

MeadowBrook Church | September–November 2019

lifeGROUP

Life together for the Kingdom of God



ACTS



life group

*Life together for the
Kingdom of God*

MeadowBrook seeks to CONNECT people to Christ and His church, GROW them as disciples to be disciplers, and equip them to SERVE through missions, ministry, and worship, all to GLORIFY God.

Christ Centered | Community Driven | Kingdom Focused

***But you will receive power
when the Holy Spirit has
come upon you, and you will
be my witnesses in Jerusalem
and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the end of the earth.***

Acts 1:8 ESV

ACTS

In Acts, we see the beginning of the church and pictures of life in the Kingdom of God as strangers on this earth awaiting our true home. It is titled the Acts of the Apostles, but in reality, it is a continuation of the work of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in the Apostles. It is an exciting book, full of adventure, conflict, and key victories against the enemy of the Church. My hope is that through this curriculum and study, you will learn what it means to live in the New Covenant Community of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, and that the witness of Christ would continue to spread to the ends of the earth through you.



Hunter Hindsman
Life Group Minister

Special thanks to Taylor Hindsman, Mike Niemi, Matt Fike, Christian Tucker, Heather Clough, Kristi Nichols and Chip Tucker for contributing to this curriculum in either their writing or editing. If you are interested in writing or editing in the future, email hunter@mbchurch.com today.

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YOU MAY CALL YOUR WITNESSES

Acts 1:1-11 | September 01, 2019

CONNECT

If you only had once sentence to leave with your family as your last words, what would it be?

GROW

Read Acts 1:1-11 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

Because of the work Jesus did on our behalf, God has made us into a kingdom where Christ reigns through us, his church.

In this first section, Luke describes the ministry of Christ in the gospels and his 40 Days on earth after his resurrection in a few brief sentences. From these sentences, two things jump out: First, Jesus is not done working. His righteous life, sacrificial death in our place, and glorious resurrection were the beginning of Jesus' ministry not the end. It is through faith in his earthly ministry that we get to experience his continued ministry in this world. His ministry is experienced through the Spirit-filled body of Christ, the church.

Facts and faith have long been viewed as enemies but Acts 1:3 reveals that Jesus did not see proofs and faith as enemies, but as friends. Here are four evidences that support the resurrection of Jesus:

1. The tomb is empty.
2. The initial explosion of the church in Jerusalem.
3. The enduring faith of the disciples in the face of much hardships.
4. The conversion of James the brother of Jesus and of the Apostle Paul.

Listen to Pastor Randy's sermon discussing these evidences: <https://www.mbchurch.com/sermon/the-reality-of-the-resurrection/>

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Rev. 1:4-8; Rom. 8:9-14

Jn. 14:15-27; Rev. 22:10-17

Secondly, Jesus took his last days to speak of the Kingdom of God, a phrase that "occurs six times in Acts (1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31) Significantly, two of the six are at the beginning and end of Acts indicating the proclamation of the gospel in Acts represents the beginning of the fulfillment of God's Kingdom promises. The 'kingdom of God' does not refer to an earthly, political or military, kingdom, but the present spiritually directed reign of God. Under this reign individual lives and entire cultures are gradually transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit." (ESV Study Bible)

The Spirit of God empowers us to be witnesses of Christ in word and deed to all peoples.

Jesus does not want His disciples to stay with him but directs them to stay in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit. The key to being an effective witness for Jesus Christ does not come from worldly strategies and methods but by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. He is the source of our strength and witness. He convicts hearts, illuminates minds, and calls people into the Kingdom of Christ. He gives the church a variety of gifts for ministry and gives power for victory over sin and the forces of darkness. We are merely vessels. He turns us into witnesses.

But what does it look like to be witness? “To be a witness we must have the Word of Christ (the message of the gospel), the inner reality of what we proclaim, and passion.” (R. Kent Hughes) If we don’t speak the message, no one will hear and believe. If we don’t reflect the kingdom realities we are calling people to, no one will listen. And if we do not go forth with a passion for God’s glory and his kingdom’s expansion, then people will conclude we don’t believe the message ourselves. So why should they? We must rely on the Spirit’s power and move forward as effective witnesses to all peoples from all places, reflecting the image of Christ and the character of his kingdom, passionately calling people to repent and believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
(Acts 1:8 ESV)

Life in the Kingdom

“The gospel is the Good News that there is a Kingdom far above and beyond the borders of this world, where death is dead and sin and sorrow cease. The gospel is about how God brings this Kingdom to us by reconciling us to Himself through Christ.

That means two things. First, it means the gospel fulfills the hopes that our idols have promised and betrayed. The Scripture says that all God’s promises are yes in Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20). As sinful human beings, we all tend to think what we really want is freedom from authority, inheritance without obedience like the prodigal son. But what Jesus offers is the authority we were designed to live under, an inheritance we by no means deserve to share, and the freedom that truly satisfies our souls.

Second, this means that the gospel isn’t the start of the Christian life, but rather the vehicle that carries it along... By looking at our jobs, our marriages, our families, our government, and the entire universe through a gospel lens, we live differently. We will work and marry and vote with a Kingdom mind-set, one that prioritizes the permanent things of Christ above the fleeting pleasures of sin and the vaporous things of this world.” — Russell Moore, *The Gospel for Life Series Preface*, xi-xii.

Jesus is coming soon... Let’s get to work!

R. Kent Hughes does not want us to miss the shock of the places Jesus mentioned in Acts 1:8. It would have been “not only spiritually revolutionary, but socially and ethically unheard of.” The gospel was going to go out to all nations. By the end of Acts, it extends to the gentiles. But the work isn’t over. As the disciples are standing there looking up, two angels appear and effectively say, “He’s coming back. Go get to work.” What was true then is true today. He’s coming soon. We have work to do.

How are you participating in the gospel labor of the Kingdom of Christ?

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

MeadowBrook has taken serious the call to be a witness to the ends of the earth. One of the ways you can participate is by going on a trip with us overseas. Tentatively, in 2020, we will take a few trips to Uganda, a trip to Cuba, a couple of trips to Argentina, a trip to the Middle East, a trip to Japan, and potentially more.

If the Lord is impressing on your heart a desire to be involved in His global work through MeadowBrook, visit <https://www.mbchurch.com/content-migration-global-missions/> or email Mike at mike@mbchurch.com for more information.

IN MINISTRY

We are all ministers of the gospel, in whatever life stage or situation we might find ourselves. If we are wanting to grow in our witness to the unbeliever, this passage clearly calls us to rely on the Holy Spirit. Two of the ways we can do this is by...

1. Identifying the areas in which he has gifted us (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12)
2. Praying Jn. 16:7-11 and 2 Cor. 4:4-6 over the lost in our lives.

AT HOME

While raising children, it is easy to focus on the externals. But our job as parents are not to raise well-behaved, culturally successful kids, i.e. Pharisees. Our job is to be witnesses of Jesus' glory and his grace. "Perhaps the best thing you could do for your children would be to get yourself before God, behold His glory, and then move toward your children with the encouragement that there is a great and glorious God for whom they were made. Life is found in beholding and knowing Him." —Ted and Margy Tripp, *The Gospel for Life Series: The Gospel and Parenting*, 57.

AT WORK

Are you being a witness for Christ at work? Here are some ways you can be a faithful witness for Christ at work:

1. Share Christ with your co-workers.
2. Consistently work hard for the glory of God, not just when others are watching. (Eph. 6:5-8)
3. Use your work to further the values and justice of the Kingdom.
4. Submit to authority and avoid gossip and slander in your workplace.
5. Reflect God's glorious creativity in your work.

RESPOND

Father,

Thank you for saving me from my sins, bringing me into your glorious kingdom, and giving me your Holy Spirit through your Son Jesus Christ. Your Son is enthroned forever, exalted at your right hand. I long for the day when he returns and establishes his physical kingdom, but in the meantime, help me to be a faithful witness in both my words and my deeds. Forgive me for falling short in _____ and lead me in the path of righteousness for your glory and kingdom's expansion. In the name of Jesus Christ who is still at work through his church, I pray,

Amen.

ACTS

Midweek Devotional: Acts 1:12-26

What Now?

As we begin to dive into the book of Acts we find the disciples in a pivotal point in their ministries. They have survived the emotional rollercoaster of seeing Jesus crucified and then resurrected from the dead. They spent forty days with their risen Savior only to see Him ascend into Heaven. They have received orders from Jesus to sit tight until they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Needless to say, the past few months had been a whirlwind and had turned their worlds upside down.

The disciples, much like many of Jesus' followers, not only believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but they also had believed he would restore order to the nation of Israel. One can only imagine how confused and frustrated they might have been now that Jesus was gone and Israel was still under Roman rule.

They were also short staffed. Thanks to Judas's betrayal, they have found themselves a man down with more questions than answers. In Verses 21-26 we see Peter taking nominations to see who could replace Judas. Two men were nominated, Matthias and Barsabbas, and after much thought, prayer, and deliberation they decided on Matthias. It might be worth mentioning that the decision of who the new disciple would be was ultimately decided in the same manner as was used to decide the one who would have Jesus' clothes at his death. Lots were cast to help make both decisions.

In Verse 16 we see Peter begin to step up and take on more of a leadership role in Jesus's absence. Not only does he lead the nomination process, but he also attempts to make sense of Judas's betrayal as he reminds the others of the prophecies fulfilled. Most notably, we see Peter circle the wagons and encourage the others to come together and commit to praying earnestly until they receive the Holy Spirit they had been promised by Christ prior to His ascension.

So what can we learn from the disciples that will help us survive the frustration and uncertainty that often accompany times of waiting? Pray. Pray early. Pray often. Pray earnestly. Most importantly, pray expectantly! Pray that God will bring growth and maturity out of the times of waiting, so that when our number is called, we will be ready to be filled with the Spirit and pressed into service.



Article by Christian Tucker
Member of the Burttram Life Group

LOOSED ARE THE PANGS OF DEATH

ACTS 2:1-41 | September 08, 2019

CONNECT

What is the worst pain you have ever felt in your life?
What was your response when it finally dissipated?

GROW

Read Acts 2:1-41 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

The Spirit of the Lord has come to indwell those who believe in Jesus Christ, bringing new life, continual fellowship with God, and divine power.

As Jesus promised, the Spirit came to indwell the disciples. He appeared as tongues of fire as he descended, the fire signifying the purifying presence of God within his people and the tongues signifying the testifying ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is no coincidence that the Helper who was to glorify Christ (Jn. 16:14) immediately empowered this band of disciples to boldly and powerfully declare the “mighty works of God” as his first act of ministry in their lives. This moment changed history in a monumental way. The Spirit was active in the world since the very beginning (Gen. 1:2), but “now the Spirit was coming to people in a new, more powerful way, signifying the beginning of the new covenant age,” (ESV Study Bible) or “the last days” as both Peter and the OT prophet Joel described them. It is in these last days that we experience the firstfruits of the Spirit’s ministry in our lives, meaning that we are living in a time characterized by the already, but not yet realized kingdom realities given to us by Christ through the Spirit. We have new life, yet we await glorified life. We have fellowship with God through his Spirit, yet we await the day we will see our Lord face to face.

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

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Additional Passages:

Eph. 3:14-20; Rom. 15:13;
1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4:13-18

The Holy Spirit is not an “it.” The Holy Spirit is a “He”. He is the third person of the Trinity with whom we are called to grow in love and relationship. The Bible gives clear and direct commands as to how we are to engage the Holy Spirit in relationship. Here are a few of those Commands:

1. Walk by the Spirit. (Gal. 5:18)
2. Live by the Spirit. (Gal. 5:25)
3. Be filled by the Spirit. (Eph. 5:18)
4. Sow to the Spirit. (Gal. 6:8)
5. Worship by the Spirit. (Phil. 3:3)

Listen to Pastor Randy’s sermon discussing living victoriously with the Holy Spirit:

<https://www.mbchurch.com/sermon/40-days-of-renewal-living-victoriously-with-the-holy-spirit/>

We have the divine power of God working in us, empowering us to battle sin and carry out his ministry. Still, we await the day where we no longer struggle with sin and where we see the often unseen fruit of our labor. Though the best is yet to come, we are living in glorious days where we are day by day more fully realizing the blessing of the Holy Spirit in our lives and growing in relationship with Him.

