

"Kevin Harney shows us that true strength comes in God's presence. A fantastic read for daily meditation."

MARK BATTERSON, author of *The Grave Robber*

PREACHING RESOURCES

EMPOWERED

BY HIS PRESENCE

RECEIVING THE STRENGTH
YOU NEED EACH DAY

KEVIN G. HARNEY

EMPOWERED BY HIS PRESENCE



PREACHING/SERMON RESOURCES

Dear Friend,

I am so excited and honored that you are preaching through *Empowered by His Presence* with your congregation. I have gathered some materials to help as you put each sermon/message together.

Of course, no pastor or teacher plans to take someone else's sermon and simply repeat it. That is why I am not offering a manuscript for you to read, but some resources for you to use as you shape the unique message God wants you to bring to your congregation. What you will find in this document is a compilation of resources for each of the four weeks of the *Empowered by His Presence* series. You can use what works for you, drop what does not fit, and add your own content to develop a Spirit-directed message that will connect for the unique needs of the congregation you serve.

I suggest you proceed with this seven-step process as you prepare each message:

1. **Pray** for God's leading and the infusing power of the Spirit as you write a message that points people to the empowering presence of Jesus.
2. **Read the primary biblical passage(s)** provided for each message and ask God to speak to you through the truth of his Word. As you and I both know, God wants to speak to us first, so keep your heart open as you prepare.
3. **Read the corresponding section of Empowered by His Presence** and contextualize the lessons from that chapter for your ministry setting. Each section contains six short chapters that focus on different biblical characters. Every section ends with a chapter on Jesus.

4. *Watch the small group DVD for that week of Empowered by His Presence.* This gives additional ideas, stories, and biblical input. Each DVD session has a powerful narrative story and sections of teaching on the unique aspect of living an empowered life captured in that section of the book.
5. *Review the sermon/teaching materials* provided in this document. I was intentional about giving you lots of ideas and even idea starters to get your heart and mind engaging in the message preparation process.
6. *Add your own study* and ideas. God will be speaking to you about the need for people to avoid acting powerful in their own strength or living like powerless victims. As you prepare, you will have a unique word from the Lord and ideas to communicate about how each of us can live an empowered life as we live and walk in the presence of the God who made and loves us.
7. *Write your message and deliver it* with passion and joy. As I am preparing these resources I am praying that God will form a life-impacting message in your heart and that the Holy Spirit will empower you as you preach it!

May the God of all grace lead you in your preparation and delivery of his message of being *Empowered by His Presence!*

With you in his service,

Kevin G. Harney

MESSAGE

1

Experiencing God's Presence in Suffering, Loss, and Pain

PREPARATION SUGGESTIONS

1. Pray for God's leading as you develop your message.
2. Read the biblical passages listed on page 59 of the book, *Empowered by His Presence*.
3. Read the book introduction and section 1 of *Empowered by His Presence*.
4. Watch the introduction video piece and week 1 of the *Empowered by His Presence* DVD.
5. Review the resources below.
6. Write your sermon/message.
7. Pray again for God to fill you to overflowing as you present the message he has placed on your heart.

• PREACHING RESOURCES FOR WEEK 1 •

BASIC MESSAGE OUTLINE

- Introduction—Powerful, Powerless, or Empowered: Three Different Roads and Destinations!
- Scripture Reading
- Prayer
- Lessons from Job—Holding On to God When the World Is Crashing In
- Lessons from Paul—Power to Press On through Personal Weakness
- Lessons from Hannah—Faithful Sacrifice Honors God
- Life Application—Clinging to God with Cramped Fingers
- Closing Prayer

INTRODUCTION IDEAS

- *Images*—Show pictures of things and people that our culture associates with being powerful. Then show pictures and images with what is commonly seen as powerless. Talk about how we often see ourselves in one of these groups. But God does not want either of these for us. He wants us to be empowered by his strength as we live and walk in his presence.
- *Science*—Talk about some of the renewable energy sources that are being used and becoming more popular. Look at how these can become valuable as some of the traditional sources of energy run low or become too expensive. Then talk about how God has the ability to empower us and fill our tank with an endless supply of his strength.
- *Props and Visuals*—Have two curl bars with twenty-five pounds on each side (fifty pounds plus the bar). Plan to have a small child come up and also someone who lifts weights. Have these people volunteer and be ready before the service and let them know what you have planned. Then start the contest. See who can lift the bar and curl the bar the most times. One will seem powerful and one powerless. Have the stronger person do as many curls as fast as they can. As it becomes clear that the child has no hope of winning, ask them if they want some help. When they say yes, invite two very strong people up to take both ends of the bar and help them with their curls. Explain that this is the beauty of being empowered. They gain outside strength to add to their own. This is what God offers when we live and walk in his presence.

