well as the mission of our church. Everyone has a purpose and DNA in Christ. To often we are out to reach a “destiny” when God has a “design” that He has for us in relationship with others.

The Purpose of This Message: By reading a quick overview of the Book of Acts we will discover the power of an Amazing Force working in all kinds of lives in all kinds of situations. This Amazing Force assists those involved in reaching the known world. They were radically passionate for Christ and in so being, were able to overcome astounding distractions, circumstances and dangerous peril to be used of God in a mighty way. Our opportunity is the same. We are called to make a difference, but not without the help of the Amazing Force of the Holy Spirit. The empowerment to overcome any obstacle and to provide all wisdom and truth for the journey. You do not want to miss this life's journey without the working of this Amazing Force. The power of God!

Question: If God were to walk into the room and sat down beside you, and He would say something like this to you,

“In the next few years, the years before 2015, I'm going to allow you to have a significant part in influencing 100's, 1,000's, and possibly 10,000's of people for my Kingdom.”

- How would you respond?

Often we pray as a church and even sing songs that have these words in them, “Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done!” And if God were to walk into this room here to day and He walks up to you and says, “OK!” Would it be possible that we would say, “OK, what?”

See, it's OK with God that His Kingdom come to this earth. But He works His plan through you and I.

This past Friday, (Fri Nov 06, 2009) **The Pratt Tribune**, (By Carol Bronson) came out with an article titled, “**Four churches prepare for 125th year.**” Here's what the article had to say,

It's no coincidence that four churches are celebrating 125th anniversaries in the same year that the city of Pratt marks its 125th year of incorporation. It's also no coincidence that three of them are clustered in a two-block area around the junction of two major highways.

One of the first actions of the Pratt Town Company was to donate land for Baptist, Christian, Methodist and Presbyterian churches, as well as for schools...“That's why the churches are centrally located, and it also indicates how important they (town organizers) thought churches and education were,” Giannangelo said.

The Pastor of Pratt Presbyterian Church commented about the community 125 years ago,

“They had a faith and a vision of something they could not see, I like to imagine

no one was saying 'we've never done it this way before.'"

If God were to walk into this auditorium and tell us that we could have a significant part in influencing our community with the love of Christ, that would become the most significant thing that we could focus on.

Sovereign Move Of God

Have you ever had good times that turned to great times? It like when all your work came in on time, it had incredible results and your got recognized for it or advanced for it? It was like your ship came in!

As well, have you ever had a time you did nothing but had great and wonderful things go your way? It's like they found a mistake charging you on one of your bills or found a mistake on your taxes and you found out that you are going to get reimbursed! Not only that, you went to the dentist and he said you have no cavities, someone sent you an encouraging card in the mail for no apparent reason and you teenage kid said, "How can I help with work around the house?" That would be an amazing day?

We don't get those very much do we? That my friend is a sovereign experience. That is the sovereign moment that you never want to forget about. It's like someone saying, "I bought this lottery ticket for you, it won last night, here it is." No way, right?

There have been incredible sovereign times in my life where I believe God, in His own "**Providence**"- **His divine plan**, has stepped into my life. On one occasion was when my heart was being tugged toward His. He made me aware of Him and curious about Him. That tug was obviously prompted by the Holy Spirit but it may have been promoted by the prayers and teaching that I sat under. I'm not sure how many times it was that you heard the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ before you actually "Heard" the message of Jesus Christ. But it was a work of God through the Holy Spirit. It was an Amazing Force!

Later in my life there were occasions where the sovereign move of God was activated in my life. One particular time was when **I was in Africa. I was 23 years old** and had become so lonely and thousands of miles away from anyone who I could talk to or be comforted by. In a moment, a sweet presence of the Lord like I have sensed only a few times in my life, invaded my room and I laughed, I wept and I worshiped God! It was a sovereign move of God.

What I'm saying in this message is that there are sovereign moves of God and there is nothing like them. I love them. I want them and I believe that there are things that we can do to assist them in being an active part of our life...but you may not like how it comes,

- 1. In Desperation**
- 2. Have No Alternatives**
- 3. Lose Total Control**

Active Faith

Now I want to take you to another place. It is a place of Active faith. It is an area where we activate what God's Word says we are capable of doing. It is best defined in Hebrews 11:1

"Now faith is being sure of what we **hope for** and **certain** of what we do not see."