Because of what Jesus accomplished in his death, burial, and resurrection, the pangs of death have been loosed.

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”⁵⁵ “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:54b-57 ESV).

The good news of the gospel is that death has been defeated by our Lord Jesus Christ. It was our sin that crucified him. It was our death that he bore, but death could not hold him. Jesus rose from the grave victorious and is alive forevermore. This life he now freely gives to all those who repent of their sins,

believe the gospel, and follow Christ as Lord. This was Peter’s message. This is our message. The bitter pain of death is no more for the disciple of Jesus Christ. ***Are you afraid to die? How does the gospel help us overcome our fear of death?***

Repent and be baptized.

Saving faith is always preceded by repentance (turning from sin) and followed by works of righteousness. Peter is not dismissing faith, but implying it “in both the command to repent and to be baptized (lit. immersed in water) ... the willingness to be baptized is an outward expression of inward faith in Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 3:21)” (ESV Study Bible, parenthetical statement added). Baptism is an outward symbol of an already present inner reality and the first act of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ for the disciple. ***If you have not repented and believed in the gospel, talk to your Life Group leader or email hunter@mbchurch.com today. Please do not put this decision off.***

If you have not been baptized by immersion after salvation, why not?

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. (Acts 2:23-24 ESV)

The Death of Death

“Death, the dreadful consequence of sin, means decay and burial. Whereas life is God forming humanity OUT OF the dust (Gen 2:7), death places us back INTO the earth, so that we decay back into dust.

Genesis 3:19 erases Genesis 2:7. There is no blessing in death, for it is a curse and a reversal of that which is always the true blessing: life (Deut. 30:19a). In resurrection, however, the tables are turned and death itself is reversed. First, God the Father raised Christ bodily so that his body did not succumb to decay (Acts 13:37; cf. Acts 2:31; Ps 16:10). Then, at his coming, he will deliver the bodies of believers from their graves and decay in the dust. Joyfully, their corpses will rise from dust to inherit eternal life (Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19; Jn. 5:28)... Yet, even in the clench of death, Christ supplies to us an immediate treasure. He provides to our spirits a conscious, blessed yet disembodied, fellowship with himself. Therefore, in death we will be “with Christ” (Phil 1:23). Prior to the great day of resurrection, though we die, he partly overcomes the sting of death, imparting to us a “better” companionship with Christ (Phil 1:23)... Because the Spirit of God the Father who raised his own Son dwells in us, we will be raised to be “like him” (1 John 3:2 NASB), experiencing the redemption (Rom 8:23) and glorification of our bodies at Christ’s second advent. All things, death included, will then be subject to him (1 Cor 15: 20-23; Phil 3:20-21). Subdued, death will die.” – Dr. Jeffrey Bingham, “Death is Not a Blessing.”

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

MeadowBrook seeks to operate on giftings rather than offices. This means we seek to mobilize people to serve where they are gifted, not simply because we need to fill a spot. Do you know your Spiritual Gifts? If not, we could help you think through that at our next Ministry Connections on November 6th or possibly even sooner.

Email hunter@mbchurch.com or go to <https://www.mbchurch.com/next-steps/connections/> to register.

IN MINISTRY

Every member of Christ's church is called to proclaim the gospel to those around them and to strangers in the power of the Holy Spirit leaving the results to God. In fact, it is impossible to imagine the Spirit-filled life without including evangelism. So...

- Who are you praying for the Spirit to convict?
- Who are you sharing the gospel with in the power of the Holy Spirit?

AT HOME

"The promise is for you and for your children..." (Acts 2:39a).

- Are you viewing your children as potential brothers and sisters of Christ?
- Are you talking with them about their inability to please God apart from faith in Christ? Do you tell them that the Holy Spirit will work in them and make them new?
- Are you modeling and teaching them what it means to live Spirit-filled?

AT WORK

What would it look like to rely on the Spirit in your job? How would that change the way you worked?

For the Spirit is not meant to help us in what we perceive to be spiritual things, but he is our helper in all things so that whatever we do may bring glory to God.

RESPOND

Father,

Thank you for decisively defeating death through the resurrection of your Son by the Spirit of life. By your grace and faithfulness, that same Spirit lives and dwells in me. Forgive me for my lack of awareness of my desperate need of the life and power your Spirit provides. Forgive my foolish self-sufficiency. I desperately need you. Lord, help me to live courageously in the power of the Spirit, not fearing death. The blood of the lamb has taken death's power. Help me to stand firm in your will, proclaiming your gospel message enduring suffering, and entrusting my soul to you, my faithful Creator, while doing good for the glory of Christ, Amen.

Devoted

Acts 2:42-47 | September 15, 2019

CONNECT

Anyone who has ever coached knows how important fundamentals are if you want to be successful as a team. Before looking at today's passage what would you say the fundamentals of Life Group are?

GROW

Read Acts 2:42-47 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

A good Life Group is devoted to the right things.

Have you noticed that as our access to more and more information and the ability to "connect" has increased, we have often gained more confusion than clarity? More guilt than peace of mind? More superficiality than meaningful relationships? More loneliness than sharpening relationships? The model of this budding church in Acts 2 helps us see how Life Groups can be places where clarity and peace of mind are encouraged through channels of deep interpersonal relationships with one another.

Is your Life Group devoted to the Word of God and to fellowship, as defined in Acts 2:42? Before you answer "Of course" let's ask a few diagnostic questions:

- When a question comes up about life, maybe parenting or marriage or work etc., is the first response to look at what the Scriptures say about the issue, specifically or generally, or just to see how someone else does it?
- Does your group spend time trying to see what the Scripture reveals to us about God and pause simply to reflect over his goodness and his grace in our lives, or does your group jump straight to life application?
- Do you spend time with each other outside the Sunday Morning hour?
- Can you identify 2 people in your Life Group who is praying for you about specific spiritual matters in your life?

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

2 Pet. 1:3-4; Rom. 12:1-21;

1 Thess. 5:12-28;

1 Tim. 6:17-19

This newly formed church was marked by devotion to the teaching we now know as the New Testament and to fellowship, which is defined as being the relational fellowship experienced over food and the spiritual bonds formed in common prayer. As we devote ourselves to the Word, the plethora of other voices and our own opinions are silenced by the truth of God's word bringing breathtaking clarity and grace into our life. And as you devote yourselves to relational and spiritual fellowship with one another, superficial relationships give way to genuine, meaningful relationships that impact your life for your good and the glory of God.

A good Life Group exists as a community.

The church, and our Life Groups, are communities of people unified by their common faith in Jesus Christ. We, as image bearers of God, model the fellowship experienced between the three persons of the Trinity. The fellowship of this church was marked by Spirit-led generosity toward each other as needs arose, togetherness, and worship. Each of these reflected the love, generosity, togetherness, and glory freely given by each person in the Trinity to each other and to us in Christ.

"This was an angelic commonwealth, not to call anything of theirs their own. Immediately the root of evils was cut out... None reproached, none envied, none grudged; no pride, no contempt was there... The poor man knew no shame, the rich no haughtiness."
– Chrysostom, Homily VII

"The sharing of material things in common is not a required communalism but a voluntary caring response to need, (nor was it uniform). [The verb tense for sell and distribute indicate] this sharing was done again and again... As people are having need they receive help... This means that people did not sell everything all at once. The picture is of a community that cares for all of its members, even those in material need." –Darrell Bock, Acts, 152-153. *(more to come on generosity in Acts 4-5).*

Are there any current needs in your Life Group that need to be met?

A good Life group seeks to introduce others to Christ and their fellowship.

Read John Stott's insight into Acts 2:47 (parenthetical and emphasis added):

"The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit who created a missionary church...

From these earliest believers in Jerusalem we can learn three vital lessons about local church evangelism. First the Lord himself did it: The Lord added to their number. Doubtless he did it through the preaching of the apostles, the witness of the church members, the impressive love of their common life, and their example as they were praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Yet he did it. (Lesson: humility in your witness and dependence on Christ).

Secondly, what Jesus did was two things together: he added to their number... those who were being saved. He did not add them to the church without saving them, so no nominal Christianity at the beginning, nor did he save them without adding them to the church, no solitary Christianity either. Salvation and church membership belonged together, and they still do. Thirdly, the Lord added people daily. The verb 'added' is an imperfect, meaning 'kept adding,' and the adverb, 'daily,' puts the matter beyond question. The early church's evangelism was not an occasional or sporadic activity... No, just as their worship was daily, so was their witness. Praise and proclamation were both the natural overflow of hearts full of the Holy Spirit." – John Stott, The Message of Acts, 86-87.

Is this true of you and your Life Group?

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42, ESV

At MeadowBrook

When you give to the church through regular offering and gifts, you are helping meet both physical and spiritual needs of others through the ongoing ministry of MeadowBrook. Your dollars are making an immediate and, more importantly, an eternal impact in the lives of others all over the world.

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

This text reveals that gathering together in corporate worship is a command from God, and that gathering together is also a way we serve one another. One way you can minister at MeadowBrook is simply committing yourself to the gathering of the saints in corporate worship and participating in Life Group.

IN MINISTRY

How do you view your home? Have you considered its potential for gospel ministry?

Whether you live alone or whether you can hardly see the floor in your home underneath all the toys, your place of residence can be used for great kingdom ministry and fellowship. List two specific ways you can use your home for gospel ministry:

1. _____
2. _____

AT HOME

The gospel radically changed the way this church viewed their possessions. This generosity was modeled, expressed, and felt in the homes.

- Have you considered modeling this type of biblical generosity as a family involving each member of the family?
- How does the love and fellowship of this church challenge you in your familial relationships at home?

AT WORK

Why do you work?

The accumulation of wealth is a motivation for many. We like to think not, but often when kids are heading to colleges or into careers, the potential income is typically a major deciding factor. In Christ, we have a much better purpose in our work than the temporary, fruitless accumulation of wealth.

So, my question stands, *why* do you work? How does this passage inform your answer?

RESPOND

Father,

You are loving and generous, faithful and relational. You are not far off, but in Christ and by your Spirit you have brought me into the very fellowship you enjoy with them and have provided a place for me to live out that fellowship at MeadowBrook and in my Life Group. Thank you! Lord, forgive my pride, greed, lack of compassion, and lack of generosity. Help me to love as you loved, give as you give, relate as you relate. Stir within the hearts of me and my Life Group this same devotion to your Word, the fellowship, and your Kingdom's expansion as was experienced in that early Jerusalem church. This will not happen apart from your Spirit's work within us. We are totally dependent upon you. We love and trust you and will follow you where you lead us.

Amen.

Compassion over Convenience

Acts 3:1-26 | September 22, 2019

CONNECT

Has there ever been a time when you received credit or praise for something that you did not do? What happened and how did you respond?

GROW

Read Acts 3:1-26 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

In order to live as Christ did, we must know him.

As Peter and John approached the temple to pray, they witnessed a crippled man being brought to the outside gate by his friends (or potentially family). He was put there to beg for money from those entering the temple to pray. This must have brought to mind the numerous times they were with Jesus when he healed the lame, the sick and the blind. Maybe seeing this man being carried by his friends brought back the specific memory of the crippled being lowered through the roof by his friends to lay him in of Jesus (Lk. 5:17-26). Without hesitating, Peter and John went to the man with the understanding that Christ's power and love was of greater value than anything else the world could offer.