Whatever introduction ideas you use, talk about how seeking to be powerful, living powerless, and relying on God's empowering presence each leads to a very different kind of life. Use the resources from pages 13–17 to shape this part of your message.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Scriptures as you feel they fit your message. Give exposition of texts you choose.

PRAYER

Pray for God to help each person gathered to discover His empowering presence, even in the hard and challenging times of life.

KEY IDEA

Lessons from Job—Holding On to God When the World Is Crashing In

- Tell the story of Job and read about his loss and pain. Focus on Job 1:21–22.

- Tell the story of Jerry Sittser from chapter 1. Or tell a story about a person in your congregation who has met God and drawn closer to him through loss and pain. You might even want to interview someone or show a video of their story of being empowered by God through deep loss.
- Invite people to think about when they have faced loss, pain, and heartache and ask how they responded. Did they blame God and run from him? Did they hold on to God even when things didn't make sense?
- Have someone in the congregation with a microphone, ready to read the piece titled "From the Heart of Job" on page 25.

KEY IDEA

Lessons from Paul—Power to Press On through Personal Weakness

- Read 2 Corinthians 11:23–25 and 12:8–10.
- Tell Paul's story of receiving the forty lashes minus one five times. Describe what this must have been like. Talk about his relentless commitment to keep preaching Jesus through all he suffered. Don't belittle anyone else's suffering, but ask people, "Are you willing to press on and follow Jesus, even when it means loss, suffering, and pain?"
- Invite people to make a decision, right now, to press on and follow Jesus when it gets hard, when pain comes, and even when doing the right thing leads to the "wrong" results.
- Have someone in the congregation with a microphone, ready to read the piece titled "From the Heart of Paul" on page 31.

KEY IDEA

Lessons from Hannah—Faithful Sacrifice Honors God

- Read Hannah's story from 1 Samuel 1.
- Talk about the princess syndrome and how so many people today are looking for the "happily ever after" ending to their story. You might want to show pictures of a few Disney princesses.
- Tell Hannah's story and how, even when her prayers were answered, she still gave up her son to serve with Eli.

- Invite people to reflect on how God has been near them, empowered them, and carried them through times of significant sacrifice. How do these times make us stronger and draw us closer to God?
- Have someone in the congregation with a microphone, ready to read the piece titled “From the Heart of Hannah” on page 37.

KEY IDEA

The Gospel—Jesus’s Scream of Loneliness

Using the content and ideas from chapter 6, share the gospel and focus on how Jesus willingly suffered and sacrificed so that we could be in relationship with him and never be left alone.

LIFE APPLICATION—CLINGING TO GOD WITH CRAMPED FINGERS

Use one or more of the “Action Ideas” from the “Resources for Living an Empowered Life” at the end of section 1 of the book.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask God to help each person desire to live an empowered life rather than powerful or powerless. Thank Jesus for willingly sacrificing himself so that we can be empowered. Pray for each person to discover the powerful presence of Jesus in the darkest of times.

MESSAGE

2

Encountering God in the Community of His People

PREPARATION SUGGESTIONS

1. Pray for God's leading as you develop your message.
2. Read the biblical passages listed on page 108 of the book, *Empowered by His Presence*.
3. Read section 2 of *Empowered by His Presence*.
4. Watch video piece for week 2 of the *Empowered by His Presence* DVD.
5. Review the resources below.
6. Write your sermon/message.
7. Pray again for God to fill you to overflowing as you present the message he has placed on your heart.

• PREACHING RESOURCES FOR WEEK 2 •

BASIC MESSAGE OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Scripture Reading
- Prayer
- Lessons from a Paralytic—On the Mat or Carrying It?
- Lessons from Paul and Timothy—Lend a Hand
- Life Application—Seeking Community
- Closing Prayer

INTRODUCTION IDEAS

- *Scripture*—Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–26 with appropriate images of the body projected during the reading (foot, ear, nose—alternating with pictures of people—showing how all the parts fit together). Talk about how God has made us for community, connection, and to be part of his family. God makes us stronger and more of who we are meant to be by putting us in a community that is eternal!
- *Story*—Tell a story about a person who has discipled you, prayed for you, or invested heavily in your spiritual journey. Explain about how the life of this person has been a source of heavenly empowerment.
- *Props and Visuals*—Have a person brought into the worship space on a stretcher with four people carrying them. Talk about this as a metaphor of life. We can be in one of two places: on the mat or helping to carry it. When we are on the mat, God is empowering us through the help and community of others. When we help carry the mat, God is empowering another person through us.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Scriptures as you feel they fit your message. Give exposition of texts you choose.

