

The Discipline of Disciple-Making: Sharing the Same Gospel & Mission

Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16-17

The only trustworthy, reliable, authoritative explanation of God is right here in our hands: *it is God's Word the Bible.*

The Bible is the only real key to unlock truth about God, thus it is: the only sure doorway into His salvation, the only official map that leads to God, the only trustworthy reference book that defines and reveals God, the only verified classification guide to explain what God does, and the only navigational chart that leads us to the True & Living God.

Let that sink in.

No matter what the next supposed prophecy, lost book of the Bible, archaeological find, ecstatic experience, or out of body event that you hear about: *they add nothing to what we know about God, and those new supposed insights are NOT from God.*

Mohammad of Islam didn't get any true revelations from God, neither did Joseph Smith of Mormonism; and neither has anyone else up to this day in all of history since John the last of Christ's Apostles.

As Hebrews 1 says, God spoke in many ways over the centuries, but His final revelation was through Christ. The Revelation of God's Word is completed; and Jesus closed the Book on all authorized, inspired truth from God; and there is no more continuing, ongoing stream of new doctrinal information coming from God. God has finished speaking His Word, and the Book He sent is complete. When you hear about any new, amazing, fantastic claim about visiting with God or angels: *those new supposed insights are NOT from God.*

This morning connect some vital truths in your minds with me.

THE BIBLE CONNECTS US TO GOD'S TRUTH

First, we each hold a copy of God's Word the Bible, which has just led us to celebrate the greatest week in history: Christ's death in our place, His Burial of our sins, & His Resurrection for our justification (Romans 4:25). That is an event we share in by faith so deeply that: *we celebrate it like it happened yesterday, because it is so real today.*

We know, believe, and hold tightly onto the truths of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, right? We know Christ, believe God, and have experienced His Holy Spirit. Those are the elements of salvation, and that has come to us through the Gospel.

Second, please open with me to Paul's summary of that message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in Romans 1:16.

Paul calls those truths the Gospel. The word Gospel means “good news”. The early church, the Apostles, and Paul all looked upon Christ's death, burial, and resurrection to save sinners as the “good news” that they wanted to share with people around them.

GOD HAS GIVEN TO US THE GOSPEL TRUTH

But as we will see, those in the 1st Century believed that the “good news” was unlike any other communication possible. Paul explains the uniqueness of this message. Paul tells us that the Gospel’s “good news” comes surrounded by an explosive power from God.

The Gospel, when shared as the **Good News of what God has done to Christ for sinners to be saved**: *is the very power of God unto salvation.*

So, from this Bible, we can see clearly, and hold deeply, and believe intensely the truths of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for sinners. Those events of the past connect so clearly, and powerfully to us by faith: that they impact how we live today.

From this same Bible we see that the Gospel is not static, when we share it: *this Gospel comes pre-packaged by God with supernatural “power”.* All they were asked to do was to share this good news where ever they went, and where ever they lived. Share the Gospel and watch God do the powerful, miraculous work of salvation.

THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD

What motivated, amazed, challenged, and encouraged those early followers of Christ was watching the miracle God was doing before their eyes each day. The miraculous transformation of individuals that were **brought to life** by the Gospel of salvation; **cured of spiritual blindness** by the power of God onto salvation; and **healed of the horrible leprosy of sin** by faith in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ’s death in their place.

The one miracle that has never ceased to be displayed in the true Church of Jesus Christ, from day one onward to today is this miracle: the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. That is what we get to hear from Romans 1:16-17. Please stand and hear from God's Word:

Romans 1:16-17 (NKJV) For I am not ashamed of the **gospel** of Christ, for it is the **power of God to salvation** for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

SHARING THE SAME GOSPEL

Each of us here today that are saved: have been saved the very same way the disciples were, the same way the Church born with 3,000 coming to Christ on the Day of Pentecost were, and the same way Paul was a few years later.