Because they had been on the receiving end of Christ's healing and forgiveness and had witnessed him heal many others, both Peter and John could respond to this crippled man in his desperate state with confidence and hope. The same is true for us – those who are in Christ have experienced the

Where is your hope?

The cripple's friends brought him to where they found their hope – money. This resulted in a continual need that could never be completely satisfied; he needed to come back to this same place daily. Peter and John brought him to where they found their hope – Christ. This resulted in a lasting and fully satisfied healing.

- In times of trouble, where do you find your hope?
- When others are in hardship, where do you point them to find hope?
- How do you respond to someone in need – do you move towards them in love, shy away or point them to temporary fixes?

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Lk. 5:17-26; 2 Tim. 3:16-17;

1 Thess. 1:4-5; Mk. 8:34-35

Matt. 22:36-40

grace that surpasses understanding and the freedom from sin's ugly grip. Now, as we study our Savior in Scripture – learning of his character, his heart for his people, and his ways – we will know how to respond to others when they are most desperate in a helpful, effective, and eternal way that points to the hope found in Christ Jesus. This is almost always a major inconvenience to our preconceived plans.

Ask God for you and your Life Group to place a higher value on displaying the compassion of Christ to others than on our convenience.

Glorify God in the way you interact with others, how you spend your time, and with the words you speak.

1. Peter and John were headed into the temple to pray. It was important to them to spend time in prayer with a community of people. ***Is it important to you to meet regularly with the church to pray and read God's Word?***
2. They demonstrated the love and power of Christ to the people around them in need even though it may have inconvenienced them. ***In what ways do you place convenience over compassion?***
3. They revealed to the crippled man his idolatry of money and his real problem—sin. Then they told him where true healing and satisfaction come from – Jesus Christ. ***What idols stand in the way of worshiping the Living God?***
4. Peter wasn't content to only glorify God with his actions. He glorified God with his words by how he pointed to the One who truly healed the lame beggar. Peter not only lived out the gospel to those around him, but he used words to verbally share the gospel so as to cast out all doubt as to who truly saves, heals, redeems, and is worthy of praise. ***What gave Peter confidence in sharing the gospel with those around him?***

Discussion: Talk with your Life Group about the importance of sharing the gospel. Romans 10:14-17 may be a good passage to read together.

Love the Lord your God with all your mind.

Notice how Peter was able to review the history of his people (the people that he was speaking to) so well. He was able to walk through how God had been pointing to Christ from the very beginning of creation and then through great men of faith his audience would revere.

Do we love God with all of our mind? Are we a people who study God's Word and know how each book fits into the metanarrative of the Bible? Have we thoroughly equipped ourselves to the point where we are able to give a reason for our faith, with both intellect and heart, both in season and out of season?

Peter most certainly loved God with all of his mind; so much so, that he was able to minister to those around him in the way they would best understand.

Discussion: What are ways we, as a Life Group, can encourage one another and keep each other accountable to loving God with all of our mind?

The Name of Jesus

"In his testimony to Jesus Peter attributed to him a cluster of significant titles. He began by calling him 'Jesus Christ of Nazareth' (6), but went on to style him God's 'servant' (13), who first suffered and then was glorified in fulfillment of Isaiah 52:13... Next he was 'The Holy and Righteous One' (14) and 'the author [or pioneer] of life' (15), while in the concluding part of the sermon Peter called him the 'prophet' foretold by Moses (22) and before the Sanhedrin the rejected stone which has become the capstone (4:11). Servant and Christ, Holy One and source of life, Prophet and Stone – these titles speak of the uniqueness of Jesus in his sufferings and glory, his character and mission, his revelation and redemption. All this is encapsulated in his 'Name' and helps explain its saving power." - John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 92-93.

*14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,
15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.
16 And his name--by faith in his name--has made this man strong whom you see and know,
and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. (Acts 3:14-16 ESV)*

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

Peter ministered to the man in need and proclaimed truth to him and those around him. A great way to live this out in our context is through Meadow-Brook's Open Hands ministry. At this ministry we clothe those in need and have counselors to share the gospel with them in an effective way.

If you desire to display Christ's healing compassion to others at Open Hands, email Elona Morgan at elona.morgan@gmail.com to help distribute food, clothing, or counsel.

IN MINISTRY

Ministering to those around you is almost never convenient. Most of the time we have to slow down to listen, help, and encourage towards Christ. So...

Have you created your daily schedule with flexibility for ministry purposes?

How are you equipping yourself to share the gospel or other biblical truth?

AT HOME

As we study Scripture, it's easy to see the importance of ministering to unbelievers or the least of these. But, what about your family? Maybe you have an unbelieving spouse or child, so you immediately think of ways to share truth with them effectively. Regardless of the spiritual state of your family, we see time and time again how crucial it is for us to be ministering to our spouse and our children.

- If we know that the mouth speaks from what is in our hearts, what and how are we speaking to our family?
- What are we encouraging our kids to pursue or find security in – money or Christ?

AT WORK

As you go to work each day, there are people there who do not have a relationship with Christ or who are very young in their faith. Peter's example of unashamed proclamation of Truth applies to us in the workforce today.

- Are you willing to sit with co-workers who are experiencing a difficult time and encourage them with the hope of God's Word instead of saying "I'll pray for you," yet not actually praying with them?
- If you see a co-worker struggling with work, how can you reach out your hand (as Peter did) to help?

RESPOND

Father,

Thank you for giving me spiritual life and healing. I was crippled, unable to do anything on my own, but you sent your Son to rescue and redeem me, who was broken. How often do I forget that it was and is you who healed me and sustains me? Lord, forgive me for taking credit for the work you have done and are doing in my life. I know my love for you will deepen as my understanding of you deepens. Open my eyes, that I might behold wondrous things out of your law. O God, equip me for the work of ministry – to my family at home, my family at church, and to the people of Gadsden. All praise, and honor, and glory are yours forever.

Amen.

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED BOLDNESS

Acts 4:1-31 | September 29, 2019

CONNECT

What are some of your biggest fears? What do you do to overcome them?

GROW

Read Acts 4:1-31 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

Persecution is inevitable in a Christian's life, however the Holy Spirit will sustain you and give you the words to say in the midst of it.

Acts 4:1-31 is the first recorded event of persecution in the Christian church after Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father. Notice who endures the first wave of persecution – John and Peter. Peter denied Christ three times out of fear of being persecuted (or even associated) with Jesus. Now he is boldly proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ as our resurrected Lord and Savior.

Sadducee's in the Sanhedrin

This wealthy group of men was a part of the religious elite in Jewish culture. They did not believe in the possibility of the resurrection and that the Messianic Age had already taken place. Unlike the Pharisee's, who persecuted Jesus and those who followed him because of differing beliefs, the Sadducee's persecuted Jesus and his followers out of fear of losing power, money, and authority. Peter knew who these people were and knew what they believed and still boldly proclaimed what was true (v10-12).

Do you shy away from proclaiming truth when you know that other people believe differently than you?

that courtroom when tried for ministering to a man in Jesus' name. They were indwelt with the Holy Spirit and it was he who gave them the words to speak to their persecutors (v8). It is because of the Holy Spirit that "Peter and John responded with confidence and powerful freedom of speech, ministering beyond their human abilities. They responded daringly and aggressively and with integrity. No compromise." (Hughes; Acts, 63). Trust that God will be actively with you in times of persecution.

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Mk. 8:34-38; Jn. 15:18-20;
1 Pt. 1:13-21; Col. 1:15-23;
2 Tim. 3:12

Kent Hughes says, "Persecution is an inevitable element of genuine Christian faith" (Acts, 59). Jesus warned his disciples in John 15:18-20 that the world will hate them and persecute them because they hated and persecuted him. Later Paul writes, *all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* (2 Tim. 3:12). So we should not be surprised when we face opposition as we are seeking to live a life that is honoring to the Lord. Not only should we not be surprised by persecution, but we should also not be fearful of it. Peter and John were both there when Jesus gave the the warning in John 15. They knew they were not alone in

Sharing the gospel will either offend people or save them.

The good news of the gospel is offensive to those with hardened hearts toward God. The gospel tells them they are broken. The Gospel unapologetically proclaims that people are incapable of “fixing themselves.” More than that, the Word proclaims our best deeds and efforts are like filthy rags before the Lord (Isiah 64:6). This Gospel tells us we are not our highest authority. That place is reserved for The One who sent His Son to live a perfect and acceptable life before God. He took on our punishment for disobedience, a punishment we deserved to bear. He defeated sin and death when He was resurrected from the tomb. When people hear this, they reject it, unwilling to recognize this as reality. But to those who have an openness to hearing truth, they cling to it for life.

When Peter addresses the Sanhedrin regarding the name by which this man’s healing was done in, he “moves from healing to salvation, and from the particular to the general. He sees one man’s physical cure as a picture of the salvation which is offered to all in Christ” (Stott; The Message of Acts, 97). When you’re sitting at lunch or having coffee with a friend or co-worker who doesn’t know Christ and they’re confiding in you about a difficult situation, **share the gospel with them by pointing to the specific brokenness in their life and how the gospel is the answer.** We know that Christ is restoring all things and making broken things whole again, whether in this life or the one to come (Read Col. 1:15-23).

Are you willing to experience discomfort or suffering for the sake of the gospel? For the sake of future saints?

Signs and Wonders

“If, then, we take Scripture as our guide, we will avoid opposite extremes. We will neither describe miracles as ‘never happening’, nor as ‘everyday occurrences’, neither as ‘impossible’ nor as ‘normal’. Instead, we will be entirely open to the God who works both through nature and through miracle. And when a healing miracle is claimed, we will expect it to resemble those in the Gospels and the Acts and so to be the instantaneous and complete cure of an organic condition, without the use of medical or surgical means, inviting investigation and persuading even unbelievers. For so it was with the congenital cripple. Peter took his miraculous healing as the text of both his sermon to the crowd and his speech to the Council. Work and sign together bore testimony to the uniquely powerful name of Jesus. The healing of the cripple’s body was a vivid dramatization of the apostolic message of salvation.” - Stott; The Message of Acts, 104

Pray with each other for boldness to keep sharing the gospel.

After they experienced persecution they ran straight to their community of fellow believers and told them what happened. Their first response – prayer. They began by recognizing who God is – Creator (v24), Revealer of Truth (v25-26) Sovereign One (v27-28). Then they ask for boldness. Notice how they did not pray for protection, physical safety, for the ceasing of their persecution or a life free from hardship. They prayed for boldness so they would go on proclaiming the message of life with a confident conviction of truth. May MeadowBrook be a people unashamed of the gospel.

Take time to pray as a Life Group for boldness to share the message of salvation and hope to Etowah County and the world.

A Look at the Greek: Acts 4:24

“Their first word [of their prayer] was Despotes, which means Sovereign Lord and is a term used of a slave owner and of a ruler of unchallenged power. The Sanhedrin might utter warnings, threats and prohibitions, and try to silence the church, thus their authority was subject to a higher authority still, and the edicts of men cannot overturn the decrees of God.” - Stott, 99.

¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19-20 ESV)

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

The best way to grow in boldness in sharing the gospel is to pray and then intentionally put yourself in conversations with people who do not have a relationship with Christ. A great way to boldly step out in faith is through MeadowBrook's International Student Dinners/Game-Nights, where you have the opportunity to show hospitality and warmth to those who desperately need it. ***The next one is coming up on: Sunday, October 13th.***

If you want to make a spiritual impact in the lives of college students who may go back and share the gospel with their families back home, email Mike Niemi at mike@mbchurch.com.

IN MINISTRY

God has specifically placed you in your neighborhood, your son/daughter on that specific team, etc. so that He might use you to radically change lives.