PRAYER

Pray for each person to see the biblical call to live in community. Ask God to give all of you hearts that are humble enough to know that we need each other. Invite the Holy Spirit to show you how community is a gift and a source of empowering strength for each of us.

KEY IDEA

Lessons from a Paralytic—On the Mat or Carrying It?

- Read the story of the paralytic and his friends from Luke 5. If you did not use the mat illustration from the introduction, you might want to use it here. Talk about what that man's life would have been like had he not allowed his friends to empower him and move him to the place where Jesus was. Look at how God uses us to empower others by lifting and carrying their mat. Talk about how we all have times we need to humble ourselves and let others help carry us. In both cases, the empowering presence of God is present!

- Tell a story about a time when God sent people (maybe people from your congregation) to come alongside you, pick you up, and empower you when you felt empty. Or have someone in your congregation share a personal story on video or live. Celebrate the gift God gives us when he chooses to empower us through community with others. Talk about how we need to be available to be used by God to help lift others up in their time of need and become a conduit of his empowering presence.
- Challenge people to think about one person in their circle of influence who needs some help and support. Have them commit to find one practical way they can help lift the mat of this person in the coming week.
- Have someone in the congregation with a microphone, ready to read the piece titled “From the Heart of a Paralytic” on page 73.

KEY IDEA

Lessons from Paul and Timothy—Lend a Hand

- Read 2 Timothy 2:2 and talk about the generations of faith reflected in this passage. Cast a vision for lives that pass on the faith with such clarity and passion that it keeps moving from generation to generation. Give some background on Paul and Timothy’s friendship and partnership in the gospel.
- Take a hand—or two! Invite two people to join you to help illustrate the idea of living with both hands locked to the hands of others. Be sure to prepare the people in advance. Ideally it should be a person who has helped and encouraged you spiritually and another person you are helping along on their spiritual journey. Teach the idea of how God empowers us through living with one hand locked to people who are ahead of us spiritually and who are helping us along. But we are also to lock on to people who need us to help them forward on their spiritual journey. God empowers them through us.
- Challenge those gathered to live a life where they are receiving help and strength from God through a person of deep faith who can help them along. Have them identify one person who is holding their hand and helping them forward. Then challenge them to be sure they are also holding the hand of someone who needs help forward in their spiritual walk. Have them identify a person whose hand they are holding so that God can strengthen this person through community. If they can’t identify these people, invite them to pray for God to develop these relationships.

- Have someone in the congregation with a microphone, ready to read the piece titled “From the Heart of Timothy” on page 79.

KEY IDEA

The Gospel—Jesus Calls Us to Community

One of the reasons Jesus died on the cross and rose again was to invite us into community. Share the simple story of the gospel and talk about how faith in Jesus connects us to a community of people we will be in relationship with for eternity. Celebrate this reality!

LIFE APPLICATION—SEEKING COMMUNITY

Use one or more of the “Action Ideas” from the “Resources for Living an Empowered Life” at the end of section 2 of the book.

CLOSING PRAYER

If you used the illustration of two people who have locked hands with you on your spiritual journey, invite them back up. Lock hands with them one more time. Then each of these three people can lead a brief prayer thanking God for how he has empowered you through the community you have with other believers, including those on the stage.

MESSAGE

3

Empowered for the Journey by Receiving God's Rest

PREPARATION SUGGESTIONS

1. Pray for God's leading as you develop your message.
2. Read the biblical passages listed on page 155 of the book, *Empowered by His Presence*.
3. Read section 3 of *Empowered by His Presence*.
4. Watch the video piece for week 3 of the *Empowered by His Presence* DVD.
5. Review the resources below.
6. Write your sermon/message.
7. Pray again for God to fill you to overflowing as you present the message he has placed on your heart.

