

COVENANT — THE FIRST CHURCH

Jesus' Great Commission

LESSON 01

JUNE 07, 2026

LESSON TEXT

Acts 1:1–14

FOCUS VERSES

Acts 1:6–8

⁶When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

⁷And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

⁸But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

Jesus commissioned us to share His covenant with the world.

MY RESPONSE TO COVENANT

I will establish the King's kingdom on earth.

COVENANT CONTEXT

Although Jesus' earthly ministry had come to an end, His covenant with humanity continued in a new, closer way. He promised He would continue to dwell among His people by filling us with His Holy Spirit. As the Book of Acts demonstrates, He will give us power through His Spirit to be witnesses and make disciples for Him.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: What subject could you talk about for an hour right now with no preparation?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to our calling to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. JESUS' CHARGE

A. The Power of the Spirit

DISCUSS: *When you think about the power that comes with God's Holy Spirit, how does that power show up in your daily life?*

B. The Spread of the Gospel (I)

- C. I will share the gospel with my family, friends, and neighbors.

***DISCUSS:** Besides speaking, what are some ways you can be a witness on a daily basis with your actions and lifestyle?*

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- A. Spiritual Power Versus Political Power

***DISCUSS:** How does a shift in mindset away from political or earthly power and toward spiritual power change how you think about power?*

- B. I will invest my life and resources in the kingdom of God.

***DISCUSS:** What are some of your life's resources (time, talent, and treasure) that you can invest into God's kingdom?*

III. ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM

- A. Sharing the Gospel

- B. Making Disciples (V)

***DISCUSS:** What does making disciples look like after someone has experienced the new birth?*

- C. I will make disciples for Jesus.

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us see the Holy Spirit's transformation in every aspect of our lives
- For God to help us to be witnesses not just with our words, but with the entirety of our lives

LESSON CONNECTION

Bridget worked as a finance counselor for a large university on the West Coast of the United States. For the most part, she enjoyed her job. The pay and benefits were generous for her area. She was comfortable in her knowledge of her subject matter, and she found a sense of accomplishment in guiding students in making wise financial decisions.

However, Bridget was not passionate about finance, nor was she overly passionate about higher education. Bridget was an artist. Her nights and weekends were consumed with all things artistic. She enjoyed finding new and unique ways to convey the images in her head onto canvas. Acrylics worked just fine if she did not have much time, but she also experimented with watercolor, oil, pastels, ink, and even charcoal. She also enjoyed restoring old furniture and turning discarded appliances and housewares into expressive art displays. When she needed a new blouse or dress for a special occasion, she preferred to make her own rather than browsing online clothing retailers. If nothing else, her hands found themselves crocheting or knitting unique items for whatever gift-giving holiday was next. Her art had found its way into local coffee shops and tourist attractions, and she happily manned a tent at local and regional art shows to display and sell her work.

One weekend a visitor showed up at Bridget's church. Bridget introduced herself warmly to the young lady, welcoming her to the church. During small talk, the visitor asked Bridget what she did for a living. Without

thinking, Bridget replied, “I’m a finance counselor.” Bridget’s husband overheard her comment and quickly interjected, “No, she’s not, she’s an artist; finance is just her job.” The group shared a hearty laugh, and Bridget’s husband proceeded to brag on his wife’s accomplishments until she turned red with embarrassment.

Later Bridget reflected on what her husband had said at church. While he had commented lightheartedly, she realized there was truth in his words. At her core, she was an artist. Her identity as an artist showed up in every area of her life. Her artistic touch showed up at her work office, where the walls were plastered with stunning pieces she had created to assure and inspire students. Her artistry consumed her free time as she often spent quality time with friends in art galleries. Even at church, her pastor had harnessed her talent to create all of the church’s social media graphics.

Bridget could see a spiritual analogy immediately. Just like her artistry touched every aspect of her life because that was who she was at her core, her identity as a follower of Jesus Christ also touched every aspect of her life. Even before she was an artist, she was a Christian. She knew that the Holy Spirit within her was designed to permeate every aspect of her being. Therefore, her thoughts, emotions, actions, relationships—yes, even her art—were different because of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

She bowed her head and silently prayed: *Lord, if I allow the artistic gift You gave me to show up in all aspects of my life, let Your Holy Spirit show up even more so. I am an artist only by Your grace and mercy so I may be a witness to You in this world.*

BIBLE LESSON

I. JESUS’ CHARGE

Shortly before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He gathered His faithful followers together and gave His final words, a sure guarantee. They would receive the Holy Spirit and the power that only comes through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This promise reminded His followers that God’s covenant relationship with His people was not over with the conclusion of Jesus’ earthly ministry. God had always desired to dwell among His people and He would continue to be right there in their midst. Just as God once walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, tabernacled Himself in the center of the Israelite camp, and became incarnate in human flesh, God would continue His eternal covenantal practice of abiding among His beloved.