Hebrews 11:1

I believe God's work in our life is multi-faceted not just two sided. Without realizing it, many people miss the other side of their walk with Christ, and I believe it is not the more “realistic” part of the Christian walk, but I believe it is the most “active” part of the Christian walk. I truly believe that many Christians sacrifice the other side of the Christian walk in fear of missing the other. Let me illustrate.

I have a friend. I love him dearly. He has had incredible opportunities handed to him because he was fearful of missing God, he was fearful that he would be in a position of not hearing God when he was taking advantage of present opportunities. He was afraid that he would miss God's sovereign will because he would be taking advantage of God's present purpose.

There was a pig farmer from Iowa who had made a few million dollars and sold his business. He was looking for an investment and found that land development in Texas was booming so he took up roots, moved to Texas and began investing in property. There were about four hundred undeveloped acres sitting on the side of town. He hired my friend to take responsibility for the whole project of building two or three hundred homes.

My friend reluctantly took the position and assisted this investor in developing a successful housing project. In the process, this investor wanted nothing more than my friend to become his successor. He treated him like a son and he was going out of his way to help him be a financial success.

When the project was done, there was an equal amount of land next to the same property. This man looked at my friend and said, “I will put all the money up for you if you want to take the lead, everything you make is yours, all you have to do is pay me back.” He would talk to him again and again, but my friend was fearful and was afraid that he would miss God.

To make a long story short, my friend never took advantage of the moment. The investor built the houses and paid my friend the salary he had always given him. That was about 10 years ago.

Sometimes God Provides In The Form of A Job

It is amazing that in all the times that I've needed money and I desperately sought God for provision, it came in the fashion of a job. It took me a little while to understand it, but God often opened a door for me to find some extra work, help here or there, but work was provided more than money in many cases. God's not up for a Bail-Out plan, but I do think He is into a **Work-Out plan!**

What Are We Talking About?

Why I mentioned my friend and why I mentioned that God provides in the form of a job is that we can have a right concept about God and miss what God is trying to do in our lives. When we should be working we can think we should be spiritual and when we should be spiritual we get to working. When you get those wrong, you will miss everything.

When I talked about the sovereign move of God, that is something that happens despite all those who are participating. As there have been incredible moves of God around our nation, they have sprung up with revival fire, incredible manifestations and healing power. There is no doubt books that will and have been written about them. And, as you study them out, there is not order about them, all the way back to the Azusa street revival in the early 1900's,

there is no rhyme or reason other than Godly people were available to God to have his way.

But then there is the question, what do you do between the moments of God's sovereign move. Do you keep talking about the last sovereign move of God in your life and stop everything until there is another sovereign move of God? Do you stop at a church, and wait until God decides to pour out His sovereign move on you? Do you do nothing?

I believe I have an answer for that. I believe the sovereign move of God will always have opportunity to have His way in my life and our church. The reason I know that is because I ask for it every day. I ask God to have His way. I pray for an incredible move of God. I cry out, "God use me." And who knows, right now we might be in the middle of a sovereign move of God...to which I believe is true. I believe any obedience to God's leading is a sovereign move of God. Some are just more obviously demonstrated than others.

Acts: An Amazing Force

I believe before the end of this message we will have a clear understanding of what God wants us to do.

I. Theme of Acts: The Unhindered Movement of God

The 28 chapters of Acts is a sovereign move of God in a powerful and miraculous way. It was an Amazing Force and it was unhindered by four things:

1. Unhindered by Persecution

There was much persecution in the first century. The Roman persecution of Christians began as early as 64 AD by the emperor Nero. The Church has traditionally spoken of ten primitive persecutions of Christianity; commencing with that of Nero in 64 CE, and closing with that of Galerius in 305 AD.

Strong's Concordance reveals that "persecute" (Greek *dioko*) means "to pursue, follow after or press toward." Vine's Expository Dictionary adds "to put to flight or drive away." Only within certain contexts does it take on the sense of oppression, ill treatment, abuse, tyranny and even martyrdom and murder. Persecution is aggressive and injurious behavior carried out in a hostile, antagonistic spirit, normally by a group, but occasionally by one individual toward another.

In the New Testament, instead of persecution hurting the church it actually helped the church, it became an Amazing Force. Through the persecution, the message of the Good News spread the believer's to other towns and areas, hundreds of miles away where they shared the message of Jesus Christ.

