



TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God's church will reach to the ends of the earth.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

Through God's Spirit, I will be a witness everywhere God opens a door.

LESSON TEXT ACTS 1:4–8

KEY PASSAGE ACTS 1:8

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.



TEACHING OUTLINE

ICEBREAKER: When have you had to share a story about yourself in an uncomfortable, unfamiliar setting? How did that feel?

TEACHER TIP: Use the group's answers to point to the first-century Christians sharing the gospel in uncomfortable, unfamiliar settings.

CONNECT: Share the Connect segment. (I)

I. BEGIN IN JERUSALEM (ACTS 2)

- A. The Spirit on the Jews First
- B. Persecution Spread the Church to Judea
- C. I will be a witness to people I know and like.

DISCUSS: *How do you respond when someone begins to share his or her hardships with you? Have you considered those conversations as invitations to share the gospel of Jesus Christ?*

II. CONTINUE TO SAMARIA (ACTS 8)

- A. The Spirit on the Samaritans Next
- B. The Hatred Between Jews and Samaritans
- C. I will be a witness to people I do not like.

DISCUSS: *How do you think the early Christians felt when they found themselves sharing their faith with people who had formerly been their enemies?*

III. REACH TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH (ACTS 10)

- A. The Spirit on the Gentiles
- B. Peter's Prejudice Against the Gentiles
- C. I will be a witness to people I do not yet know.

DISCUSS: *In what ways has God challenged you to expand your vision to become more active in worldwide evangelism?*

APPLY: Share the Apply segment. (V)

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer for God to stir up a passion for worldwide revival in every member of the church, challenging us to each do our part to reach the lost.

CONNECT

DISPLAY IMAGE NOW

JOSHUA CHAMBERLAIN, A distinguished veteran of the American Civil War, stood apart from his peers in many ways. He received a Medal of Honor for his heroic leadership on Little Round Top at Gettysburg. He fought in twenty-four engagements with the famous Twentieth Maine, including the notable battles of Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor. He was wounded in battle six times, and on two of those occasions, his obituary was released to the public—once by the Union Army and once by newspapers in New York. One of his wounds was severe enough that it eventually killed him, though he carries the distinction of being the last man to die of war-related injuries. In 1914, at the age of eighty-five, he finally succumbed to the effects of a Minié ball that had shattered both hips at Petersburg in 1864. The internal injuries caused by that wound were a problem until his death.

Chamberlain is famous for many things. Besides being a Medal of Honor recipient, he also served as president of Bowdoin College, was elected to four terms as governor of Maine, and helped establish the agricultural and technical college that eventually became the University of Maine. Throughout his life he remained an advocate for Maine, helping attract investors and immigrants to bolster the state's economy. However, another notable moment of his life occurred at Appomattox Court House in Virginia, where General Grant accepted General Lee's surrender to end the US Civil War.

As Chamberlain and the soldiers he had fought so valiantly beside stood and watched their former enemies file past in silent defeat, he issued a remarkable order. Watching the men who were once his enemies on the battlefield make their last march together, Chamberlain commanded the soldiers in his force to salute their defeated foes. The salute began with his unit and slowly spread down the whole Union line as, together, the victors honored the valor and courage of their enemies. It was an iconic moment that began the hard work of healing and restoration that was necessary after four years of deadly conflict. The next few years would be a critical season of reunification as brothers, friends, and countrymen, who once were enemies, united again under the common banner of the United States of America (*Faith in God and Generals* by Theodore Baehr and Susan Wales).

When the disciples of Jesus established His church in the aftermath of Calvary, they did so with a spiritual mandate to carry the gospel beyond their circle of friends and acquaintances. Jesus commanded them in Acts 1:8 to start in Jerusalem, but He also commanded them to go to Judea, Samaria, and all the way to the ends of the earth. There they would encounter people who were strangers and sometimes former enemies. However, the power of the Holy Spirit would knit them together into one unified church for the purpose of reaching a lost world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.



LEARN

I. BEGIN IN JERUSALEM (ACTS 2)

In the last exchange Luke recorded between the risen Jesus and His disciples, Jesus told them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). He also made a promise about Jerusalem. After declaring “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations,” he revealed this international revival would begin at Jerusalem (verse 47). This statement is intriguing because Jerusalem is the city that rejected the Messiah. This city celebrated His coming and worshiped Him as a king, but within the same week, many of them demanded His crucifixion. Yet this was where God chose to pour out His Spirit first.

A. The Spirit on the Jews First

John had the Jews in Jerusalem in mind when he said, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). However, John went on to say, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (verse 12). Jerusalem proudly housed the Temple and stood at the center of redemptive history. And Jesus determined, before those in Jerusalem rejected Him, that it would be the place where the good news of the gospel would be preached first.