Are you being purposeful with your time and conversations with those around you?

Who in your neighborhood do you not know? Begin a gospel-centered relationship with them.

Who are you praying would come to know and love Christ deeply? Write their name down and pray.

AT HOME

If anyone in your family does not have a relationship with the Lord, they should be your #1 priority (this doesn't mean you're not sharing the gospel with others). Pray with them. Boldly share truth with them. Walk with them through Scripture. Talk with them about who they are without Christ and who Christ desires them to become.

Are you praying for your family's spiritual lives? Are you praying with them?

How are you challenging and encouraging each other with Scripture?

AT WORK

No matter what job title you have or who you work for (unbeliever, government, or otherwise), you can and should share the gospel. Our purpose in life is to glorify God and make disciples of those around us – our co-workers, boss, subordinates, students, our child's coach, etc. When you become fearful of what others may think of you or even of the prospect of losing your job if you share, remind yourself of the Sovereign God whom you serve.

RESPOND

Father,

Thank you for the power of the resurrection. Thank you that the gospel came to us not only in word, but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You – who sent your Son out of the perfection of heaven for the mocking of earth so that we might be saved – are worthy of any affliction or persecution we might face because of his name's sake. Remind us how Christ was hated before we were, rejected before we were, and glorified as we know we will be when Jesus returns. Grant us the same boldness and drive that Peter and John had so that we may be found faithful in your sight.

Amen.

Hypocrisy Kills

Acts 4:32-5:11 | October 06, 2019

CONNECT

Have you ever been to a local community play or a musical? If so, which has been your favorite? What was it like seeing someone you know play a character that behaved totally different than who they were in real life?

GROW

Read Acts 4:32-5:11 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

The Spirit creates an attitude of radical generosity within disciples.

If you are searching for joy and contentment in this life, perhaps you need to yield to the Spirit's work in your heart and adopt the posture of generosity this early church possessed. Giving is not meant to be burdensome or compulsory, as Peter makes clear in Acts 5:4 and Paul makes clear in 2 Cor. 9:6-7. Your giving is actually a ministry of the Spirit to your heart as well as to others.

Through Spirit-filled generosity, He frees you from the love of money and causes you to experience the greater joy of heavenly treasure and the blessedness of ministering to those in need.

A Look at the Greek

And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33 ESV)

"The verb 'were giving' (ἀπεδίδουν, apedioun) is imperfect, so the ongoing character of the powerful witness is the more dominant point rather than miracles, although miracles may also be in view. It is the resurrection as exaltation that is highlighted, since it shows how God has vindicated Jesus." – Darrell Bock, Acts, 214.

Takeaway: Our power in witnessing is found in the bold, Spirit-empowered testimony of the resurrection and vindication of Jesus Christ as the Son of God who takes away the sins of the world, not in signs and wonders. We do not need miracles to be a powerful and effective witness.

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

2 Cor. 9:6-7; Jas. 3:12-18

Mt. 23:5-7, 25-26;

1 Pet. 1:13-21

The generosity of the disciples varied as the Spirit, who filled them with power, grace, and boldness, led them. The words of this passage do not imply a forced, total renunciation of all private ownership, in light of Acts 5:4 John Stott highlights that, "Although in fact and in law they continued to own their goods, yet in heart and mind they cultivated an attitude so radical that they thought of their possessions as being available to help their needy sisters and brothers." *The Message of Acts*, 107.

How is your attitude regarding giving?
Is it cheerful? Is it compassionate?
Is it Spirit-led?

Hypocrisy kills.

The narrative continues in chapter 5 with an important word, “But.” This tiny conjunction carries a lot of power with it. It changes the direction entirely. Up until now, Satan’s attacks against the church have been external, his tactics now are moving internal. Ananias and Sapphira introduced as a contrast to Barnabas and the rest of the church as they were described in Acts 4:32-37.

It appears based on Peter’s statements in Acts 5:4 that they have entered into some sort of contract with the church promising to sell their land and give all proceeds to the church. However in their deceit and hypocrisy, they seek to keep back some for themselves, which, in the Greek, carries the idea of “misappropriating or stealing” (Stott, 109).

“[Ananias and Sapphira] wanted the credit and the prestige for sacrificial generosity, without the inconvenience of it. So, in order to gain a reputation to which they had no right, they told a brazen lie. Their motive in giving was not to relieve the poor, but to fatten their own ego.” – John Stott

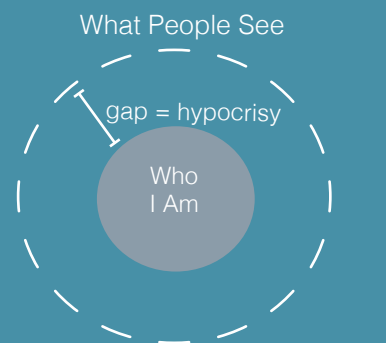
God desires his church to be pure, as should you.

The severity and the swiftness of God’s judgment sent a message. His church is to be holy as he is holy. Being both omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipotent (all-powerful), God knew their hearts and was able to execute swift judgment in this developmental stage of his church. While God seemingly does not operate in this way often, it should cause us to evaluate how seriously we view our own sin and sin in the church. Jesus expects church members to practice discipline amongst themselves, calling upon them to repent. This is an important biblical practice that ensures the overall health of the church, yet one that often goes overlooked. As a Life Group, commit yourself to one another and give each other the freedom to call out sin in your life.

However, Peter focuses more on their hypocrisy than their theft. He made clear the fact they could have kept the land and as much of the money as they wanted! It was their prideful sin of vain hypocrisy, or acting differently than they truly were, that God judged. They wanted the glory. *How often are we the same way in church life? We want people to think highly of us, to think we are righteous parents, spouses, employees, church members, etc., but we don’t actually want to be those things. We’re content with the appearance of righteousness, because in our hearts we still love our sin. That mindset cost Ananias and Sapphira their lives that day, and since then it has deceived and led many “church members” in the comfort of their pews and their token righteousness straight into eternal condemnation.*

Are you fighting to diminish the hypocrisy in your life?

“We all have gaps, it’s just a matter of how large ours is at the moment. By the power of the Spirit, constantly fight to close the gap.” - Ben Mandrell, President of LifeWay. For further engagement, listen to his sermon about Blessed are the Pure in heart here: <https://vimeo.com/341421613>



³ But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?

⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” (Acts 5:3-4 ESV)

If there a brother or sister walking in sin with whom you need to approach in love?

Is your Life Group following the guidelines laid out in Matthew 18:15-20? If not, what would it look like if you did?

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.
(Philippians 4:16-17 ESV)

When you give to MeadowBrook, you are serving through the ministry of MeadowBrook and bearing fruit for the glory of God, just as the Philippians did when they contributed to Paul's ministry. Your giving is a part of your ministry at MeadowBrook for the spreading of God's glory and the increasing of your joy in Christ.

IN MINISTRY

Are you using the resources and talents and abilities God has entrusted to you for the ministry to those in need around you?

Each of us can make an eternal impact in the situation in which God has placed us and with the resources he has entrusted to us. The early church creatively sought opportunities and ways to bless the poor in their midst.

What would it look like if you did the same?

AT HOME

Hypocrites are made in homes. If kids see their parents behaving one way in public, yet another way at home, they will reflect hypocrisy. Genuine Christian living is both taught and caught. "The primary means of discipleship parents have in the home are reading and applying Scripture; living as consistent examples of people who love the Jesus they're speaking about by following Him faithfully and depending on His mercy as they repent of sin; and showing an affectionate, committed love that pervades it all." Watters, *The Gospel and Parenting in The Gospel for Life Series*, 79.

AT WORK

Hypocrisy often reveals its ugly head in the workplace, especially in terms of eye-service for the boss. Eye-service is working one way when the boss is looking and another when he is not. In short, eye-service is hypocrisy. This is why Paul in Colossians 3:22 calls on employees to submit to their employers, "not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord." Workers who fear the Lord work hard for the glory of God all the time for that is who they are.

Is that who you are?

RESPOND

Father,

You are true and righteous altogether. Search me, my heart and my ways, for any grievous, hypocritical way in me. Help me to walk humbly with you in every area of my life. May I be kept from the sin of hypocrisy. Let the Spirit of truth whom you have placed within me lead me into paths of genuine righteousness. Forgive me for being a hypocrite in so many areas of my life. Help me to strive to be genuine in my pursuit of you, not for my glory but for yours. I love you and my heart's aim is to bring glory to your name. It is in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, I pray,

Amen.

Gospel Courage

Acts 5:12-42 | October 13, 2019

CONNECT

What does it mean to have courage? Has there ever been a time where you had to instill courage in someone?

GROW

Read Acts 5:12-42 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

God delivers his people not for safety's sake, but for the continuation of the gospel ministry.

After the judgment God brought against Ananias and Sapphira, Luke moves to describing the growth of the church as a result of the Spirit powerfully working through the apostles, answering their prayer from 4:30. Having dealt with the threat from within, this budding church faces a threat from without. Eaten up with envy, the Sanhedrin move against all the apostles and have them imprisoned for preaching the gospel, yet God releases them miraculously. Then something interesting happens, he commands them to preach the gospel in the Temple! He wants them to do the very thing that sent them in jail in the first place in the home court of the Sanhedrin. And they obey him! Then when the Sanhedrin bring them into their court, Peter preaches the gospel again! Enraged, they want to kill them, yet stayed by Gamaliel's opinion, they opt to scourge them instead. Leaving that day, the apostles continued to preach the gospel! They could not be silenced, for they understood their mission. They understood that God's deliverance through the intervention of an angel and one of their opponents was for the sake of the gospel going forth, not

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

Gal. 3:12-14; Mt. 5:11-12

Josh. 1:6-9; Rev. 2:8-11

Gen. 50:15-20

A Few Points on Healings in Acts

It can be easy to get caught up in these healings, but we must remember these are descriptive passages not prescriptive norms. These were not common experiences among many church members, but a limited selection. Here are some points to remember:

- The healings vindicated and took a backseat to the message of the gospel. In Acts 5, Peter drew attention to the resurrection, not his ability to heal others.
- The healings were verifiable and consistent among those who had the gift of healing.
- Seasons of healing often, but not always, preceded times of trial. Acts 3, 5, 6, 14...
- The healing was accomplished by God through individuals. God got the glory and the gospel went forth. It was not about money or fame.
- The abiding gift of healing Peter displays in Acts 5 is different than a specific supernatural healing like the situation mentioned in James 5 or perhaps like Ananias restoring sight to Paul in Acts 9.

so they could live safer lives. They were delivered from danger so they could continue to do the very thing that put them in danger in the first place. These apostles had gospel courage.

Our culture is held captive by fear, and it has crept into the church as well. Fear of suffering. Fear of failure. Fear of rejection. Fear of death. Fear of loss. Each fear inhibiting the spread of the gospel. So how can we develop this gospel courage that characterized the disciples?

"Kill us, torture us, condemn us, grind us to dust... The more you mow us down, the more we grow; the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church"
–Tertullian

- **Pray.** The boldness and ministry that is described in these verses are the answer to the prayer the church prayed in Acts 4.

- **Rest in the sovereignty of God.** God is in control even over persecution and there is purpose to everything. If He wills for you to be delivered, you will be. Rest in his plan and wisdom.

- **Fear God over man.** The worst man can do is kill you. The fear of the Living God should cause you to tremble at the thought of denying him and embolden you in the face of much weaker enemies.

- **Look to the reward.** Surely as the disciples left rejoicing that day, their minds were fixated on Jesus' words: ¹¹ *"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.* (Matthew 5:11-12 ESV)

May Etowah County be filled with the teaching of Jesus Christ, regardless of the opposition brought against us, just as it was in Jerusalem.

