

Lesson 1: Share the Story

Text: Acts 1:4-7

Message:

Everyone has a story. We understand that. The combination of a person's life experiences makes up their story. As Christians, we also have a story. What has your relationship with Jesus meant to you? Why has being a follower of Jesus been important in your life? These are questions that our story addresses.

The book of Acts records for us an important chapter in God's story with human beings as it focuses on the birth of the church. We understand the nature of the foundation of the church. It is built on the gospel. Jesus died for sin, was buried and rose again the third day defeating death and sin. Luke records for us, in Acts, the impact of that message. The birth of the church begins with the challenge to share the story or be witnesses. Let's take a look.

In verse four, Jesus tells the disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the Father's promised Holy Spirit. We understand that Jesus is just minutes away from leaving the disciples and returning to heaven. What we see in verses four through seven are his final words to the disciples while he was with them on earth. The first thing he tells them is to wait for the Father to act.

Waiting. That's one of the more difficult things. There are times when we don't want to wait. We want to act. We want to do. Jesus tells the disciples to wait, however, because they would receive power from the Holy Spirit to do what God called them to do. Attempting things in our own strength or using our own plan often leads to disappointment and frustration. Allowing the Lord to empower and direct our work is critical if we are to make a lasting difference.

The disciples, upon hearing this, are anxious. Is this the time of the kingdom? Jesus' answer is direct. You don't get to know that. Only God knows the timing of his plan. However, they do have a role. The Holy Spirit will come upon them to enable them to be Jesus' witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. Through the

power of the Holy Spirit, they would share their story starting in Jerusalem and going to the ends of the earth.

Sharing the story. That was the first challenge to the apostles. God chose the process of “people sharing with people” to expand and grow his kingdom. The church is built upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. While God himself brings the increase to the church, the message is told; one believer to another.

As you begin this study of the first part of Acts, notice the importance of sharing the story. Throughout the first twelve chapters, speaking and sharing about Jesus is highlighted. Who is Jesus and what does his life and work mean are questions that are addressed throughout the early part of this book.

We see the significance of sharing throughout these twelve chapters...

- Peter’s sermons in Acts two and three
- Peter’s address to the Sanhedrin in chapters four and five
- The growth of the church in chapter six
- Stephen’s address in chapter seven
- Philip’s preaching in chapter eight
- Saul’s conversion in chapter nine
- Peter addressing Gentiles in chapters ten and eleven
- Peter’s teaching in chapter twelve

Sharing the story. Who is Jesus and why is he important; it is a powerful thing.

Thought Questions

1. Why would the Holy Spirit need to empower the apostles for them to be Jesus’ witnesses? What does this tell you about the person and work of the Holy Spirit?

2. Why is it hard to wait for the Lord's direction and leading in our lives?

3. What is an example of you getting "ahead of the Lord" and how did it work out?

4. In your opinion, why is the personal account (witness) more powerful or effective than something else (a miracle or supernatural occurrence)?

5. Much of our entertainment today is the telling of "stories." We see that in movies, videos, and reality television. These are just some of the ways stories are told. How might the story of Jesus be told? How can your own story of Jesus be shared with others? How would you give your "witness?"

6. In a paragraph, what is your story of Jesus? Consider some of these questions.
 - a. Who is Jesus?
 - b. What has he done for me?
 - c. He lived so long ago; why is he important for me today?
 - d. Why is living for Jesus rewarding?

Take it to the Next Level

This week I will...

- Write and be able to say “my story” about Jesus.
- I will pray for and seek an opportunity to share “my story” at least once in the coming month.

Prayer Focus:

As I begin my study of the first part of Acts, Lord, may I allow the Holy Spirit to lead and guide my life, as he did the lives of the apostles. Let me be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading, and obedient to his prompting. Help me, as I study, to see the importance of sharing the story of Jesus. Embolden me to compose and share my story with those you have put in my life. May your church continue to expand as it did in its early days.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.