

# ACTS 1:6-14

*MP: We are called and empowered to be witnesses to Jesus*

*FCF: We are stuck either building earthly kingdoms, doing mission in our own strength or sitting on the sidelines*

*CC: Jesus saves us, not because of our perfect record in evangelism, but by His grace*

## INTRO

### I. Welcome + Pew Bible # 909 + Prayer

### II. Over time, I've come to realize that God made me in such a way, that I love sharing with other people about things that I've learned or experienced.

- A. When I was a young elementary schooler, I spent an egregious amount of time learning everything I could about cars. I would read anything I could get my hands on, study each car that drove by, and then like Rain Man, recite the model names and trim levels of each one.
- B. My two older sisters absolutely loved this, and they would show me that by saying in their own sibling love language, words of discouragement, to "stop it" and "go away" — thankfully I got the message loud and clear, and started to learn about other things and tell them about those instead.
- C. Later in life, this developed into a knack for telling stories about things that I had personally experienced. I love the idea of getting to bring other people into a moment in time, and re-enjoy it with them.
  - 1. On top of that, I think that laughter builds relationships in the best of ways, and a lot of life is filled with hilarious moments that deserve to be shared with those around you.
  - 2. Pair that with the fact that for whatever reason, a lot of pretty ridiculous things happen to me
  - 3. And you've got the recipe for a grandpa in training, where I will tell a story or anecdote to anyone who listens, even though I'm 90% sure everyone has already heard it. But too bad, sometimes the best movies are the ones you've already seen.
  - 4. The fact of the matter is, when I experience something, I want other people to know it too. I want to share that moment with them.

### III. Now, I don't think I'm alone in this love for story.

- A. I think each of us are in some ways hard-wired, by the great Author of all stories, God, to be captivated by story, and want to draw others in through them.

1. You have to admit it, when you have a fantastic meal at your new favorite restaurant, you want to tell other people about it so that they can experience it as well.
  2. Or if you just spent a weekend at the best vacation spot you've ever been to, you want to tell your friends so that they could visit
  3. Or if you're like me, when you see some car pull a Mad Max move on a service road off route 50 by a major intersection, you feel that justice must be served, so you need to tell the world about it afterward. Unless it was you that did it, and then you keep it hush hush.
  4. Or if you just witnessed your son or daughter or grandchild being born, or you lived through an illness or loss, or you experienced some other life-altering moment, you want to share the story with others around you.
- B. The fact of the matter is that when we experience something, when we live through something or when we witness something, we want to tell others about it. We want to tell the truth of what happened.

#### **IV. What is surprising though, is that we don't often have that same level of desire to tell the story of Jesus Christ and how he's changed our lives.**

- A. For some reason, telling others the story of the gospel, feels harder.
- B. For some reason, being God's witnesses to the ends of the earth feels like an enormous task, a terrifying prospect, and a life-altering vocation.
- C. It's almost like, being God's witness to the ends of the earth isn't something we're really capable of doing *on our own*.

~ So this morning, lets look at Acts 1:6-14, and first understand our **Call** to be witnesses, then we'll see where the **Power** for witness comes from, and then how to grow our **Desire** for witness. Let's start with the call. ~

## **THE CALL — (v6-8)**

### **I. Let's put ourselves in the story of Acts 1 for a moment, so that we can understand what the disciples are feeling and thinking**

- A. Acts was written by Luke, who also has a biography of Jesus by his namesake. If we turn to the last chapters of the gospel of Luke: the disciples have just lived through probably the most significant moment in their lives
  1. Jesus, the Messiah, who they had learned from, lived alongside, seen do incredible miracles, was just crucified. Betrayed by one of their own, Judas. Jesus had been kidnapped, falsely accused,

tortured, and then nailed to a cross. Basically all of his disciples fled, and Simon Peter even denied that he knew Him. And by the 9th hour of the 1st day, Jesus had died.

2. But then, in a complete turn, on the third day, the women who had been following Jesus returned to his tomb only to find it empty! Later on that day, the disciples, walking the road to a village called Emmaus, encounter Jesus himself - risen from the dead.
3. Luke tells us that for the next 40 days, Jesus would spend time with them, revealing to them the Scriptures and helping them to understand this incredible plan of God revealed in His Son.
4. In Luke 24:45 it says, *"Then he (Jesus) opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.'"*

- B. So if you are one of the disciples, you are brimming with enthusiasm every time you get to be with Jesus. Because you would be thinking to yourself how this must be the moment when Jesus is going to bring the Kingdom!
1. This whole time, He has been saying how the Kingdom is coming, and how he's going to set us free. He told us He'd die first — well He did that. He told us how He'd rise on the third day — he did that too! He must be about to bring the Kingdom now!