The gospel is good news worth proclaiming.

Why did the apostles risk so much to proclaim the gospel? Because the gospel is worth it. In Peter's brief gospel proclamation to the Sanhedrin, he highlights 3 glorious truths of the gospel that change everything:

1. Jesus died bearing the curse of God (on a tree) on our behalf and was resurrected in victory, setting us free from the curse of the law and giving us eternal life. (Galatians 3:12-14)
2. Through obedient faith in his name, Jesus becomes our Leader and Savior, saving us from the wrath of God and leading us in paths of righteousness in his kingdom.
3. Jesus gives to us repentance, forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit, who empowers us and keeps us until Jesus returns. From beginning to end, Jesus is the giver of our salvation. He is the author and the perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). We can claim nothing but grace.

This is the good news of the gospel. We have it. The world needs to hear it. Our King has sent us to proclaim it to his glory. So out of our love for our Leader and Savior and out of our love for others still dead in their sin, we go.

In what areas of your life is God calling you to demonstrate Gospel courage?

Teaching and Preaching the Gospel

People need to be taught the truths of the gospel, especially in today's culture. We must explain what we mean by the words we use. It is all code language to those who have not been taught. And people need the gospel to be preached to them. They need to be confronted with their sins and urged to enter the Kingdom of God through faith. Let us be a church that both teaches the truths of the gospel and preaches salvation through faith in Jesus Christ from our sin and the just wrath of God.

⁴¹ *Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.* (Acts 5:41-42 ESV)

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

At MeadowBrook, we are constantly looking for ways to better connect people to Christ and his church. One unique way we do that is through our Caring for the Fatherless ministry. Each month we host a Parents' Night Out ministry for foster families in the area. This gives us opportunity to invest gospel truth into the foster children and establish relationships with the foster families, hopefully will leading to gospel conversations with them down the road. ***There will be one on Oct. 21 and on Nov. 18. If you desire to partner in this ministry email Andrea at asimmons1972@yahoo.com today.***

IN MINISTRY

How can you become more comfortable in evangelism?

From my experience, most people do not like evangelism because they do not think they are good at it. Like with anything else in this life, not doing something is the best way to never be good or comfortable at something. If we want to feel more at ease in sharing the gospel, we simply have to do it more often.

AT HOME

"In an age of helicopter parenting, Christian parents should know better than to constantly hover over their children in an attempt to mitigate potential risks and mistakes. Living life involves inevitable risks, and Christian parents must teach their children to take self-sacrificial, calculated risks for the glory of God and the good of others. Safety is far less important than Christ-exalting bravery and courage."
– David Prince, *The Gospel and Parenting*, 93.

How can you as the parent better train your kids in gospel courage?

AT WORK

Evangelizing people at work takes real courage. They see you often and evangelizing could potentially cost you in networking, profit, promotions, or financial security. However, the reproach of Christ is greater than all the rewards of man. So, view your work as an avenue for the gospel to go out into all nations.

Where are some areas you could be evangelistic in your work?

What would it look like for you to use your job for the advance of the gospel?

RESPOND

Father,

In the midst of great uncertainty and a fear-gripped culture, help us to demonstrate gospel courage for the glory of your Son and the good of others. Strengthen us by your Spirit for the day of trial and give us the words to speak. Let us not grow limp in our evangelistic efforts, but press forward in gospel ministry. Help us, O Lord, overcome our timidity and fear with the love, power, and self-control given to us by the Spirit. In the name of our bold and courageous King, Jesus, I pray,

Amen.

Christ-Like

Acts 6:1-8:2 | October 20, 2019

CONNECT

What does it mean to have courage? Has there ever been a time where you had to instill courage in someone?

GROW

Read Acts 6:1-8:2 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

Christ-like living leads to a Christ-like ministry and message.

In chapter 6 we are introduced to Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Luke describes him as being full of faith and the Holy Spirit, full of grace and power, and as a powerful proclaimer of truth and wisdom. Stephen mirrors Christ in many ways in his life, message, and death.

- He brought unity to a racially charged situation in the early church, as Christ unified his disciples.
- He performs signs and wonders in the power of the Spirit as Christ did.
- He spoke with wisdom that could not be disputed, as Christ did.
- He boldly proclaimed a message of repentance to his Israelite brothers caught up in idolatry as Christ did. ***In which ways can you grow in Christ-likeness in your life and ministry?***

The Idolatry of the Temple

"When the time came for Christ and his people to begin fulfillment of what Israel's temple pointed to all along, to continue to believe that God dwells in a physical temple was idolatrous... For Israelites to commit themselves to the temple, after the coming of Christ, meant they had committed themselves to a dead, spiritually empty building and tradition. The true temple to which we must now be committed is God's temple in Christ and the Spirit... Worship in the true temple in the sphere of Christ and the Spirit is true worship, which results in resembling the image of Christ." –G.K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 195.

The Israelites had rejected the Son of God and continued to worship the idol of traditions and man-made righteousness. Stephen's message confronted. Through a biblical history of the people of God, he reveals to them they had indeed made the same mistake their forefathers had. (See graphic on page ## for overview of Stephen's speech). His point: they were resisting the Holy Spirit of God, had murdered the Son of God who was raised and is now exalted at the right hand of God the Father, and had missed the heavenly temple in Christ for the earthly temple in Jerusalem. So often, however, we are the same way in our own lives in that we, too, resist the Holy Spirit's work in us. We also often shy away from confronting the idols of the people we evangelize and disciple. So, instead of calling them to repent of dead worship to dead idols, we promote this easy believism gospel, contradicting Christ's message that "no man can serve two masters."

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

2 Cor. 3:12-18; Heb. 12:1-2

Jn. 15:18-20; Lk. 23:26-56

Matt. 5:7; Rom. 8:17

Are you resisting the Holy Spirit's work in your life? Are you still clinging on to the promises and false security of idols?

Are you presenting an easy believism gospel that is contrary to Scripture in your evangelistic and discipleship efforts?

Racial Harmony in Acts 6

The problem that was raised not merely an organizational issue, but a racial issue as well. The Hellenists were Greek speaking Jews who were from outside the promised land and the other group was native to Israel. This was an organizational issue that revealed a crack along racial lines. Rather than degenerating into division, however, this early church pursued multi-racial harmony. The division was put away, and the kingdom advanced as a result. Read this quote from J.D. Greear regarding the glory of multi-racial harmony in the church:

"Multi-racial harmony is a preview of God's eternal kingdom, and God wants to display it first through his church. What our society has been unable to produce through its laws, God creates through the gospel. The gospel teaches us that all men are created equal because they are each alike made in the image of God. All races suffer from a common problem, sin, and look toward a common hope, Jesus. That gospel creates a new humanity, a redeemed race made up of all colors, in Christ's image. God created the races to display his glory like a multi-splendored diamond, and we ought to see that glory first reflected in the church."

Christ-like living results in Christ-like suffering... (and glory).

Stephen's Christ-likeness did not lead to ease and prosperity. It led to Christ-like suffering. Stephen was falsely accused as Christ was, given a mock-trial as Christ was, and died as a result of the Sanhedrin as Christ did. Stephen's "commitment to Christ caused him to become conformed to the likeness of Christ's suffering." – G.K. Beale, WBWW, 196.

However, in his last moments, while his opponents were enraged over Stephen's repudiation of their idolatry, he caught a glimpse of the glory of Christ, in the heavenly temple by the throne. In this moment, Stephen is supernaturally given a glimpse into the glory with which he is about to share, for the Scriptures say that "we suffer with him in order to that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17). Today, those who follow after Christ will share in his sufferings, as Jesus promised, *and his glory*. This is our hope for the trial. God is with us in the midst of it through his Spirit, and he will reward us for it in eternity.

What does suffering for Christ look like in our culture?

Where can we find encouragement in the midst of any of life's trials?

Christ-like living results in Christ-like mercy.

Stephen's last words mirror Christ's words on the cross. While suffering, he entrusted his soul to the Father as Christ did and he forgave his persecutors. Those who are Christ-like will reflect his ministry and message. They will share in his sufferings, and they will extend his grace, kindness, and mercy to those who sin against them.

Does your life reflect the same mercy, grace, and kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Is there anyone in your life who has sinned against you from whom you are withholding forgiveness who you need to forgive today?

Is there a brother or sister in Christ you need to reconcile with today?

⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. (Acts 7:51 ESV)"

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

At MeadowBrook, one of the ways we proclaim the gospel in our community is through our Good News Clubs. Our teams are in 4 different area schools loving on children and teaching them the truths of God's Word every Tuesday morning and afternoon through songs, prayer, games and Bible stories.

Attalla (Tuesdays, 2:30 – 4:00 pm)

Eura Brown (Tuesdays, 2:30 – 4:00 pm)

John Jones (Tuesdays, 2:30 – 4:00 pm)

Striplin (Tuesdays, 7:00 – 8:00 am)

If you want to make a difference in the lives of these children and their families, then contact Hope Pearce at c3h2pearce@att.net

IN MINISTRY

Stephen was effective in ministry because he knew the Scriptures. He knew the grand narrative of Scripture and was able to quote passages from it by memory. He knew the Word, and it showed.

If we desire to be effective in ministry, we must also know the Word. We need to know the story of the entire Bible, and be able to easily communicate that story which answers the questions everyone is asking: Why are we here? What is our purpose? Where is this going? Am I on the right track?

People are desperately seeking for the answers we know and possess through the Scriptures. So, let's know our Bible well enough to communicate them with ease and simplicity.

AT HOME

Stephen forgave his persecutors. Rarely, do we find ourselves in situations where we need to forgive our persecutors. But we often find ourselves in situations where we need to forgive (and seek forgiveness from) our spouse and our children. Are you holding on to a past sin of your spouse, unwilling to forgive, bearing the pain of that sin as Christ did, and move on in grace and newness? If so, you are not being Christ-like. Repent and extend the mercy you have been extended by Christ.

AT WORK

Stephen was a man full of the Spirit and of wisdom, a man of good repute. This description was his *before* he was set apart by the apostles. In his day-to-day living at home and at his work, whatever it was this described him.

Evaluate your work-life. *Would it be evident based on your work-life that you are full of the Spirit and of wisdom, a man or woman of good repute?*

RESPOND

Father,

I desire to be like your Son. Let your Spirit of Liberty who has freed me from the shackles of sinful flesh conform me into the image of your Son from one degree of glory to another until the day we see Christ face-to-face and become like him in glorified bodies. Let our message be his message and our mercy be his mercy. And when suffering comes to us as it did to him, let us be found faithful. We know we have the Helper who will give us the strength and words for the trial. Let Him continually fix our eyes on Christ, who for the joy that was set before him endured suffering. In him we pray,

Amen.

STEPHEN'S SPEECH



Abraham and Joseph

God promised to bless the nations through his offspring, though he and Sarah were beyond child bearing age. Once Isaac was born, this covenant was marked by circumcision.

Joseph, a son of promise, was despised and sold into slavery by the children of Israel. However God was with him, and Joseph saved and fed Israel bread during the famine that was in the land.

Moses

God appointed Moses to be the ruler and judge of his people. However, the people rejected him. This Moses who the people rejected, God sent as both ruler and redeemer of the people by the power of God.

At Sinai, Moses received and delivered living words of God's covenant to the people of Israel, but they rejected the living Word of God and chose to worship idols, rejoicing instead in the works of their hands.



David, Solomon, and The Temple

God responded to David's desire to build the Lord a Temple with a promise that his son would build a House for the Lord and that his line will never cease to reign. Solomon built the Temple in faith and worship, knowing God's presence was not tied to any earthly structure. In this Temple, prophets who announced the coming of the Righteous One were murdered by the people of Israel and the presence of the Lord departed from it in judgment. (2 Chron. 24:20; Eze. 10:18-22)



Jesus

God sent his only begotten Son to the people of Israel, yet they rejected and murdered even him. He is the son of Promise through whom all nations are blessed. He is the Living Word who fulfilled the law of God in its entirety, reconciling God and man in his body of death. He is the Son of David who has established the heavenly Temple through his resurrection and the giving of his Holy Spirit at Pentecost. He is the Righteous Savior, Redeemer, and Ruler of the true people of God.



