

Discussion Starter: What were the circumstances that led to you hearing the Gospel and receiving Christ?

Key Text: *“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.” (Acts 1:8)*

In our “Forward” series, we’re learning about the qualities of the early church in Acts 2 that caused it to become a model church for all churches to emulate. In our first lesson, “Strengthen,” we discovered in v.42-44 that the early church was strengthened by its devotion to God’s Word, fellowship, and prayer. In the second lesson, “Build,” we learned in v.44-45 that the early church was built up through mutual generosity, sharing of Scripture, gracious words, sacrificial love, and spiritual gifts. In today’s lesson, “Go,” we’ll see that the early church was also mobilized to take the Gospel around the world.

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a humble little life-saving station. The few devoted members constantly watched the sea, and with no thought for themselves, they went out day or night, tirelessly searching for the lost. Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station, and it became famous. People began to donate money and supplies and even join the membership, and the life-saving station grew. Some of the members became embarrassed by the crude little building, so they enlarged the building, put in new furniture, and soon the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for the members—a social club. Rescuing others was given lip service, but fewer and fewer members were interested in actually participating in life-saving activities. One day, a large passenger ship sank off the coast, but no one in the life-saving station was prepared to help. Nearly all of the passengers died. The members of the life-saving station decided to stop the club’s life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the social activities of the club. If you visit the seacoast today, you will find many exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, only now, most of the people drown. (Adapted from ecfvp.org)

The “Parable of the Life-Saving Station” above is a cautionary tale of what can easily happen to a church when it becomes so focused on strengthening and building on the inside that it forgets about going to those on the outside who need to experience the life-saving Gospel of Christ. In Acts 1:8, we find Jesus’ last words of His earthly ministry and final instructions to His followers just before He ascended to Heaven.

1. We go in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” (v.8a)

We cannot go effectively without God’s power. One of the Holy Spirit’s ministries is to equip and empower us for service.

Discuss: According to these verses, how does the Holy Spirit help us to go with the Gospel? John 15:26; 16:7-11, 13-15

2. We go as witnesses of Christ.

“...You will be my witnesses...” (v.8b)

The word *witness* is used over 25 times in the Book of Acts! A witness is someone who testifies truthfully about what he or she has experienced or has knowledge of. We are not judges who pass verdicts or lawyers who argue; rather, we are witnesses who tell others what we have experienced with Christ and what we know about Him.

Note that a witness is something we *are*: Jesus said we would *be* His witnesses (v.8). Quite often, when talking about witnessing, we emphasize what we *do* and how we *do* it, but Jesus’ first emphasis was on *being*. Our witness for Christ will be only as effective as the depth of our personal relationship with Him and to the extent that we allow Him to empower our lives through the Holy Spirit. It is often easier to just get busy *doing* rather than investing the time necessary to first *being*. What impressed the unbelieving world about Peter and John was not their education, their evangelistic strategy, or their rhetoric. Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.” These unbelievers noticed that Peter and John were bold—empowered by the Holy Spirit—and that “they had been with Jesus.” *Being* precede *doing*. Witnessing begins with experiencing Jesus so we will have something to witness about!

Discuss: What are some steps you can take to make sure your relationship with Jesus stays fresh and dynamic?

Discuss: What are some warning signs that your fellowship with Jesus is not as intimate as it could be—that your “spiritual tank” is drying up?

3. The Gospel is to go outwardly in waves—first locally and then globally.

“...In Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (v.8c)

Acts 1:8 actually provides an outline of the outward movement of the Gospel:

- It began in the local community of *Jerusalem* (v.8a). See Acts 1-7.
- Then it expanded to outlying places like *Judea* (v.8b) and crossed over into cultures such as *Samaria* (v.8c). See Acts 8-12.
- Finally, it spread “to the end of the earth” (v.8d). See Acts 13-28.

Discuss: The “Great Commission” appears in all 4 Gospels and Acts for a total of 5 times. Read each Great Commission account. What different emphasis do you see in each? Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8

For Further Study:

Free online commentary of the Book of Acts at www.enduringword.com

“What Does it Mean to Be Missional?” article at www.gotquestions.org

“4 Simple and Authentic Ways to Share Your Faith Today” at www.crosswalk.com