THE STORY CHAPTER 28

New Beginnings

April 22-23, 2017

Appearing on the Big Screen…

**3**it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4**that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

*Luke 1:3-4 ESV*

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*

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 1:8*

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

*Acts 2:4*

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

*Acts 2:17*

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

*Acts 2:32-33*

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

*Acts 2:38*

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people!

*Acts 4:8*

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

*Acts 4:31*

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

*Acts 9:17*

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.

*Acts 10:44*

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

*Acts 11:24*

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

*Jeremiah 31:33*

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

*Ezekiel 11:19*

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

*Isaiah 44:3*

I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.”

*Ezekiel 39:29*

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

*John 16:7*

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

*John 14:26*

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

*Luke 24:49*

**The character’s name: SATAN.**

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

*Romans 10:9-10*

**Challenge to Action.**

**1) Ask questions in prayer.**

**2) Wait in silence.**

**3) Learn to interpret the nudge.**

THE STORY CHAPTER 28

New Beginnings

Tom Anthony

Oak Hills Church, San Antonio, TX

April 22-23, 2017

**To view The Story Chapter 28 sermon video,** [CLICK HERE.](http://media.oakhillschurch.com/default.aspx?page=3679&item=581)

**Introduction**

My palms were sweating and my heart was racing. Even though I was standing next to a group of friends, I felt like I was miles away. Have you ever had that feeling?

You’re present, but your mind is racing and the whole situation feels a little bit…surreal?

The music started and the door swung open. Something new was about to start.

And then…she walked through the door, and I saw the most amazing woman I have ever seen. In that moment, I thought to myself, “This…changes…everything.”

I know. You’re thinking, “Oh my goodness, they’re children!” Well that was 25 years ago. We were 12 at the time.

And I was right. That changed everything.

Nine months and three days later, I heard a tiny little cry come out of a very tiny little body. Again, I thought to myself, “This changes everything!”

Yes, nine months and 3 days, and we welcomed Caleb into our lives. And I was right. That changed everything.

Now, fast forward what seemed like just a couple of years to last February. This time my palms were sweating and my heart was racing.

This time I was standing with friends and family, and again the situation felt surreal.

I thought to myself, “this changes everything.”

In fact, why don’t you say it with me, “One. Two. Three. This…changes…everything.”

Let’s try it again. “One. Two. Three. This changes everything.”

Yes, that little baby was all grown up and we were welcoming our first awesome daughter in law into the family.

I know. How could my wife, Cami, and I – at such an extraordinarily YOUNG age - already have a daughter in law?

Not to be outdone, last August, we had one more of those change moments. We welcomed our second awesome daughter in law.

The photographer asked our son, Josiah, to have his family come up for a family picture. He said, “Just your immediate family.” Say it with me, “One. Two. Three. This changes everything!”

Yes, we DO have a large family. When we all went up there, the photographer said, “No, Josiah, just your IMMEDIATE family.” Josiah laughed, threw his arms out, and said, “This IS my immediate family.”

At that point, the photographer said, “Wow, I’m going to have to back up!”

You know who was thinking, “This changes everything” at that point? It was Chanel, our new daughter in law!

I’m sure you’ve had many experiences in your life where you thought to yourself, “This changes everything.” Maybe it was a wedding or a birth. Maybe it was a difficult funeral or news from the doctor you didn’t expect. Maybe it was a world event or a personal milestone.

Today we’re looking at the first part of the book of Acts, and there are some things that are obvious.

This is the beginning of the church.

Something is getting started.

The world is definitely going to say, “This changes everything.”

And maybe you’re thinking there are some other obvious things.

Tom Anthony is up there speaking. Obviously.

He’s the Community Life guy, so he’s going to talk about community. Obviously.

You may even be thinking, “I’ve never heard him talk about anything else!”

Okay, here’s where you may be in for a little surprise.

I want to look at this new beginning through a different lens. As I was studying, I saw something clearer than I’ve ever seen it before.

I started off thinking this would be a message about the early church and the role of biblical community in the early church.

But when I was reading, I saw something, and I thought to myself,

“This…changes…everything.”

**The Holy Spirit Changes Everything**

We call this book the book of Acts.

Does anyone know what this book was called in the King James translation?

It was called The Acts of the Apostles. Can I just tell you this? That’s not a good name, and I think you’re going to agree with me.

Does anyone know who the author of the book is? It was Luke the doctor. He was writing down what he saw. He was recording what he experienced. In fact, he even says this in Luke 1, verses 3-4:

**3**it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4**that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

*Luke 1:3-4 ESV*

Luke says, “I’m going to give you just the facts. It’s an orderly account. No opinion here. No exaggerations.”