In fact, everyone we read about in the New Testament from Acts to Revelation: *were all saved by the same Gospel that saved us.*

We are sharing with others the same Gospel that they shared. The simple truths they knew, we also know:

Jesus Christ Came: as the Promised Messiah, as the Perfect Human, as 100% God in flesh, and as the Virgin-born, Son of God. Jesus Christ Came.

Jesus Christ Died: as the Lamb of God, as an Innocent Sacrifice, as the Substitute for Sinners, as the Target of God's Wrath, to Purchase Sinners with His own Blood.

Jesus Christ Rose: as the Fulfillment of God's Word, as Proof of His Deity, as the Conqueror of Death, as the Completion of God's Plan, and to Be Available to Anyone, Anywhere, at Anytime.

Jesus Christ Offers: to Forgive anyone, to Cleanse anyone of anything, to Comfort anyone through any troubles, to Guide anyone all the way through life, and to Welcome anyone who comes simply by faith to Christ as Lord and Savior, to a place prepared in our Heavenly Father's House. See why the Gospel is such good news?

SHARING THE SAME MISSION

Today we are each just as called as they were back then.

In the 1st Century the Lord Jesus Christ that saved them, also asked them to go through life communicating the Gospel.

In the 21st Century the same Lord Jesus Christ that saved us, also asks us to go through life communicating the Gospel.

How did they do in those early days of the Church?

THE 1ST CENTURY RECORD

Acts 1 starts at the Ascension of Christ on a Sunday, six weeks after He rose.

Look with me at Christ's last words to the disciples that open the book of Acts. Think of the impact His words had on that 1st generation of our family.

Start with me looking at Acts 1:8:

Acts 1:8 (NKJV) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be witnesses** to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The next Sunday was the Day of Pentecost, and the Church was born.

And what do we find as we analyze the 28 chapters of the carefully scripted events recorded for us by God? Here is one way to summarize Acts: Christians verbally communicating the Good News about Jesus.

It is the Holy Spirit who energized them into action. This book is not the Acts of the Apostles; but is actually the Acts of the HOLY SPIRIT!

Now, let the key players drop off the screen for us and join me looking at the rank and file, the average, nameless, early church member who was right there through these momentous days. What did normal, everyday believers see as their priority in life back then at the start of Christ's church? We can see a good indication of that in Acts 8:4:

Acts 8:4 (NKJV) Therefore those who were scattered **went everywhere preaching** the word.

When we are walking in the Spirit we will be talking in everyday terms to everyday people about the most extraordinary event of all time. Jesus becomes a part of everyday life.

It was appeared normal in the early days of the Church that just about all:

BELIEVERS SHARED GOD'S WORD

The Book of Acts has thirty-one different words, used to explain the over 160 scenes in the Book of Acts: *where the norm of Christians is that they find ways to verbally communicating the Gospel.*

Of these scenes, some of the words “evangelize, or preach the Gospel” suggest what might be thought of as a formal delivery. Yet those formal words represent less than a third of all the usages of speaking words.

Plus, if you look closely, many words are used in references to both church leaders and unordained average, normal believers. In others words, in the 1st Century Church we could say that:

PERSONAL WITNESS WAS THE NORM

There are at least a dozen examples of PERSONAL WITNESS IN ACTS:

We first see the Apostles after Pentecost, represented by Peter and John out soul winning in Acts (3:1-16);

We find the personal soul winning account about Phillip in Acts (8:5, 26-40);

Then Peter is also witnessing in his exchange with Simon (8:9-24);

Paul is an effective soul winner in his exchange with Lydia in Acts (16:13-15);

Paul even takes the spiritual challenge of witnessing to the Demonized Girl in Acts (16:16-18);

Under great personal pain and peril we find Paul the soul-winner leading the Jailer and his family to the Lord in Acts (16:19-40);

After a violent confrontation Paul is undaunted and shares a witness with Sergius in Acts (18:6-12);

Paul wins a fellow Jew to the Lord named Crispus in Acts (18:7-8);

Paul patiently instructs, reasons, and then wins two seekers named Aquila and Priscilla in Acts (18:24-28);

He goes on to win a mighty servant for the Lord named Apollos in Acts (18:24-28);

Then he leads to salvation some who were ready but only had gotten as far as being disciples of John the Baptist in Acts (19:1-7);

Finally, in spite of shipwreck, near execution, near drowning, snake bites, and criticism Paul has a witness to fellow passengers and Roman Sailors in Acts (27:9-44).