2. Unhindered by Racial Prejudice

There was a time in this new, growing move of God that there was a question that had to be answered, "Was this move of God only for those who were Jews or was it for all the gentiles in the world?"

In **Acts 11:5-9**, Peter had an explicit vision where his Jewish theology was challenged and changed by the work of the Holy Spirit. He saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven and it came down to where he was.

When he looked into it he saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. Then he heard, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.'

Instantly he said, 'No way God, I'm not going to do that! I've kept myself my whole life from eating unacceptable things!'

Then he heard three times, '**Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.**' Then it was immediately pulled back up into heaven. At that moment three men came to the house where Peter was staying and asked him to come talk to them.

As Peter began to talk to the men in the room, the Holy Spirit fell in that room the same as it did the day it came in Acts 2, there was all kinds of things going on. After that encounter Peter had this understanding:

“So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?”
Acts 11:17

By the time we get to Acts 15 we find that it was understood that the Good News of Jesus is for everybody. This Amazing Force was unhindered by persecution and Racial Prejudice.

3. Unhindered by Geographic Boundaries

We can see at the time of Pentecost in Acts 2 that this Amazing Force reaches far into another country, the country of Rome. In Acts 28, Paul openly shares the Gospel of Jesus Christ for two whole years while awaiting trial. The last verse of Acts tells us how Paul responded,

“Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.”
Acts 28:31

The whole known world had come to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. Unhindered by Prison Bondage

We can read Paul's words that is believed to be written while imprisoned in Rome. He tells the believer's at Philippi about this Amazing Force,

“Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.”
Philippians 1:14

II. How Did The Early Church Become So Effective?

Not only, “What made the early church so effective,” but 2000 years later, what can make us just as effective as that Amazing Force in the early church. Does this Amazing Force want to function right here in Garden City at Cornerstone church?

What is it that made the early church so effective? Three things:

- 1. It Began With A Promise** (Acts 1:3-5)
- 2. It Ended With Power** (Acts 1:7)

3. **It Was The Result of Prayer** (Acts 1:13-15)

We can see all three of these things happening in the first chapter of Acts.

- **Begins with a Promise**

“After his suffering, he showed himself to these men 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.”

Acts 1:3

“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “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

- **Ends in Power**

“He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:7-8

- **A Result of Prayer**

In Acts 1:12, the disciples who were around Jesus when He was sharing His last words with them and they left that place and went to Jerusalem,

“When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying... They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”

Acts 1:13a,14-15

This Amazing Force Began With A Promise (Acts 1:3-5), **It Ended With Power** (Acts 1:7) and **It Was The Result of Prayer** (Acts 1:13a,14-15)

III. Overview of Acts

Acts 2- That Amazing Force was displayed when people applied the promise and were empower as a result of prayer, they went out sharing the message of Christ and here is the results,

“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

Acts 2:41

“Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the

people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:43

Acts 4- Look at what occurred just a little while later,

“But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.”

Acts 4:4

It's important here to stop and think about what is going on here in the book of Acts. You might think, “Well these were **extremely gifted people.**” But they really wasn't.

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

Acts 4:13

Acts 6- Many of those who had given their hearts to Jesus started being equipped and engaged in doing the work of the ministry and look how the Amazing Force continued,

“So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”

Acts 6:7

IV. Three Things Happen To The People In The Book Of Acts

1. They Were Saved

There were thousands who came to Christ, it was a crazy move of the Amazing Force! God's hand was on them so much that even in prison, poverty, confusion, persecution, nothing could stop this Amazing Force. It was a sovereign move of God.

- Become more accountable to bring people to Christ through prayer and service time. I'm believing God for 300 people to receive Christ through our outreach, personal ministry, Life Groups and church services.
- Life Groups will play a big part.

2. They Were Spirit Filled- Burn Night!

God continued to pour out His Holy Spirit out on these people, simple but powerful. There was no one who wasn't either challenged or converted. This Holy Spirit became the source of this Amazing Force. It opened up opportunities that they would have never been given before. It gave them wisdom that was beyond their learning. It gave them power that no one had ever experienced. It gave the provision that helped them accomplish their task. This was a powerful time!