So we’re looking at Acts Chapters 1-12. Will you do me a favor? If you have a Bible or a Bible app, open it to Acts Chapter 1. If you’ll open your Bible, you’re going to see something amazing.

We’re going to just look at God’s Word. We’re going to look at SEVERAL passages, and I think you’re going to say, “This changes everything.”

In Chapter 1 in verses 4 and 5, Jesus gives them instructions.

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*

Jesus says, “Wait. The church isn’t starting yet. Go wait in Jerusalem. Something – or rather Someone – is coming!

Look at Acts 1:8.

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 1:8*

Jesus tells them – just in case they were thinking about rushing ahead or ignoring his instructions – that POWER is coming.

Turn to chapter 2.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

*Acts 2:4*

This is the power he was talking about. In fact, later in the chapter, Peter references an Old Testament verse in Joel where it says this.

Look at Acts 2:17.

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

*Acts 2:17*

Can we just admit something as a church? We spend a lot of time talking about God the Father. He’s a good, good Father. Right? How great the Father’s love for us! This is good! We also love to talk about Jesus and the stories of the gospel. Jesus is amazing.

There is a third person in the Trinity, though. The Holy Spirit. We don’t spend a lot of time talking about Him. It doesn’t help that those old translations of the Bible called him the Holy Ghost. How does that work explaining him to a child? Junior, let me tell you about the Holy Ghost. Then, Junior starts crying. Okay, Junior. Let’s just talk about Jesus some more!

Turn to Acts 2:32. Look at how this verse talks about all three.

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

*Acts 2:32-33*

Keep walking through this with me. Look at Acts 2:38. It talks about how we become Christians!

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

*Acts 2:38*

Jump ahead to chapter 4 of Acts. Look what happens when Peter gets up to speak.

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people!

*Acts 4:8*

And then again in verse 31.

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

*Acts 4:31*

Later in the book of Acts, Saul – who later was named Paul and wrote a good portion of the New Testament, had an encounter with Jesus. He was struck blind, and a man named Ananias was told to go pray for him. Look what happened in Acts 9:17.

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

*Acts 9:17*

Saul had already had an encounter with Jesus. He already believed in Jesus. But this prayer from Ananias still needed to happen.

Turn to Acts 10. Peter is talking to Cornelius and his household when this happens. In verse 44.

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.

*Acts 10:44*

Finally, look at Acts 11. In verse 24, we get a description of Barnabas, one of the early followers of Jesus. It’s such a great description.

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

*Acts 11:24*

You may be thinking at this point. SO WHAT? Why does this matter? Why did you get us to say out loud, “This changes everything”?

Well, here’s a surprise that made me look at this in a whole new way. I started looking at this and thinking, “Is this just a book of Acts thing? Is the early church just obsessed with the Holy Spirit? Was Luke – our author – just giving us his ideas?

Let’s go back to the Old Testament. Look at Jeremiah.

“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

*Jeremiah 31:33*

Or how about looking at Ezekiel?

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

*Ezekiel 11:19*

This is the promise of the Old Testament. Look at Isaiah.

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

*Isaiah 44:3*

Those descendants are you and me! Look again at Ezekiel.

I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.”

*Ezekiel 39:29*

But it wasn’t just Luke or a few Old Testament prophets. Look at what Jesus said Himself! The disciples wanted Jesus to stay with them. But Jesus had a different plan. Here are his words!

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

*John 16:7*

Jesus is telling them he is going to leave. But that’s a GOOD thing! And here’s why.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

*John 14:26*

Here’s what happens. Jesus comes into the world. He is God in the flesh. He lives his life. He gives his life on the cross to pay for our sins. Then he defeats sin and death and rises from the dead. All of this happens, and the disciples witness all of this. They are 100% believers in this truth!

**What if Our Way of Living the Christian Life is Flawed?**

SO things are ready to roll, right? That’s all you need, right? Just believe. That’s what we were told as kids. Just pray this prayer. Right? But that’s NOT what Jesus said. Look at what he said.

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

*Luke 24:49*

Okay, why does this matter? Why would I say, “This changes everything.”

Well, what if everything you ever thought about living the Christian life was flawed? What if you were trying to live the Christian life but NOT doing it the way Jesus Himself told you to do it?

Let me see if I can illustrate this. The Bible describes God as three in one. Three persons of the Trinity. God the Father. God the Son. God the Holy Spirit.

The Father loves us. He loves us so much that He sent the Son. Jesus lived, died, and rose again. We can’t earn our way into heaven. Sin separates us from God. So what we do is we put our faith on Jesus. Right? That’s all clear. That’s what we do.

