

## REACHING THE WORLD GOD'S WAY

Today we begin the second to last section of our Through the Bible Series and we are calling this 7th section **Spirit and Truth**. This is **Week 38** of our reading plan and if you have stuck to the **F260 Plan** we gave you back in February you are now almost 3 quarters of the way through the Bible so I just want to congratulate you on reaching this incredible milestone that unfortunately not many have accomplished. So WAY TO GO those of you who have remained faithful in your reading!! I hope that God has given you a greater appreciation for His incredible word and our prayer is that this will be just the beginning of the many times you will attempt to read through the BIBLE! For those of you who have not been reading along with us or who have faded in your commitment or maybe this is your first time at VC, today is a great day to join with us as we begin a new section. You can start today with **Week 38** and make a commitment to finish the year strong by committing to the next 15 weeks. If you would like a reading plan you can pick that up at the **Next Area** or you can download the **Bible App** and search **F260** where you can follow along each day on your phone or personal device.

Over the next 9 Weeks we are going to be taking a look at God's greatest vehicle for taking the Gospel to the world. What is that vehicle? It is the CHURCH! The church is more than just a place we go to on Sunday to sing songs and listen to someone preach God's word. The Church is a living organism made up of followers of Jesus who have been filled with the Holy Spirit and have been given a directive not to just sit in buildings having weekly gatherings but who have been charged with the responsibility of taking the message of salvation to the world!!

After Jesus was resurrected from the dead and prior to His restoration of Peter that we looked at last week, Jesus gave His disciples WHAT He wanted them to do after He was gone.

**Matthew 28:16-20 (NIV) 16** Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Prior to His departure back to Heaven Jesus gave them HOW they were going to accomplish it.

**Acts 1:4-9 (NIV) 4** On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **5** For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." **6** Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" We, the church today, are asking a different question. "**Jesus when are you coming back to put an end to the craziness we see in our world?**" I believe His answer is the same for us as it was for His disciples. **7** He said to them: "It

is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” **9** After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

While we tend to be more focused on the END Jesus wants us to be more focused on the MISSION! What I want us to see this morning is this. What Jesus commanded His disciples to do was not just meant for those that He called while on earth. It is also His desire for us as well! So if you will turn to **Acts 2** we are going to take a look at 3 ASPECTS of the mission we are called to and how it is the Holy Spirit who will help us accomplish it. **(PRAY)**

First of all, I want you to notice that **because of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives we are to be His WITNESSES in this WORLD!**

**ACTS 2:1-3 (NIV) 1** When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

The Day of Pentecost is significant. **Pentecost means “fiftieth” and refers to the Feast of Weeks or Feast of Harvest** which was to be celebrated 50 days after the Passover. This is not a coincidence. Especially when we understand that Jesus through His death, burial and resurrection was our PASSOVER LAMB. It was during the Pentecost celebration which followed 50 days after the passover that an offering of firstfruits from the harvest was to be made. The significance of the Holy Spirit coming on this particular day signifies that the Holy Spirit is to be the firstfruits of what we inherit as believer’s when we choose to trust our lives to Jesus for salvation. It was also symbolic of the fact that those who were gathered into the church on that day were to be the firstfruits of a full harvest of believers that is still being gathered even to this day.

The use of WIND and FIRE to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit fits with the symbolism often used in scripture to describe the SPIRIT of God. It is important to note that what they saw was a visible phenomenon that God used to show them the Holy Spirit's arrival. This was a fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to His disciples in **John 16** that we talked about in **Week 5 of The Word Made Flesh**. This is what they were waiting for and now because of the Holy Spirit’s arrival in the lives of believers they are now to go and fulfill the Great Commission **(The Great Commission being to “Go and make disciples of all nations”)** From this moment in Acts 2 and moving forward all believers will receive as an inheritance of their faith the Holy Spirit. This is what Paul was saying to the Corinthians when he said this in 1 Corinthians 5.