3. They Were Sent

Everyone was engaged. It didn't matter where you were from or where you would go, God opened up doors for them to be the next to share the Good News of God. Those who were on the cutting edge of this ministry immediately began to train and release those with this Amazing Force! It is interesting that those

who fled from persecution felt more like they were sent by the Holy Spirit. When this Amazing Force is working in your life you will not live in reflection to your circumstances but inspired the the power of the Holy Spirit.

"No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD."

Isaiah 54:17

In this Amazing Force, God uses people. He awakens their heart with His love. He helps them discover their need for Him and then He opens up opportunity to be a part of His Amazing Force.

V. Antioch- The Church of Amazing Force!

What we see is a

Sovereign move of God often becomes a collective people of faith.

It's important that we look for the appropriate components of what it takes to be a great church. There are so many suggestions and opinions, but again, I believe Acts has our answer of what a great church should look like, a church of the Amazing Force.

There is no doubt, an example of a great church would be the one in Antioch.

- This is where a group of scattered **persecuted believers gathered**
- This is the place that was so interesting that the leaders in Jerusalem sent out leaders to see what was going on and so much was happening that they started a **year long Bible School**
- This is the place where some **prophets came** to observe this Amazing Force and **prophesied a world wide famine** which occurred.
- This is where the children of God were **first called Christians**
- This is the church where they first to officially **send out missionaries**

I believe that in Garden City, God wants to use Cornerstone Church to become a church of Amazing Force! I believe that the **model** to become a church of Amazing Force should be Antioch.

Antioch Is A Model A Church Of Amazing Force in Seven Ways

1. Antioch was a Frontier Church (Acts 11:20-21)

It was an innovative leader in the early church. They were able to lead more people to Christ, using different methods and through different means. They were not afraid to do something new or different.

2. Antioch was an Outreach Church (Acts 11:21 & 24)

Verse 21 says, "...a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord." And then in verse 24 it says, "...a great number of people were brought to the Lord." People were finding Christ as their savior by the camel loads!

3. Antioch was an Influential Church (Acts 11:22,25-27)

Because of what God was doing there different kinds of people came from different places to see what was going on, Barnabas came from Jerusalem, Paul came from Tarsus, key prophets came from Jerusalem. It was a happening place.

4. Antioch was a Discipled Church (Acts 11:26)

A school rose up there where they *taught great numbers of people* (vs. 26). Because of the process they developed they were able to raise up disciples from their own area who understood the Word of God and how to lock in on the Amazing Force of God's hand.

5. Antioch was a Generous Church (Acts 11:29-30)

When there was a famine in the land, Antioch was the first church to provide financial relief for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders of those communities by Barnabas and Saul.

6. Antioch was a Worshiping and Seeking Church (Acts 13:1-2)

It was in Antioch where Paul and Silas was worshiping and seeking God with others. And there was a Word of the Lord given. As they were seeking God's face where they were both commissioned by the Spirit of God to go out together and eventually become the most powerful influencers of the Amazing Force of their day.

7. Antioch was a Sending Church (Acts 13:3)

It was the first church to send out missionaries. There, they fasted and prayed and then they laid their hands upon them, to commission them to be sent and then the rest is history.

It's Simple!

Before we let it get way too complexed, it is important that we understand that these seven things were not the start up program, they were the outcome of a church that hosted the Amazing Force. Just as a trickle of water will eventually find it's path, that Amazing Force is wanting to pour out on us and fill us up so we can spill out.

So what do we do? It is simple, keep it simple. A church that is vibrant with the presence of this Amazing Force is a church that doesn't over complicate reaching and discipling people for the Kingdom of God.

The cluttered and complex church is limited and overprogrammed, too busy doing everything and exceptional at nothing. The sad thing is that too many churches are too busy to notice.

A difficult fact is that our culture is not simple at all. Actually the world is getting smaller and smaller with Globalization through technology, the simpler things have become the more and more complex things have become. But that is why people are attracted to simple, because things are so out of control and hectic. They need a place to find peace and rest and then a place to connect and grow and eventually be released to do what they were created for.

That's our purpose as a church, to devise a simple process to reach and mature people. **In that way we can reach people, mature people and involve people.** We will never lose our heart to reach those who are without Christ, it is not just driven from a mandate to "Go," but from a compassion to "Love." We will never lose our responsibility to mature those who have found Christ as their Lord. This is a call that is deep within us and powerful in potential. Then without any question, we are to involve these in the same process. This is powerful. This is simple. This is our journey!