

Session 1

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

Acts 1:1-8

Memory Verse

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

– ACTS 1:8, CSB




You Will Be My Witnesses

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave final instructions to His followers. He also promised them that the Holy Spirit would give them all the power necessary to be witnesses for Him to all people.

Final words are a big deal. Think about the last words a military leader gives before a battle like the words Eisenhower shared with the Allied troops just before D-Day. Often, we see clips of the last words a coach tells his team before they take the field or court to fight for victory and are inspired ourselves. We can all remember some last words a loved one shared before passing. Any time we know we only have a few moments left with a loved one, we tend to cling to what they say or do.

Final words and thoughts carry more weight because we know they are the last we will hear from that person before a battle, game, or even death. We take note of those words and use them as motivation for how we approach an event or live out our lives.

 What are some final words from a coach, leader, or loved one that stand out to you?

 Why would you say final words carry more weight?

Session Summary


After the resurrection, Jesus spent forty days with His followers preparing them for what was coming. He taught them and gave instructions on what their assignment was to be. He promised them the coming of the Holy Spirit and taught what it means to live as His disciples.

Jesus stressed that the Holy Spirit is the key to a powerful life. They were told to wait for the coming of the Spirit, and they received the promise of the Father that the Holy Spirit would enable them to live in His power as they fulfilled the instructions of their Savior. In His final charge to them, Jesus told His followers to be His witnesses in every place they traveled and to every person they encountered.

1. Final Moments (Acts 1:1-3)

Acts opens with an introduction to the purpose of the book and the author. The book of Acts was written by Luke. He referenced continuing his writings about the life and ministry of Jesus that began with his Gospel account. This book describes Jesus's ministry continued after the events in the Gospels—a ministry that still works in the church today. Acts does not encompass all that the early church did to grow, but it does describe how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Rome.

Jesus knew time was short, and He sought to give last instructions to His disciples. These are the last few moments they had together, and what happened was significant. Jesus is the ultimate teacher, and He is always the perfect example for us to follow. Note that even in His last instructions, Jesus modeled how we are supposed to live out our lives. Though He had all the power of His deity available to Him, Jesus chose to demonstrate what it means to trust the Holy Spirit for power. He gave His commands to the disciples through the Holy Spirit. If Jesus, who is God, chose to surrender to the Holy Spirit, then how much more do we as fallible humans who are limited in our own strength need to do the same?

 Why is it significant that the text tells us Jesus gave instructions “through the Holy Spirit” in His final moments?

Think about the impact of how Jesus related to the Holy Spirit. As the third member of the Trinity, the Spirit was the least known at the time. The people were familiar with God the Father. They had learned about and grown close to Jesus the Son. But this third member was not yet known to them. Though we know the Spirit had been working throughout history to that point, He had not been sent to reside in believers yet, so He had not been a permanent part of Christ's followers' lives.

? Why might trusting the Holy Spirit be tough for those early believers? In John 16:7, Jesus said it was to the disciples benefit that He would go away, and the Spirit would come. Is it tough for you to trust the Holy Spirit?

Jesus knew wouldn't be easy for the disciples to carry out His instructions and commands. They needed power to obey and carry out His mission. This was the role the Holy Spirit would play in their lives. Jesus also modeled what it was like to carry out His mission through the power of the Spirit instead of relying on His own strength.

Luke referred to another aspect of Jesus's mission during these last days—to verify that He had been resurrected. Death was defeated, and He is alive. Jesus's presence proved everything was accomplished just as He had told them, and they could rely on the truth of the resurrection forever. Jesus showed He was exactly who He claimed to be and was worthy of their trust and following.

? Discuss: Where do you need to trust in the Holy Spirit's power instead of your own strength?

2. Final Instructions (Acts 1:4-5)

Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father—the Holy Spirit. Imagine how that instruction might have been more difficult than being told to travel around teaching and preaching. Sometimes waiting is the hardest thing for us to do, but when the instruction to wait comes from the Lord, we can be assured that the waiting will be worth it and disobedience is foolish.

? Recall a time when you felt like God was clearly calling you to wait. What made this difficult?

Christ-followers can accomplish nothing for the kingdom of God if we are not willing to wait for the Holy Spirit to empower and guide us. Jesus knew the disciples were men of action. They were committed followers who had been a major part of His ministry for the last three years, and yet they needed the Holy Spirit if they wanted to accomplish His mission on earth. How often do we need that same reminder? We can easily get caught up in our own plans, our own strength, and our own skills and rush off to do God's work without waiting on the Holy Spirit. The lesson for us is the same as the disciples. Wait on the Holy Spirit and trust Him to provide the power we need to fulfill God's call on our lives every day.

? Share an experience you have had of the power of the Holy Spirit when you've been faithful to wait as God instructs.