How many of you have heard a preacher or a Christian say to you, “Just believe this and you’ll go to heaven.” They share what I just shared, and then say, “All you have to do is believe.” Have you heard that before?

Well, let me share THIS. There is a character in the Bible who believes the Father loves us. He believes the Father loves us so much that he sent Jesus. He believes Jesus died for our sins. He believes Jesus rose from the dead. He KNOWS sin separates us from God. He KNOWS we have to put our faith on Jesus to be restored into right relationship with God the Father. Do you know this character’s name?

**The character’s name: SATAN.**

That’s right. Satan believes all of these things. In fact, he KNOWS they’re true. So…how can just believing all of these things restore you into right relationship with God? The idea that all you have to do is “just believe” is a myth.

Belief in the Bible is not simply a mental ascent. You don’t believe with just your mind.

Romans 10:9-10 says this.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

*Romans 10:9-10*

**It’s Not About Asking Jesus Into My Heart**

So I want you to see something clearly. To do that, I want to invite my friends Travis and Kristen out to help me. We’re going to illustrate this because this changes everything.

*Travis and Kristen come onto the platform.*

Faith was never intended to be just in your head. It was never intended to be “just believe.”

In our illustration, Travis gets to be Jesus. Travis, you’re Jesus. Okay, now don’t let this go to your head, Travis. It’s just an illustration!

Travis is the Son of God. He’s Jesus. He’s God in the flesh. He was born as a baby, lived his life in sinless perfection, and then died on the cross for our sins. He rose from the dead to defeat sin and death. BUT, simply believing this event happened doesn’t restore us to right relationship with God. It’s more than JUST believe. We actually have to put our faith ON Jesus. I can’t get right with God. I can NEVER earn it. I can NEVER do enough. Without Jesus’ work on the cross, I am NOT going to heaven.

So I put my faith ON Travis. Now, how many of you have heard the expression, “Ask Jesus into your heart?” Did you know this phrase is not found in the Bible?

The Bible says that Jesus rose from the dead, appeared for about 40 days, and then LEFT TO GO TO HEAVEN!

Jesus himself says that He’s not going to stay. He’s going to leave. And that’s a good thing.

*Indicate a small area of space near Kristen.*

SO if this little area here represents my heart, I never invite Jesus INTO my heart. I put my faith ON Jesus.

And here’s where the Holy Spirit comes in. Kristen, you get to be the Holy Spirit! Just for today. Don’t get carried away!

When I put my faith ON Jesus, the person I receive is not JESUS. I receive the Holy Spirit. So, Holy Spirit, come on in.

*Kristen steps into the area indicated.*

You get to be in this little area that represents my heart.

Jesus, you still matter because you showed me how to live a perfect life. You taught me and modeled for me. You’re my older brother. You’re my friend.

But Holy Spirit, I need you in here.

*Point to the empty chair.*

Now, this chair represents the control chair in my heart. One of us is going to sit in that control chair. Jesus is not sitting in that chair. The Bible says he’s sitting in a chair at the right hand of God!

*Sit in the chair.*

So if I’m sitting here, making my own decisions, and occasionally noticing the Holy Spirit, how are things going to go for me? I’m going to struggle in my own strengths and failures.

*Stand up and have Kristen sit in the chair.*

So I put the Holy Spirit in the control chair, and I let the Holy Spirit direct me. Do you see this? Do you see why this changes everything?

*Kristen stands up and speaker sits in the chair.*

Every time I jump back into the chair, I start to struggle.

*Stand up, and Kristen sits back down in the chair.*

Every time I let the Holy Spirit sit in the chair, I can experience the fruit of the Spirit.

Can you join me in thanking Jesus and the Holy Spirit for helping us out?

*Travis and Kristen leave.*

Wait, Holy Spirit, don’t leave! Just kidding. The Bible says he will NEVER leave me.

How did Jesus live so perfectly? He was in constant communion with the Holy Spirit.

That same person – the Holy Spirit – can reign inside you and me.

This…Changes…Everything! Friends, say it with me. One. Two. Three. This Changes Everything!

The book of Acts was not about the Acts of the Apostles or the Acts of the Church. It would be better titled, “The Acts of the Holy Spirit!”

Friends, too many of us are trying to live the Christian life without knowing the POWER – the Holy Spirit – necessary to live it!

**Application**

You may be thinking, “This is great information, but what do I do differently?”

Can I give you a very practical how to? Can I give you a way to do this every day? It’s Three Things.

**1) Ask questions in prayer.**

Most people just give lists to God. I pray for this. I pray for that. I pray for this. Amen.

We’re good at talking TO God and telling him what’s on OUR mind, but we’re not good at listening.