**1 Corinthians 5:5 (NIV) 5** Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. He also made this clear to the Ephesians when he said this in Ephesians 1.

**Ephesians 1:11-14 (NIV)** **11** In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, God giving His people the PASSOVER and PENTECOST celebrations thousands of years prior to the arrival of Jesus and The Holy Spirit shows us that this was pre planned by God from the beginning. **12** in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. **13** And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, **14** who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. Notice the use of the words SEAL and GUARANTEE. This speaks to the security of what we have in Christ. Which means you cannot lose your salvation once you have obtained it because you have God's seal of approval that cannot be erased or canceled out. Our seal is the Holy Spirit which guarantees we are His until the day we enter glory with Jesus.

But I want you to notice that the Holy Spirit was given to them so that they could carry out the mission, not so they could stay where they were! **Acts 1:4-5 & 8 (NIV)** **4** On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **5** For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." .....**8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

It is fitting that the Holy Spirit is being described as a mighty rushing wind. Just like the wind He comes out of the heavens and fills the earth. He moves at will. He cannot be contained. He is commanded by no one. He is at the service of man, but He will do what He wants, not what we want. Like God the Father He is omnipresent and all powerful. Another description we are given upon His arrival is that of fire. Fire begins small but it soon spreads to consume everything in its path. It burns up. It purges. It illuminates. And it warms. But unlike real fire the Holy Spirit cannot be put out.

This is the power that has been given to those of us who have trusted our lives to Jesus. And it is in this power that we are to be His witnesses in our community, in our nation and ultimately the world. He is meant to be exercised and unleashed in our lives. He has not been given to us so we can sit idle waiting to die or for Jesus to return. He has been given to activate us on mission. There is no greater joy than seeing the reality of God working through your life. The excitement of the life of Christ is when you and I are doing things beyond our own strength and understanding and we know it is without a shadow of a doubt God working in and through us.

**How are you participating in the mission? Are you participating in the mission?** If you are bored with your Christian faith it may be because you have never activated your faith by stepping into the gift you have been given and letting the Spirit of Jesus loose in your life. This is what you have been empowered for if you have trusted in Jesus!

Secondly, I want you to notice that **because of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives we are ALL to be PREACHERS of the GOSPEL**

**ACTS 2:4 (NIV) 4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

When the Spirit of God is in our lives we cannot shut Him in, we must let Him out! (Just like you cannot restrain the wind you cannot restrain the Holy Spirit) In fact, all the Spirit wants to do is brag on and bring glory to Jesus! Everything the Holy Spirit does is to draw attention to Jesus. In that gathering on that day were people from all different places and who spoke different languages and not even a language barrier could keep the message of Jesus from being spoken. **Acts 2:5-12 (NIV) 5** Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. **7** Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? **9** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome **11** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" **12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" This was a statement that from now on God's people would come from all nations and this moment marked a transition in the redemption story. Rather than be carried by Israel as it was up to this point, the church would now assume a prominent role in taking the message of salvation to the world. It was no longer just an Israel thing, but now all the gentiles would be welcomed in fully. Not only welcomed, but called to be a part of the mission of reaching the lost for Jesus! This was the blessing God was referring to when He said to Abraham in **Genesis 12** that "in you all the families of the earth would be blessed."

When the Spirit of God is in our lives He wants to do nothing more than promote and point people to Jesus. Think about it! When you look at the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5** what do you see? You see Jesus! **Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Self-control.** All of these elements and manifestations of the Spirit were exhibited in the life of Jesus. Remember what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in John 16. **John 16:12-15 (NIV) 12** "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **13** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. **14** He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. **15** All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

The Holy Spirit wants to preach Jesus; we just have to let Him loose. Our lives should be Bibles that are preaching Jesus to those whom our life comes in contact with. **2 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NIV) 1** Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? **2** You yourselves are our letter, written on our

hearts, known and read by everyone. **3** You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Paul is making the point that the transformed lives of the Corinthian church was an eloquent testimonial more powerful than words on a page. Their changed lives, which was the work of the Holy Spirit, was an open letter that could be seen and read by all men as a testimony to Paul's faithfulness and the truth of his message.