A. The Power of the Spirit

Luke recorded Jesus’ charge at the beginning of the Book of Acts, providing the context for every other event recorded in Acts. From the early outpouring in the upper room to Paul’s witness in Rome and everything in between, none of the events of Acts would have been possible without the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was necessary not only to give Jesus’ followers power but also to provide them with direction and clarity.

Jesus plainly told His followers they would not understand the things that are in God’s power, which includes knowledge of “the times or the seasons” (Acts 1:7). God’s Spirit would provide power for a different, albeit specific purpose: to be witnesses unto Jesus Christ. Being filled with the Spirit’s power mandates that we understand and

accept our roles as Spirit-filled witnesses, all the while understanding that not *all* God's power has been given to us. For example, God gives us power to testify to others of the grace of God, but He has not given us power to walk on water.

***DISCUSS:** When you think about the power that comes with God's Holy Spirit, how does that power show up in your daily life?*

B. The Spread of the Gospel

(I) Jesus charged His followers to be witnesses to all people in the known world, starting locally in Jerusalem, moving regionally into Judea, breaking social barriers into Samaria, and then into the furthest reaches of the earth. The geographic outline of the Book of Acts mirrors this pattern. What began in Jerusalem in Acts 1 rapidly expanded until this miracle-filled book concluded in Rome in Acts 28.

While some of Jesus' followers may have been surprised at Jesus' encouragement of a worldwide witness, those knowledgeable of Old Testament prophecy would have recognized salvation for all peoples was always part of God's covenantal plan. Abraham received one of the earliest prophecies of this promise: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). Peter quoted this promise in Acts 3:25 and Paul quoted it in Galatians 3:8. In both places, it was used to invoke the continuation of God's ongoing covenant relationship with humanity.

Other Old Testament passages also foresaw the eventual salvation of all Gentiles. Psalm 22:27 prophesied: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD." Isaiah 49:6 foretold that the coming Messiah would be "a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Malachi 1:11 promised the Lord's "name shall be great among the Gentiles." Memorably, the prophet Jonah begrudgingly witnessed to Nineveh, the capital of the Gentile kingdom of Assyria, and thousands of Gentiles received a taste of God's grace and mercy that was later fully realized in the Book of Acts.

C. I will share the gospel with my family, friends, and neighbors.

As believers who seek to be like the New Testament church in Acts, we are now called to receive the Holy Spirit, the indwelling presence of God. However, being filled with God's Spirit comes with a responsibility to be a witness to all with whom we interact. The indwelling Holy Spirit permeates our entire being, influencing our thoughts, words, emotions, actions, and lifestyles. Thus, we are called to be witnesses with our entire being. We often associate being a witness with speaking, but we also witness by what we think about and dwell on, what we care about, how we respond to others, how we live in an unholy world. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to saturate us until we are witnesses with every part of our lives.

***DISCUSS:** Besides speaking, what are some ways you can be a witness on a daily basis with your actions and lifestyle?*

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The statement that God is on our side is somewhat of a misnomer. It is more accurate to say we need to make sure

we are on God's side by living as citizens of His kingdom. Yes, if we are filled with His Holy Spirit and endeavoring to do His will, then He is on our side, but before that happens, we must make sure we are on His side, living in covenantal relationship with God Almighty.

Jesus encouraged His followers to pray for God's kingdom to reign on the earth and to pursue God's kingdom first and foremost. (See Matthew 6:10, 33.) By shifting humanity's focus away from the temporal and onto the eternal, Jesus hoped we would reprioritize our covenant relationship with God, correctly bringing our thoughts and actions in line with God and His will.

A. Spiritual Power Versus Political Power

The question the disciples asked in Acts 1:6 betrayed a sad reality: Despite hearing Jesus' teachings, seeing His miracles, and even witnessing His resurrection, the disciples were still looking for Jesus to sit on a throne in the heart of Jerusalem and set up His earthly kingdom. Jesus' response was a gentle reminder not to be concerned with such things because that power was not granted to them.

The two references to *power* in verses 7 and 8 provide an important distinction regarding God's kingdom and the power He gives us. His responsibility is overseeing the times and seasons, such as setting up kingdoms and bringing them down. He has not granted that power to humanity. Jesus' statement would have reminded His audience of the prayer in Daniel 2:21, which affirmed that only God could change "the times and the seasons," and only God "removeth kings, and setteth up kings." The Jews in the first century would have loved to overthrow Rome, but that was not up to them; that power belongs to God.

By contrast, the power granted to us is for the specific purpose of being witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world. This commission crosses language lines and national borders by calling Spirit-filled followers into "the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). God's kingdom on earth would not come by military campaigns and conquests, but by His Spirit encompassing the entire globe.

***DISCUSS:** How does a shift in mindset away from political or earthly power and toward spiritual power change how you think about power?*

B. I will invest my life and resources in the kingdom of God.

We are most in tune with God's Spirit when we get right what the disciples initially got wrong: We must understand what power belongs to us and what power belongs only to God. When we operate in our assigned roles—we invest all we are and everything we have into God's kingdom—we are acting in covenant with God. Just as Jesus gave His all for us by dying for our sins, rising again to conquer death, and abiding with us through the Holy Spirit, so now we give our all by being witnesses with our whole being. Such is the nature of our covenant relationship with God; He gave His all, and in response we give our all.