The Holy Spirit

Acts 8:3-40 | October 27, 2019

CONNECT

If you are confused about something or someone, what are the things you do to alleviate that confusion?

GROW

Read Acts 8:3-40 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

The Holy Spirit oftentimes is shrouded by confusion because of some of the supernatural elements that accompany Him in the Scriptures. There is an aspect of that which is healthy. He of course is God, and we are but man. However, it becomes unhealthy when we choose not to fight through the initial confusion and simply ignore Him, or perhaps worse when we engage him in a manipulative way to our own benefit as Simon does in this story. I hope by looking at 3 brief stories, each of which involves many different human characters, we will come to see that the Holy Spirit is really the main character and come to a better understanding of Him and His ways.

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

2 Cor. 3:12-18; Heb. 12:1-2

Jn. 15:18-20; Lk. 23:26-56

Matt. 5:7; Rom. 8:17



The Ministry of Philip the Evangelist c. A.D. 34?

“Philip, a leader in the church in Jerusalem, began his evangelistic ministry in Samaria. God then led him south toward Gaza, where he explained the gospel to a God-fearing Ethiopian royal official. Afterwards Philip was transported by God to Azotus, where he preached and continued his ministry up to Caesarea.”
ESV Study Bible, 2006

The Holy Spirit brings healing that results in joy.

In the first part of the narrative, Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8 comes one step closer to being fulfilled in that Philip, one of the seven faithful men chosen in Acts 6, preaches the gospel in Samaria, accompanied by many great signs of healing done by the Holy Spirit. The result: “there was much joy in that city.” The gospel was preached and believed, the Spirit brought about healing, and joy resulted. While we may not see some of the same miraculous and outward signs in today’s ministry, the principle remains the same. When we preach the gospel and people believe in Christ, they experience healing from the Holy Spirit in their area of greatest need: their sin and separation from God the Father (otherwise known as brokenness).

Through Christ, our mediator, the Spirit heals us of our spiritually dead existence by breathing spiritual life into us again, making us new in Christ and setting us free from our slavery to sin. The Spirit then tabernacles within every believer, indwelling them and restoring to them full access to God the Father through Jesus Christ. That which was broken is now healed and restored by the Spirit’s ministry to us.

The Holy Spirit cannot be manipulated or manufactured.

Simon, whom tradition denotes to be the first Christian heretic who spread false teaching, reveals his prideful assumption that unfortunately many show the Holy Spirit can be manipulated and manufactured. Now, we may not seek to do that with money. However, there is a popular movement that centers on persistently using specific words or declarations in prayer, manufacturing speaking in tongues through coaching at prayer conferences, and emotionally driven worship that seeks to manipulate the Holy Spirit or manufacture his presence. This section in this birds-eye view at Acts 8 should serve as a severe warning to those attracted by those teachings. As it was with Simon, these efforts are not driven by a desire to know and enjoy God, but rather to use God or the Holy Spirit as a means to an end of self-glorification, ease or _____. Peter's strong language to Simon "discloses the condition of his heart, and that he did not truly belong to the people of God... [and it] also seems to class Simon as an unbeliever." –ESV Study Bible

We must be on guard against this view of God prevalent in our culture. Like Simon, there are many who have sought to fake belief in Christ by going through the signs of outward belief without the inward repentance of their dead works and idols. My prayer is that this is not any of you.

Are you seeking to manipulate or manufacture the Holy Spirit? If so, repent.

Have you truly repented and believed in the gospel or have you gone through the right motions yet are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity?

"The Spirit is a person to know, not a force to be harnessed." – Randy Gunter

Why the delay?

"Apparently in this unique case, where the gospel was first moving beyond the bounds of Judaism, the Lord sovereignly waited to give any manifestation of the full power of the Holy Spirit until some of the apostles could be present, and therefore there would be no question at all that the Samaritans had received the new covenant empowering of the Holy Spirit in the same way Jewish Christians had. This would show that the Samaritans should be counted full members of the one true church, the new covenant community of God's people, founded and based at that time in Jerusalem."

– ESV Study Bible

The Holy Spirit leads the church in fulfilling the Great Commission.

In the last story we see the Holy Spirit sovereignly directing events to further advance the Kingdom and fulfill Christ's commission. Philip, on the road to Gaza, was directed to a man in a chariot who was reading a prophetic passage in Isaiah. There is no doubt The Spirit directed Philip to this man. Philip, understanding the Spirit's purpose opened his mouth and guided the Eunuch, beginning with that Scripture, to the gospel. The eunuch gladly believed, and the Spirit in his sovereign timing ensured that in the midst of the desert there was water for this first member of the church at Ethiopia to be baptized. The Spirit was sovereignly guiding Philip in his fulfillment of the Great Commission.

From these stories, we learn that the Spirit restores that which was broken and leads his church in the fulfillment of the Great Commission to glory of Christ. He is a person to know and enjoy, not a force to be channeled. He is our helper, our comforter, and our healer. Let him walk with you as you engage him through the Word he inspired and helps you understand and through prayer, in which he helps you in your weaknesses.

⁴ Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵ Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. (Acts 8:4-5 ESV)

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

Baptism is the prescribed first act of obedience by our Lord after one comes to faith in Christ. It is also perhaps our first act of ministry as well. Through baptism we are publically declaring Jesus is Lord to a congregation that likely has unbelievers in it, but we are also modeling in a very picturesque way the gospel itself and our own personal testimony through the act of baptism. The death, burial and resurrection of both Christ and your inward spiritual self are proclaimed through that one act.

If you have not been baptized, please obey Jesus in this manner and minister to our congregation in this unique ordinance. Put it on the schedule by emailing hunter@mbchurch.com.

If you would like to serve by helping a baptismal candidate on the day of their baptism, email Janet Hall at janet@mbchurch.com

IN MINISTRY

Be the guide for someone as Philip was. The Bible is not a book about religion, but a book that reveals God and how he has been at work, is at work, and will be at work in his Creation. It answers the questions people are longing to have answered. Why am I here? What's my purpose? How can I deal with my guilt/shame? Where is all of this going? All of these questions the gospel speaks directly towards. However, people may not understand that when they open the words of Scripture.

As ministers of the gospel, we need to be able to guide people to Christ from any passage of Scripture, telling the grand narrative of redemption as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. Be the guide for those seeking to answer life's big question and guide them to their only hope—Jesus Christ.

AT HOME

Simon the Magician had a pride problem. He liked people thinking he was Great. We likewise struggle with pride. In the home, pride is absolutely destructive. Pride breaks relationships, refuses to make amends, refuses to seek forgiveness, refuses to admit fault, refuses to extend grace. Pride leads to affairs. It leads to bitter arguments. Pride simply destroys homes. Three simple phrases that will help you apply the gospel in your battle against pride in the home:

- I was wrong.
- Will you forgive me?
- I forgive you.

AT WORK

Simon the Magician had a pride problem. He liked people think he was Great. We likewise struggle with pride. Pride hinders your career. Recently, marketing and business guru Donald Miller highlighted how humility is something he looks for in employees of his, and that he often fires others for demonstrating pride and arrogance in the workforce. Humility listens to others' ideas, seeks to understand others, and submits to leadership. Pride refuses to do those things. You could be wrong. Others may know more. It is not admirable to be proud in the workplace. In fact, God opposes the proud, wherever they are.

RESPOND

Father,

Thank you for the healing you have brought about through your Son and by your Most Holy Spirit. Please help me not to be overwhelmed by confusion surrounding the Holy Spirit, but to know and enjoy Him as He is revealed in Scripture in my day-to-day living. Let me be led by him to expand the kingdom of your Son and to make disciples of those who hear the Spirit's call, repent and believe in Jesus, in whose name we pray,

Amen.

The Power to Transform

Acts 9:1-31 | November 03, 2019

CONNECT

“He’ll never change.” Have you ever said that about someone? Have you seen Christ transform someone like that before?

GROW

Read Acts 9:1-31 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

No one is too far gone.

Going back to the end of Acts 7, at the stoning of Stephen, we find an introduction to a young man named Saul (7:58-8:1). He was there, holding the coats of the murderers and giving approval of the wrongful death of Stephen due to Stephen’s allegiance to and proclamation of Jesus as the Christ. When Saul pops back up on the scene in this chapter, we see him “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (9:1).

Saul’s intentions, for those like us in our devotion to Jesus, are evil. He even went so far as to get a letter from the high priest of the day, giving him permission to seek these followers of Jesus out in order to imprison them for their faith...this was the reason for his traveling to Damascus.

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

2 Cor. 3:12-18; Heb. 12:1-2

Jn. 15:18-20; Lk. 23:26-56

Matt. 5:7; Rom. 8:17

Discussion

1. Who or what in today’s world can you compare Saul to in his heart intentions and in his actions?
2. Now, looking at our own hearts, how do we view those like Saul today? According to the Scriptures, how should we view them? Does it match up?
3. How can we better interact and engage with the “Saul’s” for the sake of the Gospel?

Change is possible through Christ.

“Christianity means change is possible. Deep, fundamental change. It is possible to become tenderhearted when once you were callous and insensitive. It is possible to stop being dominated by bitterness and anger. It is possible to become a loving person no matter what your background has been.” – John Piper

Acts 9:3-19 is divided into two conversations with Jesus. The first is between Jesus and Saul and the second is between Jesus and Ananias. In Saul’s conversation with Jesus we see him as the only one of his party who understands the words of Christ (Acts 22:9). Jesus clearly reveals who he is to Saul and then directs him to head into the city where he will receive further instructions.

But Saul was blinded from the light of the glory of the presence of Jesus and therefore had to be led by his co-persecutors into the city. John Stott notes that, “he who had expected to enter Damascus in the fullness of his pride and prowess, as a self-confident opponent of Christ, was actually led into it, humbled and blinded, a captive of the very Christ he had opposed.” This is how the Lord would have us come to him in faith and humility, completely depending upon him for salvation and everything else. Until one humbles himself, one will never move toward Jesus in saving faith.

Our Approach to Evangelism

Do we view evangelism as something only to do when we see someone else who is willing to consider Jesus? Or is there a place for us to speak to those who seem to be opposed to Jesus as well? Is it something we do only individually or is there a way for *us to do this together with other believers*? In the passage we see Saul, alongside the brothers, reasoning from the Scriptures that Jesus is indeed the Messiah to both those who would listen and to those who wanted to do harm to him. Through it all, the message of Jesus was known and the Church was strengthened!

Check out this article on evangelism to encourage and challenge us in our daily lives regarding our call to make the name of Christ known...

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-task-too-big-for-one>

Ananias was a faithful disciple of Jesus, living in Damascus, who also had a conversation with Jesus. The Lord gave him instructions to head to Saul and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight. But Ananias naturally had some objections because he had heard of this man and knew what his reputation was and the reason for him coming to Damascus. The Lord revealed to Ananias his purpose in saving Saul and what he had in store for him in the future for the sake of the Gospel. So Ananias, in faith and obedience, went to the house and laid his hands on Saul, prayed for him and embraced him as a brother in Christ.

How would your reaction be similar or different than Ananias’ reaction?

What is the root of Ananias’ and our doubts about the ability or lack of ability of other people to change?

Because we have been changed, we preach Jesus Christ.