The Scripture declares: “When the day of Pentecost was fully come,” there was a sound like a rushing mighty wind accompanied by cloven tongues like fire. Everyone gathered in the upper room was filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1–4). Before long a great crowd of onlookers gathered in the street below, and Peter preached Jesus to them. Revival began right there—in Jerusalem. Peter commanded the gathered crowd: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Luke recorded that about three thousand Jews “gladly received his word” and were added to the church (verse 41).

B. Persecution Spread the Church to Judea

As quickly as the revival fires began to burn across Jerusalem, enemies of the church arose and sought to stamp them out. Even though the persecutors thought they would stop what God was doing, they only managed to spread the revival to Judea and beyond. The effort to contain the phenomenon of Pentecost actually broadened its reach. As believers were scattered beyond Jerusalem, everywhere they went, they carried the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the miraculous testimony of their own experience of being filled with His Spirit. The church multiplied itself as it scattered into the surrounding region of Judea.

C. I will be a witness to people I know and like.

However, revival was limited by ethnic boundaries. The outpouring on Pentecost occurred among Jews, and as those individuals were scattered abroad, they carried



the gospel to people just like them. This was the first and easiest path for revival, and it still is. Our greatest influence will often be among people we are familiar with, whom we see daily. Like the church in the first century, we must be aware of the opportunities these connections represent.

We should pray for God to help turn casual conversations into gospel-centered interactions. In otherwise normal conversations, let us look for an opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many conversations turn toward hurts, problems, and disappointments. We have an open door to share the hope found in Jesus Christ. Building upon these daily opportunities to share what God has done in our lives helps us continue the revival that began in Jerusalem over two thousand years ago.

DISCUSS: *How do you respond when someone begins to share his or her hardships with you? Have you considered those conversations as invitations to share the gospel of Jesus Christ?*

II. CONTINUE TO SAMARIA (ACTS 8)

Acts 8 records even more intense persecution against Christians. This increasingly antagonistic environment resulted in dispersing believers as they were forced to migrate toward safer areas. Much as a farmer might scatter seed across a field, the hardship of persecution dispersed these believers into new regions not initially impacted by the revival which began in Jerusalem. Everywhere they went, these Jesus followers planted the fertile seeds of revival. Ultimately, those seeds took root in Samaria. This progression follows the pattern Jesus prescribed in Acts 1:8: “Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

A. The Spirit on the Samaritans Next

According to Acts 8:4, as believers were scattered, they went everywhere preaching God’s Word. This is exemplified in Philip, who “went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (verse 5). Philip’s ministry was accompanied by miracles, deliverance, and healings, resulting in great joy in that city. His anointed ministry caused people to believe what he said about “the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” (verse 12). As a result of this faith-filled response, many new believers “were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (verse 16). However, Luke noted, these baptized believers had not yet received the Holy Ghost.

When word reached Jerusalem of the revival in Samaria, where the Spirit had not yet been poured out, the apostles sent Peter and John to pray for them. According to Luke, when they laid their hands on them, the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost (verse 17). The apostles expected the infilling of the Spirit to be accompanied by a supernatural sign. The record of Scripture demonstrates this sign was speaking in other tongues (languages), as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6).

B. The Hatred Between Jews and Samaritans

These revival fires now swept through Samaria. To understand this significance, we must understand the tense relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans. The



Samaritans formed hundreds of years earlier after Israel was defeated and taken captive by the nation of Assyria. Because they had intermarried with other nations, the Samaritans were neither fully Jewish nor fully Gentile. According to Edward Klink III, in his commentary on John, “The Samaritans adapted the worship of the God of Israel with the gods of Babylon,” creating an intractable [hard to handle] theological conflict with the Jews (*Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*).

The relationship between the Jews and Samaritans was defined by centuries of hatred and disagreement that sometimes resulted in outright violence by both groups. Yet when the gospel of Jesus Christ began to transform the world, it spread first from Jerusalem and Judea to a most hated enemy, the Samaritans. The power of the gospel and the great love of God demonstrated at the cross bridged the gulf between Jews and Samaritans, uniting them under the precious name of Jesus. Centuries of hatred and conflict could not stop the gospel of Jesus Christ.

C. I will be a witness to people I do not like.

We must recognize that the miracle of salvation is not limited to those who are like us. The gospel is not limited by political, racial, or geographical divisions. It is for everyone. Just like the church in the first century, we are called to carry the good news everywhere we go and to everyone we meet, regardless of historical differences or longstanding conflicts. We have the good news that the whole world needs. Just like the farmer in Jesus’ oft-repeated parable, we must share truth indiscriminately with anyone who will hear and receive it.

DISCUSS: *How do you think the early Christians felt when they found themselves sharing their faith with people who had formerly been their enemies?*

III. REACH TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH (ACTS 10)

It may have been difficult for Jewish evangelists to share the gospel with their Samaritan neighbors. But a greater challenge arose when the gospel began to spread beyond Samaria to “the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). That expansion included the Gentiles, who, unlike the Samaritans, had no Jewish lineage or claim to God’s covenant with Abraham. The gospel of Jesus Christ represents a new covenant, inviting all people from all nations. Eventually, the growth of the church would run headlong into the divisions separating Jews and Gentiles.