## II. So it's not surprising that when the Lord brings them together on the mount of olives 40 days after His resurrection the disciples ask their question in Acts 1:6: *"Lord, Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

- A. The way this question is worded tells us so much about the disciples' expectations:
1. They say Lord, will you **at this time** restore the Kingdom — certainly Jesus, now is the moment, right? Finally, you're going to do it — you can hear the eagerness
  2. Lord will you **restore the Kingdom** — Jesus, You're going to take down Rome, right? You're going to take us back to when we had a unified Kingdom and no one was ruling over us
  3. Lord will you restore the Kingdom **to Israel** — the people you chose, here on this land, this nation, back in their rightful seat. Now's the time, right?
- B. The disciples were asking a question that revealed their hopes for Jesus' political and territorial revolution, and assumed the time was now.
1. They had just gone through an absolute roller coaster, and naturally assumed that *now* was the time for this physical kingdom to come.

### III. As Jesus so often does, He answers the question on a completely different plane

- A. First, He corrects their assumptions on the timetable — He says “It’s not for you to know when”
  - 1. God the Father fixes these things by His authority; there is no hidden knowledge to discern for us, the system is rigged in the best of ways. We are not meant to know the Lord’s timing, and that is for our good.
- B. Secondly, He gives the disciples a calling “You will be my witnesses”
  - 1. Jesus is not, by his might, tearing down Rome to restore the kingdom in the earthly sense. He is telling his disciples that they will be His witnesses.
    - a) In other words, they witnessed the King come. They witnessed the King begin to bring His kingdom already.
    - b) Jesus is saying, disciples, you have seen me, received the Good News, and experienced it all. You will now tell others about what you’ve witnessed.
    - c) And THIS is how we’ll build my kingdom. You will be my witnesses.
- C. If that wasn’t radical enough, Jesus says that He is not just calling His disciples to be His witnesses to *Israel*. He is calling them to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
  - 1. He’s saying, I’m not going to just restore the Kingdom to Israel — this Kingdom is for the whole world!
  - 2. The good news of God’s salvation through Jesus, was always meant for all peoples, tribes and tongues.
  - 3. God’s plan throughout the Scriptures was always the same— that His people would testify to His work in their lives to the nations. This would start with His people in Israel, but would later extend beyond to His people throughout the nations, which is expressed now in His new covenant, blood-bought church - the people who believe that Jesus is Lord.

### IV. The question for us is, are we, like the apostles, willing to stop building our earthly kingdoms so that we can go about building God’s spiritual kingdom among the nations by being His witnesses?

- A. Brothers and sisters, if you are a follower of Christ, then this is the **call** of the Lord on your life: to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth.
  - 1. You might be a banker, but you have a call to be a witness. You might be in politics, but you have a call to be a witness. You might be a pastor, but you have a call to witness. You might be a parent, but you have a call to be a witness.

2. Don't mishear me, I'm not saying the Lord doesn't want you doing those things and that you just need to quit and become missionaries overseas. I'm saying that it's the order that matters: you are first called by God to be saved, then called by God to be a witness to His gospel, and then called by God to a vocation: an area of His world to steward faithfully as His child.
  3. For all of us, the Lord has called us to be His witnesses to our neighbors in Arlington, Falls Church, Fairfax, wherever we are.
    - a) He's calling you to be a witness to the truth of Christ to your coworker, to your waiter, to your neighbors at the bus stop, the friends you went to high school with, or the barber who cuts your hair.
    - b) So, it's not a question of "if" he wants you to witness to those people we're around, it's whether or not we are doing it. Sometimes, being a witness to Christ and His gospel becomes more natural when you realize that you're just sharing a part of your life with others close to you. So the question becomes, are you building relationships with the people God has placed in front of you?
  4. For others of you, maybe you can't shake this sense that God has called you to be a witness to the nations abroad.
    - a) Maybe there's a specific people group the Lord has burdened you for, or a particular part of the world that God is creating a heart for within you.
    - b) Might there be anyone in a room this big who is willing to say "Yes, I will go to the nations."
    - c) There are billions of people in this world, most of whom do not trust in Jesus Christ as their only hope for salvation and eternal life, and are on a fast track toward spending an eternity apart of from Him in hell.
    - d) There are people groups who do not yet have the Scriptures in their own language.
    - e) There are places where no gospel-preaching churches exist.
    - f) There are villages, towns and cities throughout the earth where the loving, gracious, good, holy and just God is not worshiped.
  5. The call of the Lord, for every single one of us who trusts Christ in this room, is to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth.
- B. Friends, may we be like the prophet Isaiah, who was a witness to the glory and presence of God, and when given a mission bigger than himself from the Lord, with total surrender he replied "Here I am, send me"