After his conversion, Saul was baptized and regained his strength. He remained with the disciples in Damascus and “immediately began preaching Jesus in the synagogues” (9:20). The people were astounded when they heard him because they knew who he had been and why he had come to Damascus in the first place. Now, here he was speaking boldly the gospel he had come to silence. Saul with the greater wisdom from the Holy Spirit reasoned from the Scriptures proving to the people there Jesus was the Messiah—to the point where they sought to kill him!

After fleeing to Jerusalem and being vouched for by Barnabas, he was coming and going with the apostles in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. Equipped by his upbringing, Saul began to converse with and debate the Hellenistic Jews to the point that they also tried to kill him! Regardless of the opposition, Saul knew the power of the gospel in his life, so he proclaimed it to others no matter the cost. As a result, the church in the region was strengthened and the kingdom was expanding.

Have you experienced the same life change Paul has? If so, are you engaging in evangelism as one who has been truly changed by Jesus Christ?

What hope does this story give us for others?

²⁰ And immediately [Saul] proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

²¹ And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?” (Acts 9:20-21 ESV)

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

Every one of us has a role to play in the global mission efforts at MeadowBrook. We can pray that, through our gospel efforts, disciples from all nations might be made. We can send others either by helping finance trips or provide other needs for our mission teams. We can go and be the instrument through who God calls others into his kingdom and equips them for ministry. Inaction isn't an option. Everyone has a role. What's yours?

To be a part of fulfilling your global calling as a disciple of Christ at MeadowBrook contact Mike Niemi, Missions Pastor at mike@mbchurch.com and see what role to which God is calling you.

IN MINISTRY

Do people with less than stellar backgrounds intimidate you like Saul's did with the early disciples? Let this story encourage you that the Lord is powerful enough to transform them if we step out in boldness and faith. He doesn't always call us to be comfortable, but more often than not, uncomfortable.

Who are the Saul's in your life? Who may seem to be an enemy of the faith, but is actually a sheep who has yet to enter the sheepfold through Christ? Will you take a step of faith and prayerfully seek to engage them with the gospel, trusting the faithfulness of Jesus in that relationship?

AT HOME

Think through those who do not know Jesus and invite them into your homes for dinner or coffee, dessert and games. And as you do so, seek to turn the conversation toward Jesus.

Pray with your family ahead of time and afterwards. Explain to them that your motivation in having them over. Teach them what it looks to develop and deepen a relationship with others who have different beliefs than us, and that ultimately your desire is that they come to know and embrace Jesus as Lord. Show them that our homes are not forts in which we simply hole up and recharge, but a tool to leverage for the sake of the gospel!

AT WORK

Think through your circle of influence at work and pray for those who do not embrace Jesus as Lord. They may be living lives in complete opposition to Christ, but today's story gives us gospel hope for them. Begin praying for them and seek opportunities to reason with them from the Scriptures about Jesus.

If it helps, write their names down on an index card and stick it in your pocket where you will look at it every day to remind you to pray for them

RESPOND

Father,

Thank you for saving and transforming my life through the power of the gospel! Thank you for sending Jesus, the one and only Son, who you love, to live the life I couldn't live in perfect obedience to you, to die the death and pay the price that I should have paid for my sin, and to rise again, having victory over sin and death so that I and the rest of the world could have eternal life with you. Thank you that because of Jesus, even those that seem unlikely to trust in you, are not out of your reach and your power to save and transform. May you give us eyes to see those around us who do not know you and may you give us your heart for them. May we be faithful to call out to you on their behalf that they would be saved and may we obedient to live out and speak the gospel to them so that they can be saved. In the name of Jesus Christ who is still at work through his church, I pray, Amen.

The Gospel is For Everyone

Acts 9:32-11:18 | November 10, 2019

CONNECT

If you are confused about something or someone, what are the things you do to alleviate that confusion?

GROW

Read Acts 9:32-11:18 (Focus on chapter 10) and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

The Lord goes before us and invites us to join Him.

Cornelius was a Roman centurion who feared God. This meant he respected Jewish beliefs and customs. Despite this respect, he was nevertheless unwilling to become a full-fledged proselyte to Judaism. After a vision from God, he sent two of his servants and one of his soldiers to go and find Peter and bring him back to Caesarea. On the outset, Cornelius appears to us as much more likeable than Saul was when he was introduced, but he was still a Gentile and not a part of “God’s Chosen People”.

Miracles Among the People (Acts 9:32-43)

In his ministry, Peter traveled through several places and performed many miracles. The first miracle is the healing of a paralyzed man named, Aeneas, in the town of Lydda. This led to many people placing their faith in Jesus (9:32-35). The second miracle was the raising of the dead...a lady named Tabitha, in the city of Joppa (9:36-43). This too led to many people turning to Jesus for salvation!

What was the purpose of the miracles? Why do you think God sometimes works through miracles? Why not all the time?

The story of Cornelius shows us, however, that the Lord is at work throughout the world, even among those whom we would not expect. Who would have thought a Roman Centurion would have a heart for God? Yet our God is sovereign and powerful to transform hearts and lives. He doesn’t need us to do His work, but He does choose to use us to further His work in the world and for that we should be grateful and excited to join in!

Where do you see the Lord at work in and around you currently?

How can you be obedient and used by Him in the lives of those around you?

Don’t miss the Gospel for the appearance of cleanliness.

The next day about noon, Peter went to pray. He was hungry and fell into a trance where he saw a vision. In his vision was a large sheet coming down from heaven and in it were four footed animals and reptiles and birds...unclean animals. The Lord said to Peter, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat” (10:13), to which he refused on the basis of being ceremonially unclean. The Lord corrected him, “What God has made clean, do not call impure” (10:15). This exchange happened three times!

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

2 Cor. 3:12-18; Heb. 12:1-2

Jn. 15:18-20; Lk. 23:26-56

Matt. 5:7; Rom. 8:17

Peter, in his bid to be holy and pure before God, was missing the new covenant freedom and cleansing found in Jesus Christ. He was still living under the system that pointed to and was fulfilled in Christ. Peter soon realized that this vision wasn't about eating or not eating things that were "unclean," but rather about outsiders (Gentiles) who now had access to God through faith in Jesus and his gospel of salvation.

How do we sometimes fall into the trap of desiring to appear "clean" to the neglect of investing into messy relationships for the sake of others who might come to trust in Christ as their Savior and Lord?

The Gospel is for all peoples. Will you bring it to them?

Once Cornelius' men showed up at the house where Peter was staying, The Holy Spirit told him to go with the men because He had sent them. So Peter went to Caesarea, and when he arrived, he met Cornelius along with his relatives and close friends. Addressing the crowd, Peter said, "You know it is forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner, but God has shown me that I must not call any person impure or unclean." (10:28). Cornelius tells Peter about his own vision and tells him that he and his group are ready to hear what he has to say. *Think about that. We have the message people need to hear and truly desire to hear whether they know it or not. What implications does that have?*

Peter exclaimed, "Now I truly understand that God doesn't show favoritism, but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." He then proceeded to share the hope found in the Gospel with the crowd. While he was still speaking, the Holy Spirit moved in their hearts and these Gentiles began to declare the greatness of God in other known languages. And before it was all said and done, they were all baptized as believers and followers of Jesus! Peter and Cornelius' meeting was the orchestration of the Sovereign Lord. God purposed it not just to bring this man and his family to salvation in Jesus, but for their story to be known to the Church in those days and today. This story encourages us, as Gentiles, to be watchful for how the Lord is at work among other Gentile peoples of the world. He chooses to use us, His people, to engage the unreached with the message of the gospel! Jesus' promise that Gentiles would come to faith in Him (see John 10:9-16) was coming to fruition in this early church that begun to grow throughout the world, a growth which continues today.

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, there were skeptics. However, after explaining what had happened in Caesarea, they "became silent and they glorified God." (11:18). Like the parable of the lost sheep, there should be much rejoicing over sinners who find salvation through faith in Jesus (see Luke 15:1-7). Let us be about our Father's work of proclaiming salvation through faith in Jesus and calling sinners to repent and turn to Him so that we will have much to rejoice over with our King for eternity!

How can we better engage the nations with the gospel in our own community and abroad?

UPGs and the Gospel

An Unreached People Group (UPG) is a group of people in the world who share common language, culture, worldview, and religion where there is little to no access to the Gospel and in which there is not a sustainable church planting movement. The numbers hover around a little over 7000 UPGs with a range of population size between 3.2 – 4.3 billion people, the majority of whom are concentrated in the area of the world known as the 10/40 Window, which is home to the major world religions and highest percentages of persecution.

Two good places to start in understanding the scope of the task of the Great Commission are with the International Mission Board (www.imb.org) and Joshua Project (www.joshuaproject.net). You can also go to your App Store on your phone and download the Joshua Project "Unreached of the Day" app. This great tool will give you information on how to pray for a different UPG around the world every day!

¹⁸ *When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11:18 ESV)*

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

Along with our global trips, there are other ways to engage the nations with the Gospel that don't involve getting on a plane. The top two ways are through building relationships with the international students at Gadsden State or through serving refugees in the Atlanta area with our partners at Clarkston International Bible Church and Acts 17 Ministries.

If you want to make a global impact here in the States through one of these opportunities, email Mike Niemi at mike@mbchurch.com

IN MINISTRY

The Lord is at work in you and in those who are around you in our community. We just may not see it just yet.

Will you pray the Lord will open your eyes to see His hand at work and for a willing heart to engage them with the gospel?

When the opportunity comes, take it!

AT HOME

Do you like to walk for exercise or even drive around your neighborhood when the weather is good? As you do, would you pray? Would you pray that you would see your neighbors, who they are and where they are? It might just be that like Cornelius and his family, the Lord has begun to stir in them and draw them to Himself and He is going to open a door up for you and your family to engage them with the gospel so they can come to faith in Jesus! Will you pray to that end and actively look for those opportunities? And when they come, will you be obedient to befriend them and proclaim the story of Jesus? What a great example for your kids and grandkids to see lived out so that they will know how to live when they have families of their own one day.

AT WORK

Does your work require you to travel or engage people from other nations? Your job may be giving you access to unreached people groups. For example, at Honda you may from time to time interact with people from Japan, which is a country that is primarily unreached. Another would be working in our education system, especially at Gadsden State where many nations are represented. Through ongoing relationships and gospel conversations, God may use your job to bring the gospel to an unreached people group. How cool would that be!

*What nations does my job put me in contact with?
Are there any unreached people groups?*

RESPOND

Father,

We thank you that you are always at work in the lives of those around us, drawing them to yourself. May you open our eyes and our hearts so that we may see those around us and have your heart for them. May we see how you are working and be faithful to engage them with the truth of the Gospel in our lives and from our mouths. In Jesus name we pray,

Amen.

Antioch

Acts 11:19-30 | November 17, 2019

CONNECT

Col. Paul Tibbetts piloted the B-29 Superfortress “Enola Gay” that dropped the first atomic bomb used in WWII. Tibbetts’ physical ability was nothing compared to the atomic bomb (equivalent of 20,000 tons of TNT). How does that compare to us who proclaim the power of God to others through the gospel?

GROW

Read Acts 11:19-30 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

God’s unimaginable, unstoppable power is the source and fuel for the growth of His church.

Remember Acts 1:8? *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*



Jesus gave the Apostles a “prediction and a promise” (Peterson, PNTC: Acts, pg. 112). As we have seen in chapters 8 and 10, the gospel has spread from Jerusalem, Judea to Samaria (bringing peace between Jews and Samaritans) and to the Gentiles in Caesarea (bringing unity between Jews and Gentiles). But this has only been the beginning of something bigger than almost anyone could have expected! Now God has brought the transforming power of the gospel to Antioch, Syria! The church in Antioch will serve as a strategic “launch pad” for sending out missionaries to the ends of the earth!