These followers of Jesus were likely ready to get going but being told to wait carries some implications about what you're waiting for. You wait for something good and valuable. The Holy Spirit is way more than that. You also wait for something you need to receive because you can't create it yourself. It is about God and not you. Waiting can be a test to grow your faith. You learn to trust what God wants to do in you as much as what He wants to do through you. Instead of complaining about the wait, we can look to what God is doing to prepare us for His work in the future.

When Jesus spoke of God the Father and promised the arrival of the Holy Spirit, we see the entirety of the Trinity together. This promise pointed to each person of the Trinity and their distinct roles. The promise of the Father ensured the coming, filling, and empowering of the Spirit. God is good and trustworthy and always keeps His promises, so we can wait with eager expectation for those promises to be fulfilled.

While instructing His followers to wait for the Holy Spirit, Jesus also said they need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. When a person is baptized, he or she is immersed or covered in water, symbolizing new life. To be baptized in the Spirit

means we need to be immersed in the Holy Spirit completely. Followers of Jesus are baptized in the Holy Spirit the moment they place their trust in Jesus. This instruction was not primarily about taking the Holy Spirit with them on their travels but about being surrendered to the Holy Spirit so that He alone had control.

? Application: Where do you need to further surrender to the Holy Spirit?

3. Final Promise (Acts 1:6-8)

The disciples came together with Jesus for the last time they would see Him in person on earth. Nothing in the Scriptures tells us that they knew this was their final moment with their Savior and friend. They did ask a question that may indicate they suspected their time with Him was almost through. Their weighty question about the restoration of Israel had been asked before, but now it took on new significance because Jesus had instituted the New Covenant and this restoration was part of that covenant. Jesus responded that they were not to know the exact details but to keep trusting.

? What is a big question you want to ask Jesus? What can you take away from Jesus's response to the disciples in this instance?


It is good that the entire plan for the world is not laid out for all to know. God the Father has established the timeline, and it is His to know and control. Though we tend to get caught up in a desire to know the details of what is coming, there is beauty and freedom in trusting that God holds everything together and that we are called to continue living in faith and the power of the Spirit just as He instructed.

Jesus reiterated that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them. The most important thing wasn't the disciples full understanding but Jesus's clear instruction and promise. All who place their faith in Jesus receive the same promised Spirit as the first followers of Christ.

Once the power arrived, the mission would start. The disciples were told to be witnesses in all the world. That was to be the result of the Holy Spirit's arrival and indwelling. Once He arrived, they would be witnesses—other people would see the power and the difference He made in their lives. Jesus didn't encourage them to be witnesses, He declared that they would be. The same is true for us today. We are all witnesses for something. The question is who or what will that be for?

If we want to be effective witnesses for God, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. The best evangelism is not from a plan, program, or class; it comes from the power of the Spirit at work in our lives. That doesn't mean Christ-followers don't use a plan or program to explain what faith means; it means the way you live is what speaks the loudest to other people. The progression of where the disciples were to be witnesses then became the outline of the rest of the book of Acts. God sent His witnesses to all the places on earth, and the Holy Spirit would empower them in this quest just as He empowers us to be witnesses wherever we go.

Brentwood Baptist challenges each group to help send a representative on a mission experience every 2 years.

 Ask your group to prayerfully consider how the Holy Spirit is leading you to participate:

- Go
- Collect Supplies
- Support Financially
- Offer daily prayer support
- Other

Conclusion

Jesus spent forty days on earth after His resurrection and at the end of that time He was with His disciples. In His final moments with them, Jesus gave some final instructions and a final promise. These last words of Jesus carried much weight for the disciples in that day, and they carry weight for us today too.

For information on Missions, visit: brentwood.church/missions

Here's How to Become a Christ-Follower:

Read the following verses and ask after each one: "What does this say to me?"

- **All have sinned:** Romans 3:23 & 1 John 1:8
- **The wages of sin:** Romans 6:23 & John 3:18
- **But while we were sinners, salvation was provided:** Romans 5:8
- **Become a Christ-follower:** Romans 10:9-10 Confess and Believe

Accepting Christ is Just the Beginning:

Next Steps:

- Publicly profess your faith by being baptized (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 3:21; Romans 6:4).
- Join a church which follows the Bible, where you can grow in your faith through prayer, Bible study and fellowship with other Christians.
- Get involved in groups for encouragement and accountability.
- Begin a daily personal worship experience with God where you study the Bible and pray.
- Share with others what Jesus has done for you. Tell your story (Romans 10:14; Matthew 28:19-20).
- Begin to live for God (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; James 1:19-27).



FOR NEXT WEEK

United in Prayer

Main Passages

- Acts 1:12-14; Luke 11:1-4

Session Outline

1. United in Prayer (Acts 1:12-14)
2. Powerful Prayer (Luke 11:1)
3. Model Prayer (Luke 11:2-4)

Memorize

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

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