***DISCUSS:** What are some of your life's resources (time, talent, and treasure) that you can invest into God's kingdom?*

III. ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM

By filling us with His Spirit, God writes His covenant on our hearts. (See Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10.) Until Jesus does set up His royal throne in the heart of Jerusalem, God's kingdom is established in our hearts. When we seek to bring people to Jesus by sharing the gospel and making disciples, we are actively participating in establishing God's kingdom. We are seeing our prayers answered before our eyes as God's kingdom comes and His will is done. (See Matthew 6:10.)

A. Sharing the Gospel

The gospel message is simply defined as the good news of Jesus Christ, who died to pay the price for our sins, was buried for three days, and rose again to offer us new life in Him. We share the gospel with our words but also with our testimonies: the testimony of how He saved us from our sins and the testimony of our example. As the adage goes, "Actions speak louder than words," so our consistent testimony of a Christ-honoring lifestyle sometimes speaks louder than our words. In fact, Jesus taught in Matthew 5:14 that people may see our good works first before they glorify our great God.

(V) B. Making Disciples

Everyone who has been born again is called to make disciples of those who are not yet born again. In his book *Follow to Lead*, Stan Gleason writes that we should make strangers friends and friends disciples. It is difficult to disciple someone to Jesus if we do not even know them yet. Make a friend. Go out for coffee, invite them to dinner, ask them if you can pray for anything for them. Be genuinely interested in people. Making disciples often starts with making friends.

Making disciples includes sharing the gospel with others and teaching them how to rightly respond to the gospel according to Acts 2:38: Repent of your sins, be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost with the initial sign of speaking with other tongues. But that is only the beginning. Biological birth is necessary for human life, but parents must nurture and grow their baby to maturity. Similarly, part of the believer's role as a witness in God's kingdom is mentoring, training, and teaching new believers to a mature relationship with Jesus. After someone experiences new birth, the church is responsible for nurturing and training him or her to grow and continually become more like Christ.

DISCUSS: *What does making disciples look like after someone has experienced the new birth?*

C. I will make disciples for Jesus.

Stan Gleason compared making disciples to the first-century relationship between rabbis and disciples. He wrote that rabbis would "spend their lives teaching, training, imparting, and sharing their lives, values, and principles. This is how the Lord Himself lived, and His disciples followed His model during their ministries" (Stan Gleason, *Follow to Lead*). Making disciples is all about relationships.

Just like Jesus and His disciples, we are now commissioned to make disciples. (See Matthew 28:19.) This includes teaching and encouraging fellow believers and training new converts on how to live in covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, even after their initial new-birth experience. The commission to make disciples and to be witnesses go

hand in hand. As we bear witness to the saving message of Jesus Christ, we will naturally make disciples. By fulfilling these commissions, we participate in establishing God's kingdom on earth. All of us who are Spirit-filled should continually rededicate ourselves to these great commissions.

***Teacher Option:** Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how our true passion should be to witness for Jesus Christ. The following story may be a continuation of the Lesson Connection or a stand-alone story.*

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Not everyone will have the artistic talent and drive of Bridget, the young lady from the opening story. However, many people can identify with having a deep-rooted passion for a topic or subject matter. For some, their passion may be business related, while others are deeply passionate about education. Some may find their passion in playing an instrument, while others might be passionate about building things with their hands. If you are not sure what your passion is, ask yourself: What subject could I speak on for an hour right now with no preparation? If you can answer this question, you might have found your passion.

Our passions typically consume the majority of our time. This is why our relationship with God must be our highest passion. God may not be calling us to give up our passions of business, construction, education, or art. As Spirit-filled witnesses, our relationship with God must show up in every aspect of our lives. Does the art we create reflect a deep-rooted relationship with God? Does how we treat our employees and do business reflect a pure heart that only comes from being in right relationship with God? Can we find ways to honor God and be Spirit-filled witnesses to our coworkers, regardless of our profession? Can we be witnesses unto God on the golf course as well as in the sanctuary?

Bridget changed her language after that interaction. She no longer introduced herself as a finance counselor. Instead, she described her profession with a bold proclamation: "I'm an artist." Her shift in mindset also changed how she spoke about God. She no longer simply told people she went to church as if that were the mundane summary of a boring Christian walk. She told anyone who would listen how much she loved God and how He had changed everything in her life for the better. Her coworkers, students, and art patrons noticed a difference in how she conducted herself as they observed the Holy Spirit radiating through every aspect of her life. Her thoughts and emotions were holier. Her speech was purer.

Her ability to spread the gospel and make disciples was exponentially revolutionized when she realized that, at her core, she was a witness. She was not only a finance counselor or even an artist. She was a blood-bought child of the King of kings, a citizen of God's kingdom, filled to overflowing with the power-instilling Spirit of Almighty God. And she was living every day so others could have the same encounter with God she had.