Luke tells us that those *“who were scattered because of the persecution”* (19) that came after the stoning of Stephen shared about Jesus in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. The people who are sharing the gospel are not the Apostles. These are ordinary followers of Jesus. Oftentimes when we think about Matt. 28:18-20 (referred to as the Great Commission), we miss something extremely important. The act of sharing the gospel and making disciples is truly “Great” in the sense that it is the power of God at work through ordinary Christians to bring about salvation and transformation. *“The hand of the Lord”* (21) is another way to say the power of God (Exo. 9:3; Lk. 1:66; Acts 4:30, 13:11). These ordinary followers of Jesus shared about the Lord Jesus and the power of God was with them, just as God had promised (Matt. 28:20, Rom. 1:16). The result? *“A great number believed and turned to the Lord”* (21).

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

John 15:5; Matt. 28:18-20;
Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 5:21;
2 Tim. 2:1-2

The goal of the church is not conversions alone, it is making disciples.

The church in Jerusalem hears about the great numbers and sends Barnabas to evaluate its authenticity. This is a great reminder for us all! *“Test everything; hold fast to what is good”* (1 Thess. 5:21). High-attendance numbers do not mean something is sound in doctrine or pleasing to the Lord.

Barnabas *“saw the grace of God”* (23) and *“he was glad”* (23). The suffering the persecution of believers brought, uprooting these brothers and sisters from their homes, has now turned into an amazingly great event that brings people nearer to God! But with so many new conversions, Barnabas decides to stay and build them up in the faith.

He *“extorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose”* (23). The NET Bible translates this verse *“to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts.”* After such an awesome display of the Spirit bringing great numbers to faith, there is a temptation to relax our commitment and faithfulness to the Lord and become proud and lazy. Barnabas brings a strong encouragement to the believers in Antioch and to us to remain faithful and devoted in your walk with God. Don't let up and gloat over the fruit that has come but press onward to the finish. Hold fast to Him who is working so powerfully in and through you! The church needs laborers who are pouring into others and building up disciples to maturity in Christ.

Have you let up on your commitment and focus on the Lord and the work He has for you?

What caused you to lose focus?

What is so significant about Antioch?

Antioch was the 3rd largest city in the Greco-Roman world, with a population of approximately 600,000 people. It was a major hub for commerce and trade. Thus, there were numerous people coming in and out of Antioch, buying and selling goods and then going out to all parts of the world. What's even more interesting about Antioch is that it was a “melting pot” of all kinds of religious ideas, including the polytheistic worship of Greco-Roman culture. Within 5 miles, the same distance it takes to go from Gadsden to Attalla, was the city of Daphne, which was known for intense worship of Artemis, Apollos, and Astarte. Thus, the city of Antioch was covered with all kinds of ideas and practices that were in direct opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If God's people find their complete identity and purpose in Christ, then all believers, no matter their background, will be welcomed and embraced.

“And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians...So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.”(27)

The unbelieving community at Antioch begins to recognize that this group is not merely a sect of Judaism but a group defined by their fixation on Jesus. Wow! I pray that our church and the global church is known mainly for our exclusive focus on Jesus and nothing else. As the believers at Antioch continue to grow in Christ, Luke shows that the love they have for other brothers and sisters in Christ is growing. At hearing of the need the churches in Judea will have due to famine, which would be mainly ethnic Jewish believers, this new church in Antioch, which has a mix of Gentiles and Jews, doesn't hesitate to give an order to send relief. They weren't focused on the reasons why not to give. They were focused on the One who gave all for them! Because of Him, they knew they had been given more than they ever deserved. Setting their focus on the generosity and love of Christ was a catalyst to their generosity and love for others.

²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. (Acts 11:20-21 ESV)

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

Do you desire to be discipled by someone further along in their Christian walk?

Do you desire to fulfill the Great Commission through making disciples? Discipleship does not require special giftings. In Christ, we are all empowered and equipped to disciple. You may need training, and we can help. Are you ready to begin?

If either is you, email hunter@mbchurch.com or matt@mbchurch.com so they can connect you the right person.

IN MINISTRY

You are either growing, stagnant, or dead in your walk with Christ.

Where do you fit?

Laborers are desperately needed to disciple younger believers in maturing in Christ. We need to step up and start focusing on the purpose God has for each and every one of us.

AT HOME

"...saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts." (23)

How often has your family thought about the grace of God in our lives?

Read as a family and reflect on Eph. 2:1-9

In a family devotion, here are some questions to ask:

- What is our big problem?
- How does God solve it?
- What are ways that God has shown His "unmerited favor" to us?
- How does His grace motivate us to remain faithful and devoted to Him?

AT WORK

Is there a younger employee at work you can intentionally seek out to mentor in their career and also make them into a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Pray that God would put such a person in your path, and that he would give you favor in their eyes.

Your expertise in work gives you a pathway into the lives of younger employees in your field where you can make an eternal impact in their lives if you are intentional to seek them out.

RESPOND

Father,

You are unstoppable in your power and might! Nothing can ever compare with you! Give us more grace that we might be fixated on you this week. Reveal to us the sin that so easily entangles us that we might repent and grow deeper in our walk with you. Break our hearts for the lost and give us a passion to make disciples. In the name of Jesus Christ, who is at work powerfully, I pray,

Amen.

God's Power in Suffering

Acts 12:1-25 | November 24, 2019

CONNECT

Has there ever been something painful you have endured, yet after some time you saw the purpose in it?

GROW

Read Acts 12:1-25 and then highlight what stands out to you, explain what the author is saying in context, and then apply it to your life.

The enemies of God can never stop God.

Herod Agrippa I was the reigning “King” of Judea from 41-45 AD. Of course, the title “King” was used only because the Roman Emperor Caligula allowed it. As Luke shifts the focus from the growing influence of the ministry to the Gentiles to the believers in Jerusalem, we see the real struggles of the church amidst persecution and suffering. Herod Agrippa had a plan to wipe out with “violent hands” the growing movement of Christians by killing its key leaders. He has “James the brother of John” executed with a sword.

Why did Jesus let James die?

“Jesus let James die because he had a better life to give him. James was not being neglected by Jesus. He was in fact the first of the Twelve to experience what Jesus prayed for in John 17:24: “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me from the foundation of the world.” Peter’s deliverance from prison was remarkable. But he lived to die another day. James experienced the true deliverance: death being swallowed up by the Resurrection and the Life.

And that is what Jesus longs and intends to give to us too. That’s what he endured the Father’s wrath on the cross to purchase for us. He wants us to see and enjoy and rejoice in his glory forever.

There will come a time when Jesus’ prayer for us to be with him will overrule our prayer for prolonged earthly life. And when it does, we will experience a life so far better, richer, fuller, purer, and more joyful that we will shake our heads in wonder that we were ever reluctant to leave here.” - Jon Bloom,

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-night-the-angel-didnt-come>

H: Highlight

E: Explain the Text

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about ourselves?

What is the good news of this text?

A: Apply the Text

R: Respond to the Text

Additional Passages:

John 15:20, 16:33; Ps. 2

Jas 5:13-18; Matt. 6:1-15

James is the first Apostle to die and second key leader to be martyred in the movement. We don’t really know why Herod Agrippa desired to enact such a plan. Although, Luke does show us that “when he saw that it pleased the Jews” he went on to have Peter arrested. Thus, some scholars believe that he was attempting to gain leverage with Rome by gaining the support from his Jewish people (Peterson, PNTC, 360).

Imagine what Peter and the other believers must have felt at this moment after James’ death? We don’t really have any indication of how Peter felt with exception to the fact that he was “sleeping between two soldiers” when the angel came to break him out. But can you imagine being in his place? Your close friend and brother in Christ has just been executed and you are likely next.

Moreover, what did the group of believers feel back at John Mark's mom's house? Scared, desperate for God to do something? In the midst of the pain and fear of the believers in Jerusalem, God was with them and working out His plan without fail. Even though the situation may have looked bleak, God was using their suffering for a greater purpose than what was easily seen.

We need prayer and the prayers of others desperately.

"So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church."

When the church sees that another key leader is in prison, they meet at John Mark's mom's home and pray. Luke gives the indication that they almost immediately came together and began praying. We see that they pray with "earnest". *Ektenôis* is the word translated here as "earnest" indicating that they prayed eagerly and constantly (BDAG). Prayer is powerful because God is powerful! We don't always run to God when suffering comes. While there are many things that we can run to while enduring suffering (books, wise counsel of others, etc.), the first and regular place we must run is to God! His wisdom and power are greater than any collection of people's wisdom and power.

Notable Quotes about Prayer

"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work." — Oswald Chambers

"Prayer is the only entryway into genuine self-knowledge. It is also the main way we experience deep change—the reordering of our loves. Prayer is how God gives us so many of the unimaginable things he has for us. Indeed, prayer makes it safe for God to give us many of the things we most desire. It is the way we know God, the way we finally treat God as God. Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life." - Tim Keller

"What the Church needs to-day is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use – men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men – men of prayer." — E.M. Bounds

Of course, when we pray, we must believe that God can do anything! Nothing is too impossible for him! Yet He will do what is the best and the most wise thing to do in response to our request. James wasn't spared death at the hands of Herod Agrippa. That was God's best, wisest plan for him and God's own purposes. Yet Peter, is miraculously broken out of prison and then goes to the house where the prayer gathering is going on. The servant, Rhoda, answers the door, sees Peter, and is so overjoyed! Yet when she delivers the message to the rest of the house, they all say she is "out of her mind". When we pray, ask the Lord to give you the faith to belief that He can do it.

Who do you pray for regularly?

Who do you have praying for you?

God's work will continue whether we are a part of it or not.

Until the end, when Jesus returns, believers experience have suffering and persecution. But we know that the Lord will bring about His justice one day for those who are and continue to be His enemies! Herod was struck down by God because he had these people calling him a god. God's glory will not be shared! Do not mock him. And as Luke shows us, "the word of God increased and multiplied." God's Word continued to spread and lives continued to be transformed and the Kingdom continued to expand! We must choose whether we join Him in His work or not.

² He killed James the brother of John with the sword, ³ and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. (Acts 12:2-5 ESV)

SERVE

AT MEADOWBROOK

Many around us have experienced loss in a number of different ways that prevent them from gathering with the church. Our Allay Ministry seeks to lovingly watch over these folks who walk through these hard times in their senior years. Do you have a heart to check up on those who are no longer able to regularly fellowship with our faith family (through a card or a phone call or even a visit)? *If so, would you consider partnering with our Allay team led by Bill and Sandra Chance? To link arms with them, message Bill at bill@realtyplus-gadsden.com*

IN MINISTRY

God's plans will continue to be accomplished no matter what! The question is: Are we a part of the work he is doing?

How can you join the work God is already doing?

1. Organize a group to pray each week.
2. Spend time with God each day in the Word.
3. Share the gospel with lost people.
4. Look to be discipled by someone.
5. Look for someone to disciple.

AT HOME

"But the word of God increased and multiplied." (24)

How can your family join the work of God in your neighborhood?

- Reflect for a moment on Matt. 28:18-20.
- Ask in family devotion what are ways we are reaching people with the gospel?
- Are there people who don't know Christ close to our house?
- What can we do to join God's work?

AT WORK

Who are the lost people that you see each week on your list from last week?

- *Have you got into any spiritual conversations?*
- *Did you share the gospel?*
- *Do you need some help on what to say?*
- *How can we pray for you and the ministry God has for you at work?*

RESPOND

Father,

You are good, and you are sovereign. Your goodness is not dependent on my circumstances. Though my circumstances change, you are unchanging in your purpose and goodness. I trust in you in all my circumstances. May your truth win out over my feelings. May your hope win out over temptations to despair. Decrease my love for this world and increase my desire for the homeland which your Son is presently designing and building as my inheritance. In his glorious name I pray,

Amen.



MeadowBrook
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