As my good friend, Preston, once told me, “Don’t you think if He made you and He loves you that He might have a few things He’d like to share with you?”

So ask questions in prayer. Holy Spirit, what should I say here? Holy Spirit, is there someone you want me to talk to? Is there someone I need to apologize to? Is there anything I need to stop doing? Learn to ask questions in prayer. This is something you practice and learn to do over time.

Second,

**2) Wait in silence.**

You’re waiting on an answer. If we just start talking again then we’re back to telling him what’s on our minds.

We ask the question and then we wait in silence for the answer. Learn to let the silence linger for a bit. Learn to listen.

And third,

**3) Learn to interpret the nudge.**

That’s what I like to call it, and this is hard to learn to do.

There’s so much noise in our lives that we can’t hear well. A thought or idea crosses our minds, but it zooms by. Or we hear something in our minds, and it’s not God’s voice.

I want you to KNOW that if the thought is from the Holy Spirit, it will ALWAYS agree with the Bible.

The Holy Spirit will never say, “Way to go, stupid. You blew it again!”

The Holy Spirit will never say, “You haven’t done enough or you should try harder.”

The Holy Spirit will never say, “Just believe in yourself.” DISNEY might say that, but the Holy Spirit doesn’t say that.

So here’s your challenge for this week. It’s your **Challenge to Action**.

Every day this week, take ten minutes to do these three things. Maybe do this on the drive in the car with the radio off. Maybe 10 minutes first thing in the morning or last thing in the evening.

**1) Ask questions in prayer.**

**2) Wait in silence.**

**3) Learn to interpret the nudge.**

Let me wrap up with this. There are four groups of people here today.

**Group 1**

Group 1 hears this, and you’re saying, “I know this, and I live each day listening to the whisper of the Holy Spirit. That’s what makes my life so abundant and joyful!”

For you, you had a moment at some point in your life where you began to commune with the Holy Spirit.

Are you in Group 1? Today was just a reminder for you.

**Group 2**

Group 2 hears this, and you’re saying, “That’s right! This DOES change everything.”

You’ve forgotten the joy of listening to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and you want to get back to that.

Are you in Group 2? You once lived this way, but it’s been too long. Time to start again!

**Group 3**

Group 3 hears this, and you’re thinking, “I don’t think I’ve ever learned to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit.”

You want to take a step today to LEARN to listen.

Are you in Group 3? You may need to take a step to talk to someone today.

**Group 4**

Group 4 hears this, and you’re thinking, “I know the Holy Spirit does not live in me. I may have believed this stuff about Jesus in my head but never in my heart.” Friends, you don’t have to leave here today without taking action.

Are you in Group 4? You can put your faith ON Jesus and receive the gift – the true gift of His Holy Spirit – that He promises to us.

Because God the Father does not want us to just believe in Jesus the Son and go about trying to live our lives on our own. He wants us to receive the Holy Spirit AND learn how to let the Holy Spirit sit in the control chair.

And living life moment by moment with the Holy Spirit inside of us sitting in the control chair? That changes everything.

Okay, remember I’m the Minister of Community Life. This is not just about you and me. We belong to each other, and we’re trying to be Jesus IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD.

For over twenty years I’ve seen what happens in a neighborhood when a GROUP of people come together to form community around the HOLY SPIRIT working in all of their lives.

I’ve seen what happens when community is built in a neighborhood where our common bond is not just stage of life or common interests or that we like each other and get along but rather on the FACT the Holy Spirit lives in you and He lives in me.

When it happens in an individual? It’s wonderful. It really is.

But when it happens in a neighborhood community? Oh, my! THAT…CHANGES…EVERYTHING!

**Prayer Time Set-Up**

Friends, we don’t want you to leave here today without taking action. It doesn’t do you any good to just hear something like this and not do anything about it.

We’re going to move into a time of corporate prayer, so I want to invite the elder couples and prayer counselors to come forward.

If you’re in Group 1, you got a great reminder today.

If you’re in Group 2, maybe you simply ask the Holy Spirit to get back into that control chair. You know what it was like to have him there before. Ask him back.

If you’re in Group 3, you may want to come forward for prayer. You’re just saying you want someone to pray for you to help you learn how to talk with the Holy Spirit. Or maybe there is a trial or challenge in your life that is so consuming you that you don’t feel like you can hear the Holy Spirit over the noise. Come forward and let someone pray for you.

If you’re in Group 4, today could be the one that changes your eternity. You want to move your knowledge from your head to your heart. You want to not just believe, but you want to put your faith ON Jesus. You can come forward to have someone pray for you as you receive the promised Holy Spirit to live inside you and sit in the control chair!

Let’s pray.