• PREACHING RESOURCES FOR WEEK 3 •

BASIC MESSAGE OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Scripture Reading
- Prayer
- Lessons from Israel—Trusting God's Call to Rest
- Lessons from Elijah—A Nap and a Snack
- Life Application—Learning to Sabbath
- Closing Prayer

INTRODUCTION IDEAS

- **Scripture and Props**—Read Isaiah 30:15 and Matthew 11:28–30. If you want to be creative, do this reading slowly and very reflectively from a hammock or a comfortable lounge chair. If you can't have one of these comfortably in your worship space, make a short video of this and show it. Then talk about the rest and peace God wants you to experience and how a rested life is a gift from God and a source of his empowering presence.
- **Video**—Make a video of a “typical day” in the life of one of your congregational members who lives with a very full schedule (maybe a young person who seems to run from school to practice to homework to a job, or possibly a mom who has demands from sun up to sun down). Grab clips of this busy day and put them together as a montage that gives people a sense of a busy and exhausting day. Have the video finish with the person looking at the camera and asking questions such as: *Is it possible to slow down? Do I have to feel tired all the time? Is there really any way I can be rested, fresh, and empowered as I walk through this season of life?*
- **Images**—Show pictures of sleeping children, cats, puppies. Give no comment. Just show a few pictures and ask the question, “When was the last time you felt rested, slept peacefully, looked like this?” Show a peaceful sleeping baby. Then ask, “Do you know God wants to give you rest? Do you know that the Maker of heaven has designed you to be empowered, refreshed, and energized?” Let the congregation know that you will be teaching about God's plan to empower them through deep and real rest.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Scriptures as you feel they fit your message. Give exposition of texts you choose.

PRAYER

Pray for each person to hear God's message of rest and strength for each day.

KEY IDEA

Lessons from Israel—Trusting God’s Call to Rest

- Read the story of manna and maggots from Exodus 16, or tell the story, reading some key verses as you do so. Focus on how prone we are to work seven days and forget that God can provide all we need in six days of labor. Look at some of the ways our lives can get unhealthy (maggoty) when we fail to rest and honor the rhythm of Sabbath God has designed into the universe. Celebrate the amazing miracle that God provides good manna for the Sabbath day and encourage people to establish a lifestyle of hard work and refreshing rest.
- Talk about how we can fill up our days and schedules with all sorts of things, but we need to make space for rest. Look at some of the ways we get over-extended (kids with sports, adults with work, all of us with endless responsibilities). Talk about what a day of rest might look like (play, walks, spiritual pursuits, friends, a nap, something very different than what we do the other days of the week). Challenge people to begin with a next step of rest and embracing Sabbath.
- Have someone in the congregation with a microphone, ready to read the piece titled “From the Heart of God’s Wandering People” on page 133.

KEY IDEA

Lessons from Elijah—A Nap and a Snack

- Read or tell Elijah’s story of exhaustion, rest, and empowering refreshment from 1 Kings 19. Walk through the great battle that came before this and look honestly at this great and powerful prophet who was feeling empty. Teach about how God allowed him rest and refreshment that prepared him for the journey ahead.
- Talk about the reality that we are all human beings and we need rest. This is why God designed Sabbath into the flow of each week. In a way, we are still children who need a daily nap time (not literally, but figuratively). You might want to talk about nap time back in kindergarten. You could even have a little, rolled-up mat, some juice, and a few crackers. Talk about how children need a rest time in the middle of the day, even if they don’t realize it. Then talk about how we need rest also. When we push hard and serve God well, there is a reality: we need rest and God wants to give it. We are his kids and he is ready to empower us through rest. And if we refuse to rest, there are serious consequences.

- Talk about some of the medical consequences of stress, sleep deprivation, and the tension that comes from pushing too hard and not resting. A quick Internet search will yield many current articles on this topic.
- Challenge people to create space for rest in the flow of their normal day. Use ideas from the “Resources for Living an Empowered Life” found at the end of section 3 of the book.
- Have someone in the congregation with a microphone, ready to read the piece titled “From the Heart of Elijah” on page 145.

KEY IDEA

The Gospel—God’s Eternal Rest

Talk about how the gospel of Jesus and faith in him lead us to a place of rest today and for eternity. Celebrate that there is a rest for God’s people that is greater than we can imagine or dream.

LIFE APPLICATION—LEARNING TO SABBATH

Use one or more of the “Action Ideas” from the “Resources for Living an Empowered Life” at the end of section 3 of the book.

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask God to teach each person the gift of a rested life. Pray for people in your congregation to be honest with God when they are fatigued and tired and to ask for him to help them have a snack, a rest, and be prepared to press on with his plan for their life.

MESSAGE

4

Propelled Onward by the Call and Mission of God

PREPARATION SUGGESTIONS

1. Pray for God's leading as you develop your message.
2. Read the biblical passages listed on page 202 of the book, *Empowered by His Presence*.
3. Read section 4 of *Empowered by His Presence*.
4. Watch the video piece for week 4 of the *Empowered by His Presence* DVD.
5. Review the resources below.
6. Write your sermon/message.
7. Pray again for God to fill you to overflowing as you present the message he has placed on your heart.

