



## The Heights Baptist Church

We Live to Tell • Acts 1:8 • 10/3/2021

### MAIN POINT

God's plan for spreading His gospel message is to use ordinary people as His witnesses, right where they live in community.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is the purpose of your church? What responsibility, if any, do we have to the community in which we live?**

**Knowing that Christ loves the church, to what, then, can you attribute as primary reasons why churches become ineffective and decline?**

**When you think of the Great Commission and Christ's command to evangelize the lost, do you think first of your community or faraway places in the world? Why?**

Dr. Tom Rainer writes, "The reality is that church decline is the collective result of individuals who have decided they will not 'go.' The church thus becomes a religious country club instead of an obedient Great Commission congregation." **J**esus established and commissioned His followers to take His message to the rest of the world. That begins right here, in our community, where we live.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 1:8.

**What did Jesus promise His disciples in Acts 1:8? What command did He then give them?**

**Why was the coming of the Holy Spirit essential to the disciples' obeying Jesus' Great Commission? How would the Spirit empower the disciples to carry out Jesus' mission?**

**How does this help us understand the role of the Spirit in our lives today? Why is He important for the ongoing mission of the church?**

Jesus connected the power to accomplish the commission He was giving with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' disciples were to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit to share the truth of the gospel locally and globally. The Spirit enables us to overcome our fears and to fulfill what Jesus has asked us to do.

**What is the significance of the places named in verse 8? Starting from where we are today, what places might correspond to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria?**

**Dr. Rainer identified Jerusalem as the immediate community of the church and noted, "In many of our churches, it is the most neglected part of our mission field." Why do you think the typical church member does not invest time in "going" in their communities?**

After giving His disciples this command, Jesus ascended to heaven, and His earthly ministry came to an end. Jesus' first disciples did not do the work of evangelism and making disciples in their own strength. The Holy Spirit empowered them with courage, love, and joy. In the same way, He empowers us today. The problem is when we do not truly believe others need the gospel and that Christ is the only way of salvation (John 14:6).

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 4:1-12.

**From these verses, what did Peter and John believe and how did those beliefs impact their "going"?**

**What were the various responses from the community when Peter and John witnessed to them about Christ? What does this tell you about "going" in your community? What is your responsibility? What is not your responsibility?**

**What was the significance of the question the council asked Peter and John in verse 7? Have you ever felt like you didn't have the authority to share the gospel because of a lack of education or position?**

It has been noted these other objections believers might have about “going” in their communities:

“That is not my spiritual gift.”

“That is what we pay our pastor and church staff to do.”

“I don’t have time.”

“I don’t want to impose my beliefs on others.”

“I am an introvert.”

**Which of these do you struggle with the most, and why is it not a valid excuse?**

**What are some ways that we can include talking about Jesus through our normal conversations?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 4:13-20.

**What do you think was the source of Peter and John’s courage? What did the crowd notice about Peter and John?**

**Do you notice a difference in your courage and enthusiasm for the gospel, depending on your location (i.e. on a mission trip vs. being at work; teaching VBS vs. coaching a Little League team)? Do you notice this same difference in Peter and John? Why not? How were they able to demonstrate the same courage and enthusiasm no matter where they went?**

**What does the fact that the men seemed so “ordinary” communicate about the work of God? In what ways can this encourage us in our relationship with God?**

**Read verses 18-20 again. How can this text have real-life application in your church and community today?**

Peter and John acted out of their belief that they were Christ’s witnesses in a dying world. Christ’s command to “go” usurped all fears and all other purposes for living they might have had. It has been said, “It is a sin to be silent when we have been commanded to speak. One person in one church can make a difference. One member committed to going can be a spark that ignites a fire. One person. You. It is time for all church members and believers to acclaim these words without hesitation: I will go.”

# APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How can you make your prayer life an instrument toward “going”?**

**Do your actions reflect the belief that Christ is the only way of salvation? Are you constantly and urgently going and sharing your faith in words and deeds?**

**Of the following actions of response, which are you already doing: pray for opportunities, invite people to church, intentionally look for opportunities, or be prepared to speak when the opportunity arises? Which do you sense God calling you to do going forward? How can this group help you in that?**

# PRAYER

Thank God that He uses ordinary people like you for the extraordinary purpose of sharing His Gospel throughout the world, starting right here in your community.

# COMMENTARY

| Acts 1:8

1:8. Some have suggested that this key verse of Acts may contain a threefold table of contents: Jerusalem, Acts 2:42–8:3; Judea and Samaria, Acts 8:4–12:24; ends of the earth, Acts 12:25–28:31. We cannot know if Luke had that kind of division in mind, but the book unfolds in a fascinating manner somewhat along that pattern. Notice that the call to witness is not limited to any select group of people, since it spreads from the apostles to the 120 believers and on throughout the pages of Acts. Nor can we restrict it only to service in our own churches or to some kind of “professional ministry.” Every believer should be a “world Christian,” able to function for the Savior from the other side of the street to the other side of the world.

| Acts 4:1-20

4:1-3. The religious authorities confronted and ultimately arrested Peter and John for unauthorized teaching about the resurrection from the dead by using Jesus as the example. The Sadducees in particular were provoked by this, for they did not believe in resurrection because they did not think it was taught in the Pentateuch, the only portion of the Hebrew Bible they acknowledged as authoritative (Mt 22:23). The apostles were held in custody overnight because

Sanhedrin trials were not conducted at night. Rome had granted the Sanhedrin legal authority over the temple area since disputes arising there were religious in nature rather than civic.

4:4. Repeated attempts to suppress the Christian message only caused it to spread more quickly. On Pentecost morning the believers in Jerusalem only numbered 120 (1:15). In response to Peter's sermon that day, another 3,000 were added (2:41). Now, with the healing of the lame man, Peter's sermon, and the arrest of the apostles, the church grew to about 5,000.

4:5-7. The parties listed in verses 5-6 represent all the most powerful players in the Jewish religious establishment. They made Peter and John stand before them, two men against all the powers of Israel. Ironic, therefore, that they asked the apostles by what power they had performed the miracle and preached the gospel. It was clear that the apostles, who shirked the traditional powers, considered themselves answerable to and empowered by a different authority.

4:8. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, a necessary prelude to his successful confrontation with the Jewish religious establishment.

4:9-10. Peter again emphasizes to a Jewish audience that Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom the nation had crucified, was raised from the dead by God. This same Jesus is the power by which the lame man was made healthy.

4:11. Peter again identifies Jesus with OT testimony by citing Ps 118:22. Though Jesus was a stone rejected by the Jewish leaders, God made Him the cornerstone (foundation) of the church. God's people, portrayed as a building, are both built on the foundation of Christ and are completed by Him. The word translated rejected carries the idea of rejecting with contempt, possibly referring to the crucifixion

4:12. Peter concluded by making clear the uncompromising claim of Christianity: There is salvation in no one else besides Jesus. This message rings throughout the NT. Jesus Himself said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn 14:6).

4:16-18. Remarkably, the Sanhedrin admitted that an obvious sign had been done through them (the apostles), and yet rather than repent and believe they focused on damage control among the people. They sought to halt the spread of Christianity at all costs, so they ordered the apostles not to preach or teach any more about Jesus. It seems they wished to guard their status as religious authorities even at the expense of obvious truth.

4:19-20. Peter and John's reference to what they had seen and heard included their experiences with Jesus plus what they had witnessed since the founding of the church at Pentecost. All told,

they had been eyewitnesses to many of God's revelatory acts.