A. The Spirit on the Gentiles

Cornelius was a Roman centurion from the Italian band, a unit of the Roman army. The Bible tells us he was “a devout man” who “feared God” (Acts 10:2). The prayers of this Gentile caught the attention of Heaven. According to Eckhard Schnabel, in his commentary on Acts, the reference to a memorial in Acts 10:4 is connected to a Hebrew offering that called on the covenant name of God as an appeal for God to remember the one making the offering (*Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*). This implies that Cornelius worshiped God to the best of his ability as



an outsider. God responded to his sincerity and sent an angelic messenger, directing him to send for Simon Peter.

Even though Cornelius was sincere in his desire to worship God, he had not yet heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite his religious devotion, he could not receive what he needed from God without a preacher to share the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. He needed Peter to tell him what to do. When Peter preached to Cornelius and his household, Peter's Jewish companions were astonished to see them receive the Holy Ghost and speak with tongues. Afterward, they were "baptized in the name of the Lord" (verses 44–48).

B. Peter's Prejudice Against the Gentiles

First, Peter had to overcome his personal prejudice against the Gentiles. God accomplished this through a vision at the end of Peter's prayer meeting. While he waited for lunch to be served, God gave him a vision of a large sheet loaded with a variety of unclean animals. Suddenly Peter heard a voice commanding him, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat." Peter resisted the command, saying, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean" (verses 13–14). But God admonished Peter not to call unclean what God had cleansed.

Apparently, Peter was difficult to convince. Scripture says the vision was repeated three times and Peter still "doubted in himself" what the vision meant. Immediately after the vision, though, the messengers from Cornelius arrived, and the vision made more sense. God was not just referring to food; He was also referring to the Gentiles. Peter went with Cornelius's servants the next day. When Peter met Cornelius, he explained, "God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (verse 28). Later he would declare, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (verses 34–35).

C. I will be a witness to people I do not yet know.

God's vision for the church was bigger than the early believers could have imagined. An international revival ultimately spanned the whole world and burned brightly across the ages to reach as far as you and me. Those early believers may not have known their faithfulness would influence our present generation. But God challenged them to expand their boundaries and carry a burden for people they did not know or even like. Similarly, the Spirit continually calls us to embrace a vision that expands far beyond our local congregation and extends to people like us and not like us, whether they are people who like us or people who don't. Everyone desperately needs to know the good news of Jesus Christ. Will you reach them?

DISCUSS: *In what ways has God challenged you to expand your vision to become more active in worldwide evangelism?*



TEACHER OPTION: *Tell the story below, or share one of your own to illustrate the need to reach our world, even to the ends of the earth.*

APPLY

✓ PLAY VIDEO NOW

THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY

PENTECOSTAL movement was birthed in places like the Asberry Home on North Bonnie Brae Street and the old Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, California. These early Pentecostals possessed the same missionary fervor that was an identifying characteristic of the early church. From its humble beginnings, in a former church building used as a stable for livestock, the Azusa Street Revival dispersed thousands of Spirit-filled believers across the United States and the world.

Missionaries with connections to Azusa Street pioneered historical missionary efforts in Africa, India, and China. One source says the influence of Azusa Street spread to over fifty nations within two years (pbs.org, “A Glimpse of the Kingdom of Heaven: The Azusa Street Revival”). The missionary impulse to spread the gospel and take the message of salvation to the far-flung corners of the world has been a defining characteristic of God’s church. This demonstrates that Jesus’ commission in Acts 1:8 to preach the gospel to people from every nation, tribe, and tongue has not diminished over the centuries since He first gave it.

The church today operates under that same commission; however, the ways we fulfill that commission have shifted dramatically. Smartphones, social media, air travel, and other technologies have helped to bring the world closer together than ever before and have created opportunities for us to reach

across the world without ever leaving our hometown. We can be an active part of what God is doing around the world. First, we can support missionary efforts by connecting with missionary families through social media and following their journey while praying for their specific needs and supporting them through our giving.

Second, our call to evangelism doesn’t end when we enter the online world. Our social media and digital platforms represent unique opportunities for us to allow the light of the gospel to shine through us into the furthest reaches of the world. Share testimonies of what God has done in your life in all the ways available to you. Let God do what only He can do. The word of your testimony is powerful. If you share it, He will use it.

Finally, consider starting a podcast, blog, vlog, or other online channel that would allow you to share the story of God’s goodness in your life in a unique way that will connect with viewers or listeners. You can accomplish this in a variety of ways. One Apostolic young lady reaches a community of tens of thousands of followers through a Bible journaling blog. Another young lady shares the story of her journey as she navigates a devastating diagnosis, while a young man actively shares an Apostolic perspective among friends in a gaming community. The technology available to this generation has given every believer the tools necessary to have a global impact. What can you do to become involved in fulfilling the mandate of Acts 1:8?