~ We've been given a call - to be witnesses. But where does the ability to fulfill this Call come from? Let's look at what the text says about the Power for Witness. ~

## THE POWER — (v4-5, 8, 12-14)

### I. See Jesus wasn't going to leave the disciples ill-supplied for this incredible calling. He was clear—they would receive *power* from the Holy Spirit

- A. Now at the end of Luke, and the beginning of Acts in v4 Jesus tells His disciples clearly — **read 1:4**
1. I wonder if it was clear to the disciples what this would have meant.
  2. They certainly would have understood how for eternity God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit co-existed, One God in three persons — this was foundational for the people of Israel.
  3. They would have remembered moments in the Old Testament when the Spirit of God filled individual people for the task He would call them to
  4. They probably remembered Jesus' words about what Jesus promised the Spirit would come to do:
    - a) That the Spirit would "teach them all things and bring to remembrance all that Jesus said" - John 14:26
    - b) The Spirit would speak through them when they were on trial for following Christ - Mt. 10:20
    - c) The Spirit would bear witness about Christ and guide them into all truth - John 15 & 16
- B. So Jesus promised that they were to wait in Jerusalem and then they would receive this gift from the Father — specifically, Acts 1:8: "*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you*"
1. But what was needed for them to receive the Holy Spirit? Why the hold up? Why weren't they given the Holy Spirit right after Jesus rose from the dead? That seems like a great time to do that - keep the miracles flowin'
  2. It's because they had Him. In the flesh. Jesus was among them. But earlier, Jesus had said to them in John 14 and 15 that it is for the disciples benefit that He would return to heaven, so that He could send His Holy Spirit to them.

### II. That very next moment Luke tells us, Jesus was lifted up by the glory of God into the heavens - **read**

**v9-11**

- A. The disciples of course, are mesmerized by this — I'm pretty sure we all would have been as well.
1. I mean just imagine it - 11 disciples, all gathered around Jesus, and then after He drops a bombshell about how they would receive power from the Holy Spirit, and how they're gonna be witnesses not just in Israel but to the end of the earth - Jesus just hitches a ride on a cloud up into the heavens.

2. Then, as though the group suddenly numbered 13, two angels stand alongside and ask them what feels like a sort of obvious question. “Why do you stand looking into heaven? He’s going to come back this same way”
3. The angels are telling them, there’s work to be done and a promise to be fulfilled.
4. Clearly, the disciples get the message, because in v12 it tells us that they hiked back to where they were all staying in Jerusalem—all 11 disciples plus a bunch of women following the Lord as well.
5. And here’s the incredible part in v14: “*All these, with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer*”
6. They understood that Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem, and now that Jesus had ascended to heaven, we better pray. It’s coming.
7. Before long, just 10 days later at Pentecost, they are all together doing exactly that, gathering to pray, and the Lord sent His Holy Spirit to the house where they were, and it says in Acts 2:4 “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”

### **III. And guess what the Holy Spirit empowers them to do: to miraculously tell of the “mighty works of God”**

- A. See, the call for the apostles was to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, and it was an enormous call — one that they could not do in their own strength. No, they needed the power of God through the Holy Spirit, dwelling within them.
  1. You see this throughout the rest of the book of Acts — the Holy Spirit’s activity amongst the people of God and within individual believers, empowered them to speak the gospel with boldness
    - a) Remember, only 50 days had passed since Peter denied that He knew Jesus. After Pentecost, he gets up to give a sermon with an altar call!
    - b) The power of the Spirit can’t be contained either — throughout the book people are hearing the gospel through Spirit-empowered witness, believing and being filled with God’s Spirit — this is Galatians 3:2: people are receiving the Spirit by hearing the gospel. And guess who they hear the gospel from? Spirit-filled believers empowered to speak the gospel with boldness beyond any personal ability within themselves.
  2. Not only that, believers empowered by the Holy Spirit are then defeating the kingdom of darkness - cities in Acts that were built around pagan practices are getting turned upside down when the apostles preach the gospel, cast out demons, and see God work in ways that simply aren’t explainable in man’s ability alone.
- B. This is what happens when Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit, start to obey Jesus’ command to be His witnesses. They see the Spirit at work through them!