No matter how you read the 28 chapters of Acts you see that believers operated quite similarly in their desire and efforts to tell in every way possible the good news of the Gospel.

Wow, they heard the mission from Christ was to work as a team where everyone played, and they knew that the goal was to go and share the Gospel.

They heard and they obeyed!

“The comprehensiveness of the early church’s outreach—from their homeland and on out to the ends of the world—forbids the evangelistic schizophrenia to which we so easily fall prey—lavishing our attention on foreign missions while neglecting our neighbors, or attending to the immediate needs around us while millions overseas have never heard about Jesus.

We need balance. We must reach our neighbors *and* the world with our gospel witness, our social witness, our money, our time, ourselves, our offspring.

We must put all we have and are in the hands of Christ and allow him to use it all in his way, in his time, for others’ salvation, for his glory.”¹

WE HAVE THE SAME SAVIOR & MISSION

We have the same Risen Christ as they did.

We have the same indwelling Holy Spirit that they did.

We have the same clear Mandate that they were given. But what has happened to us?

Two generations ago, an Episcopalian Rector lamented his denominations slide from the Scriptures by writing a piece that has spread far and wide, and is just as impactful today as it was back then. Let me read to you what he wrote over 60 years ago.

"On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks were frequent, a crude little rescue station was built. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted crewmen kept a constant watch over the sea. With no thought for themselves, they went out day or night, tirelessly searching for any who might need help. Many lives were saved by their devoted efforts.

¹ Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Acts—The Church Afire*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1998, c1996.

After a while the station became famous. Some of those who were saved, as well as others in the surrounding area, wanted to become a part of the work. They gave time and money for its support. New boats were bought, additional crews were trained, and the station grew.

Some of the members became unhappy that the building was so crude. They felt a larger, nicer place would be more appropriate as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. So they replaced the emergency cots with hospital beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building.

Soon the station became a popular gathering place for its members to discuss the work and to visit with each other. They continued to remodel and decorate until the station more and more took on the look and character of a club. Fewer members were interested in going out on rescue missions, so they hired professional crews to do the work on their behalf. The rescue motif still prevailed on the club emblems and stationery, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club held its initiations.

One day a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in many boatloads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty, bruised, and sick; and some had black or yellow skin. The beautiful new club was terribly messed up, and so the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside, where the shipwreck victims could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's rescue activities altogether, as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted on keeping rescue as their primary purpose and pointed out that, after all, they were still called a rescue station. But those members were voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives they could begin their own station down the coast somewhere.

As the years went by, the new station gradually faced the same problems the other one had experienced. It, too, became a club, and its rescue work became less and less of a priority. The few members who remained dedicated to lifesaving began another station. History continued to repeat itself; and if you visit that coast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown."²

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Sharing the Gospel brought the miraculous transformation of individuals that were **brought to life** by the Gospel of salvation; **cured of spiritual blindness** by the power of God onto

² MacArthur, John (2001). Pg. 111-112. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Chicago, IL: Moody Press, paraphrasing Episcopalian rector Theodore Wedel's "Parable of the Life Saving Station", 1953.

salvation; and **healed of the horrible leprosy of sin** by faith in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ's death in their place.

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As we turn our hearts to commune with our Risen Savior & Lord, these questions should be on our minds: *"Am I doing the mission Christ left me to do? Am I speaking to the lost for Him?"*