

The Church Was Never Meant to Stay

There is a moment in the book of Acts that truly grabs your attention when you read it carefully enough. Jesus has risen from the dead. He has spent forty days on the earth appearing to hundreds of witnesses, speaking about the Kingdom of God. And right before He ascends into heaven, His disciples pull Him aside with a question burning in their hearts. They ask Him whether He is finally going to restore the kingdom to Israel. It is a question loaded with nationalism, politics, and religious expectation. It is, at its core, a question about them.

Jesus' answer reframes everything.

He tells them it is not for them to know the times or dates the Father has set. And then, in what can only be described as one of the most expansive redirections in all of Scripture, He says this: ***you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*** (Acts 1:8).

Their question was small. His answer was global.

This is the tension every follower of Jesus must wrestle with. We are prone to thinking in small circles, our families, our neighborhoods, our churches, our cities. And while all of those things are important, the heart of God has always been fixed on something far larger. He is thinking in terms of nations. He is thinking in terms of generations. He has the whole world in His sights!

Power for a Purpose

The word Jesus uses in Acts 1:8 when He speaks of power comes from the Greek word *dunamis*. We often hear that word and picture something explosive, something dramatic. But *dunamis* is better translated as 'ability.' Jesus is not simply promising a spiritual moment. He is promising to give

us the ability to do what He is calling us to do. He is saying that the Holy Spirit will equip us to be witnesses, not just in our immediate surroundings, but to the ends of the earth.

This matters because so many believers carry a quiet fear about how big the calling is. The idea of crossing cultural lines, boarding planes, learning new contexts, speaking into unfamiliar places, it can feel overwhelming. But the promise of **Acts 1:8** is that this was never meant to be done in our own strength. The infilling of the Holy Spirit is not just for our personal comfort or spiritual experience. It is for others. It is the enabling grace that moves us from walking to running, from timid to urgent, from inward-focused to outward-focused.

What Happens When We Stay Too Long

The early church learned this lesson through difficulty. In the years following Pentecost, the church in Jerusalem was thriving. Thousands were being saved. People were ***devoted to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to breaking bread, and to prayer***. It was, by any measure, a flourishing community.

But they were staying in Jerusalem.

Jesus had said Jerusalem **AND** Judea **AND** Samaria **AND** the ends of the earth. Not Jerusalem alone.

Acts 8:1 records what happened next. A great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. What looks at first like a catastrophe turns out to be a catalyst. The people who were scattered did not go quietly. **Acts 8:4** says they preached the word wherever they went.

One of those scattered believers, a deacon named Philip, went down to a city in Samaria. Healings took place. People were saved and baptized. The Holy Spirit moved. And the result, recorded plainly in **Acts 8**, is that there was great joy in that city. Philip then traveled further south and encountered an Ethiopian official, led him to faith in Christ, baptized him on the spot, and

that man carried the gospel back to Ethiopia, becoming the first to bring the good news to an entirely new nation.

One person, scattered from his comfort zone, changed the trajectory of an entire country.

This is the multiplication God is after. Not just a growing church in one city, but a gospel that spreads like fire across regions and nations and peoples. The early church did not plan this. They were pushed into it. But when they went, God moved!

A Church of Windows, Not Mirrors

There is a phrase worth sitting with: ‘we need to be a church of windows, not mirrors.’ A church that is constantly looking inward, measuring its health by its own satisfaction, asking ‘what’s in it for us’, is a church that has turned into a mirror. It only sees itself. But a church of windows is one that looks upward toward Jesus and outward toward the world. It measures itself not by how comfortable it has become but by how faithfully it is advancing the Kingdom of God beyond its own walls.

The church at Antioch in **Acts 11** and **13** is the clearest picture of this in the New Testament. It was a base church, one that existed for the benefit of others, that sowed its people into new regions and nations, that sent out people at a significant cost to itself. Remarkably, that church met in a cave! The congregation was small, but the impact was enormous. Because they understood that they were called to impact the world for the Gospel.

How to Grow in a Going Culture

Growing in a going culture is not reserved for apostles and church leaders, it belongs to every believer. Here are a few practical places to start.

- Pray for the nations first. Before you pray for yourself, pray outward. Start with the people furthest from you and work your way inward.

Something shifts in us when we begin our prayers with the world rather than ourselves.

- Put a global map somewhere visible. In your home, your office, your car. It is a daily reminder that God's heart is bigger than your current four walls.
- Start a 'nations fund'. Even a few dollars a month set aside with the specific intention of supporting and going to be a part of global church plants is an act of faith. When faith meets action and is watered by prayer, God does extraordinary things!

Go. Pray for nations, yes. But then go! There is no substitute for the experience of stepping into a new culture and seeing God move among people who speak a different language, carry a different history, and yet hunger for the same Jesus.

The church was never meant to stay. It was meant to scatter, to preach, to witness, and to see cities and nations transformed by the power of the Gospel! That calling has not expired. It belongs to us now.

Ask God where. Then go!...