**William J Toms** said this, "Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some person ever reads."

You see, you may never be called to be a pastor or you may never stand before a group of people and preach or teach in a formal church setting but that doesn't mean you are not called to preach and tell others about the good news of Jesus. If you have the Holy Spirit you have what you need and we are ALL called to do it because we have ALL (who believe) have been sent.

**Romans 10:14-15 (NIV) 14** How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? **15** And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Lastly, I want you to notice that **because of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives we are to call people to RESPOND.**

**ACTS 2:37-41 (NIV) 37** When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" When you encounter the word of God, the message of salvation. You are called to respond! There is a choice before you. **38** Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." **40** With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." **41** Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

We can preach but nothing changes until people respond and if that is true we must call people to action. Everything we do as a church and as disciples of Jesus revolves around two important responses that we must be willing to make and that we must lead others to make.

**Repentance** requires a confession of sin (agreement with God) and a desire to change and begin to allow God to bring about those changes. Forgiveness is immediate but sanctification is a process that comes through surrendering your life to the Holy Spirit and walking with Jesus through His word and in fellowship with other believers.

**Baptism** is you making a statement and drawing a line in the sand that you really do want to follow Jesus and to be identified with Him. Public baptism is not what saves you but it is a vital

part of your faith journey because it is through Baptism that you are saying that you want the accountability of other believers in helping you pursue a sanctified life. The public part invites accountability and moves it from private to out into the open. Which btw, is necessary if we are going to join in the mission. We say this all the time. Baptism becomes your first step of obedience to following Jesus. It's kind of like the stock market. When a company is private, it only has but so many resources and influence. But when it goes into the open market then it has more opportunity for growth because it's in the open and everyone knows about it. This is true for us as followers of Jesus as well.

Baptism is a gateway to DISCIPLESHIP. Discipleship is the vehicle the Holy Spirit uses to draw the lost to Christ, to make disciples, to grow believers, and to glorify God. Discipleship is intentional and means truly opening up your life for others to invest in. This involves relationship/family and is an everyday thing. This doesn't happen if we do not go public!

Preaching and calling people to respond is not just the job of a pastor or of the professional missionary. This is all of our jobs as we allow the Holy Spirit to work through our relationships. You see, the Gospel came to you and it is heading to someone else. Will you be on mission for Jesus?

## **Worship Comes Back Up**

### **Invitation:**

Have you been BAPTIZED?

When was the last time you helped someone come to Jesus? You see there is a fine line between just doing ministry and truly engaging in the mission. Engaging in the mission is where we allow our life to be a witness in the world, where we preach the Gospel and where we call people to respond? Our job is to obey the Holy Spirit and it's the Holy Spirit's job to change people's lives

When was the last time you listened and responded to the Holy Spirit?

Every desire we have isn't a Holy Spirit desire. So how can we tell the difference?

Here are some prompts to evaluate if it is you or the Holy Spirit:

- 1) If your desire keeps you in your comfort zone it isn't the Holy Spirit. He will always move you out of your comfort zone so you will have to lean on Him.
- 2) If it is drawing attention to you and not drawing attention to Jesus it isn't the Holy Spirit. He will always seek to highlight Jesus and bring Him glory.

- 3) If you do not experience unexplainable peace it isn't the Holy Spirit. He will always give you peace that comes from a confidence that God is in control.
- 4) If your action violates God's word it isn't the Holy Spirit. He will never lead you to violate God's word.

The Holy Spirit always leads us with a gentle whisper and never through guilt or ultimatums. This requires us to intentionally listen and be ready to be obedient, making the most of every opportunity. We must be in God's word and we must be willing to respond by faith.