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**OPEN THE CONVERSATION**

Who is the most well-known preacher, Bible teacher, or worship leader that you can think of? We don’t often think about the point when each of them made a simple but real decision to follow Jesus. One of the most well-known preachers of all time is Billy Graham. He perhaps preached the gospel to more hearers than any other human being. Literally millions heard the gospel from him, and his influence continues on even after his death. But he was once just a farm boy who gave his life to Jesus. Christian businessmen in his town prayed together that God would raise up someone from their community to take the gospel around the world. God answered that prayer!

**INTRODUCTION**

We may mistakenly believe the work of sharing the good news of Jesus is reserved for people like a pastor or missionary, or those with particular gifts or callings, but when Jesus issued the Great Commission, it was a command for all His followers. Some are called to a preaching ministry like Billy Graham, our pastor or a well-known worship leader, proclaiming the good news before the crowds. No matter what our gifts or skills, we are all called to act as Jesus’s witnesses and do everything for the purpose of giving God glory. The most important, purposeful and lasting thing we can do with our lives is surrender everything to Jesus for Him to use.

Today, we will kick off our study of what makes up a healthy and growing church by looking at purpose and power. Thank goodness God kindly gives us BOTH. We’ll look at the Great Commission and Jesus’s command in Acts 1:8 for us ALL to be His witnesses.

**How would you define a witness? What does it mean to be a witness for Jesus?**

***READ Acts 1:4-11***

1. **What command did Jesus give His followers in these verses? Why is it necessary that we have the power of the Holy Spirit to obey this command?**
2. **What role does the Holy Spirit play in our lives today? In what ways is the Holy Spirit a “helper” or “advocate” in your life??**
3. **Jesus said that the disciples would “receive power” in verse 8. What was the stated purpose of this power? How does this apply to our lives today??**
4. **Compare Acts 1:8 and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. What is similar or different?**
5. **How does the reality of Jesus’s return give hope for the future and motivation to act as His witnesses now?**
6. **Why is it important that we follow the guiding of the Holy Spirit together as Christ’s body and not as isolated followers?**

**WRAP UP**

**Acts 1:8 contains a critical command given by Jesus: With the power and help of the Holy Spirit, we are to stand up as Jesus’s witnesses, sharing the truth about Him to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8 and the Great Commission frame the call in the life of every believer to share the good news of Jesus with everyone.**

**Put today's lesson into action: How can you apply it to your life?**

*Ask for any prayer requests, and pray for one another. Pray for each other to have boldness and power to speak of Jesus to others. Ask God to make you aware of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and to help you have courage to obey.*

**EXTENDED CUT**

The book of Acts was written by Luke, who also wrote the gospel of Luke. Luke, a doctor by trade, was not one of the twelve initial disciples chosen by Jesus. He opened the book of Luke by sharing that he composed his Gospel from eyewitness accounts of Jesus’s ministry (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke’s “first narrative” (the Gospel of Luke) focused on Jesus’s earthly ministry, and the book of Acts focused on what happened next, chronicling important events in the early church. Luke was a traveling companion of Paul, and Acts contains his own first-hand accounts of the journey and ministry of the apostle Paul.

The events in our text today took place during the forty-day period between Jesus’s resurrection and his ascension into heaven (Acts 1:3). Our passage begins with a command to the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and a mention of the coming fulfilment of “the Father’s promise” (v. 4), the arrival of the Holy Spirit, an event we know as Pentecost.

Remember, up until this point in the history of God’s people, Scripture records the Holy Spirit being with specific people for specific reasons and timeframes based on God’s will. An example of this from the Old Testament is King Saul. After being chosen by God to serve as the first king of the Israelites, Saul was anointed by Samuel, and “the Spirit of God came powerfully on him” (1 Samuel 10:10). Later, after King Saul sinned and failed to show a repentant heart, the Holy Spirit left him (1 Samuel 16:14). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was specifically bestowed on John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus and His ministry (Luke 1:15).

In Acts, the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individual believers would radically change. The Holy Spirit would no longer be bestowed only on select people of God. Soon all believers would receive the powerful gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus taught His followers about the Holy Spirit before His death. In John 14:16-20, Jesus told His disciples they would receive a “helper” (v.16, ESV), or “advocate” (v.16, NIV), to help and be with them forever. In verses 4 and 5, Jesus affirmed that this promised helper would arrive and instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit’s arrival in Jerusalem. The coming baptism of the Holy Spirit would empower and strengthen the disciples and kickstart the ministry of the early church.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus told the disciples they would “receive power” when they received Holy Spirit. Note the source of this power: Our power doesn’t come from ourselves or our gifts and abilities. Our power comes from the Lord, and with the Holy Spirit working actively in our lives, we can do things we couldn’t do otherwise. This was important for the early church as they pursued the Great Commission and is equally important for us as we do the same.

Think about the role of a witness called to the stand in a court case. They don’t share their opinion, but rather the truth about what they saw and/or experienced. When we act as witnesses for Jesus, we do the same—we share the truth about God’s grace and mercy, which we have experienced firsthand. We share the truth about how we’ve experienced the Lord’s goodness in our lives. We share how He’s showed up for us, how He’s provided, and how our lives are better with Jesus.

Jerusalem = my town

Judea = the region

Uttermost parts of the earth = the whole known world

Jesus’s ascension was necessary for us to receive the Holy Spirit (John 16:5-15), and His departure was necessary to fulfill God’s plan. The “Counselor” Jesus mentioned in John 16:7 is the Holy Spirit. Remember, the Holy Spirit empowers and helps us as we live out Jesus’s command to act as His witnesses (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit is vital in our lives as we walk out the purpose God created us for, and Jesus knew it!

In the book of Acts, we see the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individual believers radically change from being bestowed on certain believers for specific purposes, to dwelling in all believers. Receiving the Holy Spirit in this way kickstarted the ministry of the early church, and the Holy Spirit is just as essential to believers today.

The Holy Spirit leads us through the life-long process of sanctification, molding our character and lives to better reflect Jesus, and acts as a helper in our pursuit of the Great Commission, empowering us to act as Jesus’s witnesses. As we are actively pursuing relationship with the Lord, practicing spiritual disciplines like prayer and Bible reading, the Holy Spirit cultivates His fruit in us (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit also bestows spiritual gifts upon all believers (1 Corinthians 12). We use these gifts in many ways, but they are primarily meant to be used within the body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:7).

In Matthew 28, Jesus issued the Great Commission, commanding all believers to go and make disciples, and in Acts 1:8, Jesus called His followers to act as His witnesses, sharing His truth. The gospel message is meant for everyone. It is meant for all nations and to be spread to the ends of the earth. Jesus’s command to share is meant just as much for those living in 2025 as it was for the firstcentury believers hearing it proclaimed for the first time.