• PREACHING RESOURCES FOR WEEK 4 •

BASIC MESSAGE OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Scripture Reading
- Prayer
- Lessons from Isaiah—Send Me
- Lessons from Esther—Taking Risks
- Life Application—Getting on Mission
- Closing Prayer

INTRODUCTION IDEAS

- *Testimony*—Have one or two people share a story about going on a mission trip and how they were energized, empowered, and fired up while they were on mission. This can be done live or on video. Then have them talk about how it is tougher to stay on mission and empowered when they are home and not out on an adventure for God. Follow up these testimonies by wondering what our lives might be like if we saw every day as a mission trip, right where we live, dine, go to school, work, and socialize. Let the congregation know that God is ready to empower them for the mission and call he has for them right where they live each moment of each day.
- *Images*—Show pictures of remote places, unreached people groups, and far-away places that your church supports in mission through prayers, giving, and sending people. Thank God that you can be part of his work to reach out with the gospel in many places that are far away. Then show pictures of common, well-known, and identifiable locations in your immediate and greater community. Talk about the mission field right around you. The cubicle next to yours at work is a mission field; your school campus and neighborhood are mission fields.

SCRIPTURE READING

- Video people from your congregation reading outreach passages (Matthew 28:16–20; Acts 1:7–8; Luke 19:1–10; Luke 15:8–10) in public places in your community. Be discreet, but use identifiable locations like a mall, city hall, a local gas station, or other familiar places. Show this at the start of your message.
- Read Scriptures as you feel they fit your message. Give exposition of texts you choose.

PRAYER

Ask God to ignite the hearts of every person gathered with a fresh passion for the mission God has called them to. Pray for those gathered who might not yet know Jesus to be open to his love, grace, and good news.

KEY IDEA

Lessons from Isaiah—Send Me

- Give some of the background on the life and death of King Uzziah. Then tell the story of Isaiah's vision and call. If you can have a grill with hot coals, this could be a powerful visual when you talk about Isaiah's lips. You can even take a red-hot coal from the grill with tongs and dip it in a bowl of cold water so people can see

the smoke and hear the sizzle (a microphone near the bowl would help) or you could touch it on a piece of steak (you might get a little grill smell, which could make a point). You could even ask for a volunteer who wants to offer their lips (but no one will offer, and if they do offer, turn them down!). Note: Make sure you are not breaking any fire code if you do this.

- When Isaiah saw God and received his call, he was transformed. You might want to look at the impact of Isaiah's life as he followed God and was empowered for the mission.
- Challenge those gathered to declare, "Here I am, send me!" Even pause at this point in the service to give people time to offer themselves, in a fresh new way, to God's mission for their life. Remind people that being on mission every day invites the presence of Jesus and empowers us.
- Have someone in the congregation with a microphone, ready to read the piece titled "From the Heart of Isaiah" on page 175.

KEY IDEA

Lessons from Esther—Taking Risks

- Tell Esther's story using key verses. Be sure to focus on Esther 4:15–16. She was willing to pay the ultimate price, giving her own life, to do the work God had placed before her. Take note of the sovereign presence of God every step of the way. Although the name of God is never used in Esther's story, God is present in clear and powerful ways and he is the one who empowered Esther to follow with boldness and courage.
- Talk about the growing challenges we face as Christians in a culture where living for Jesus and holding to the teaching of his Word is getting tougher with the passing years. Invite people to commit to follow God's plans, mission, and call above the things of the world.
- Ask people to identify one risk God might be calling them to take for the sake of his mission in the world. It could be a risky invitation, a new friendship with someone far from Jesus, sacrificial giving to the work of God, or some other area of challenge. Encourage each person to confess their unclean lips, to take a risk, and to enter God's call and mission with greater passion.
- Have someone in the congregation with a microphone, ready to read the piece titled "From the Heart of Esther" on page 187.

KEY IDEA

The Gospel—Sharing in God’s Mission

Walk through the simple story of Jesus and remind people of the price he paid and the risk he took for each of us. Call every believer to enter God’s mission of sharing the love, grace, and truth of Jesus with those who are still far from him.

LIFE APPLICATION—GETTING ON MISSION

Use one or more of the “Action Ideas” from the “Resources for Living an Empowered Life” at the end of section 4 of the book.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray for the boldness of Esther and Isaiah to fill your congregation. Ask God to send his Holy Spirit with fresh new power on your congregation and every person gathered.