#### IV. Friends, do you long to see God at work? Do you long to see God doing things only explainable by Him doing it?

- A. We have only to follow the same pattern as the apostles: Believe in Christ, pray, and together with other believers join in God's mission to be witnesses to this world
- B. God loves to glorify himself by working in incredible ways to draw men and women to himself — when we pray that the Lord would rescue our friends and our family, and when we say “yes” to Him, to be His witness, we will see God work!
- C. It has been such a joy to belong to good, healthy churches like this one, and hear the stories of how simple faithfulness by a few Christians, led to a friend or neighbor giving their lives to the Lord.
  - 1. Nothing has encouraged my faith more than when I got to watch as a few normal Christians met a woman who was stuck in cycles of homelessness and prostitution. They treated with dignity and love, welcomed her into friendship, and invited her into bible study and worship on Sundays. And when she gave her life to the Lord and got baptized, we were encouraged. Because it was spirit-empowered, normal Christians who God had used to accomplish something that was beyond their own strength or ability. God's power was at work through the Holy Spirit
- D. There is nothing like being a witness to help reveal to you, how much you need God's power to work through you. And there is nothing more encouraging when He does.

*~ The Lord has given us an incredible call to His witnesses to the end of the earth. He has ascended and now gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit when we believe in Him, which is His Power at work through our witness. ~*

## THE DESIRE / CONCLUSION — (9-14; Acts)

### I. But, here's what I think a lot of us may be feeling.

- A. I get that the Lord has **called** us be His witnesses. I get that He has **called** us to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. And I get that God has given us **power** for that witness through the Holy Spirit. That He gives us **power** to speak His gospel with boldness.
- B. But, why do I always struggle with a **Desire** to do it in the first place? Why is it so hard to make this a priority in my life?

### II. Maybe we should ask, what motivated the apostles to actually follow this calling? What gave them the desire to be witnesses?

- A. What's so incredible is that Jesus' concentric circles in v8 — Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, is literally the structure of the book of Acts.
- B. In other words, the spoiler of Acts is, they **do** become His witnesses to the ends of the earth.
  - 1. Beginning in Jerusalem, and then slowly beyond, further and further until Paul writes in Romans 1:16: *"16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*
- C. Witnesses to the work of God through the gospel in their lives, have continued to carry that witness faithfully over the last 2000 years, which is why you and I are here in this sanctuary.
- D. But not only did they actually become His witnesses, the Apostles also suffered, they were persecuted, and even martyred for testifying to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- E. What filled them with the fuel, the motivation, the desire to accept that call?

### **III. I think it's because they met the Lord, they knew Him, they experienced Him.**

- A. The desire to be His witnesses came from trusting what they had actually witnessed
  - 1. They had been completely captivated by the person and work of Christ
    - a) There came this point where the Apostles realized that Jesus really was who He said He was. He really was the Son of God.
    - b) Over and over again they heard Him say how He came into the world to save sinners, to bring the forgiveness of sins and the offer of eternal life to all who believed.
    - c) And when He told them that He had to die on their behalf, He really was nailed to a cross - He took the consequence of sin: death.
    - d) And when He told them that though he'd die, He'd also rise from the grave, showing that He had victory over sin and death: there was the empty tomb.
  - 2. And they weren't saved because they had a perfect record, they were saved by grace through faith
    - a) Jesus just called them to follow him, not by any merit of their own, but simply by His grace.
    - b) Admittedly it was a bumpy ride along the way for the disciples, but they believed He was the Christ. They had witnessed it in their lives, and it changed them.
- B. Friends, the desire to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth does not come from making yourself feel bad about hardly ever being His witnesses.
  - 1. The only thing that fills you with a joy, a longing, a desire to share the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit, is to remember what you've witnessed.

- a) Remember that when you believed in Him, Jesus really did save you from the punishment of your sin and gave you the guarantee of His Spirit, righteousness and eternal life. That it was His finished work on the cross, not your own, that saved you.
  - b) Remember that Jesus loves you deeply; more than you could imagine. And that no quantity of evangelism, makes Him love you any more.
2. Your desire to share that truth with others, can only come when you realize evangelism is just gratitude—it's just worship.
- a) It's telling the story of the Gospel of Jesus because you experienced it, and you want others to join you.

**IV. You see, Jesus will come back again, in the same way He ascended.**

- A. And every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.
- B. And as the Holy Spirit wrote through the Apostle John at the end of the book of Revelation: "Surely I am coming soon. Amen. Come Lord Jesus"
- C. Let me pray