

January 5, 2025 (Unit 29, Session 1)

## **Jesus Gave His Followers a Mission**

(Acts 1)

Today's passage is found in the first chapter of the book of Acts. Although Jesus' time on earth was coming to an end, He promised to leave for His followers a special Helper and Guide. God fulfilled His promise to remain with us, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit, He also provided the power to accomplish the mission of His church.

What was Jesus' overall mission for His church? Better yet, how were the apostles supposed to accomplish this feat in Christ's absence?

Jesus' departure meant great uncertainty for His people. He proclaimed the restoration of God's kingdom, but His apostles could not seem to recognize His power at work. Though they requested a timeline for their troubles, the Lord directed their attention away from the passage of earthly time and instead toward the power of His Holy Spirit.

As He did with His early followers, the Lord has called us to be witnesses of His good news to the world. He may not give us the answer to every one of our questions, but He does give us the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim His good news with our words and actions. From Judea to Samaria, near and far, there is no place His power and purpose cannot reach. Knowing we lack the ability to do His will on our own, He provided His Holy Spirit to aid us on this mission. Jesus even declared in John 16:7 that it is better that He leave us and grant us the Spirit's power in His place.

As you talk with your kids this week, consider the truth that the Holy Spirit has already provided us the strength needed to witness to the next generation of Christ followers. While we may not understand His timing or plans, we can trust in His ability to provide what is needed to do His will. Help your class see that the Holy Spirit empowers us to face life's uncertainties and to live on mission for His kingdom, leading others to place their trust in the God who provides all we need.

January 12, 2025 (Unit 29, Session 2)

## **The Disciples Replaced Judas**

(Acts 1)

In the latter half of Acts 1, Jesus' eleven disciples were at a turning point in their ministry. Jesus had ascended to heaven, and His followers recognized the gap Judas left. They came together, united in mission and motive as they waited for the promised Holy Spirit.

How did the disciples take their next step without Christ's physical presence guiding them like before? To what did they cling for hope and clarity?

Verse 14 explained that a zealous prayer life knitted together the eleven disciples and their fellow believers. This eagerness to commune with the Father not only bound them together in fellowship; it also unified them as they sought out the next leader to take Judas Iscariot's place. While they followed Jesus' command to wait in Jerusalem, the disciples leaned on God's Word as the cornerstone of their faith. Peter stood up among their community of believers, reminding them of Scripture's supremacy and foresight. He reassured them of the Holy Spirit's movement throughout the Old Testament and emphasized His presence and guidance amidst this new turning point for the church.

Continuing to unite themselves in prayer, they sought out the next apostle to join them as a leader. They trusted the character and direction of the God whom they served and called for Matthias to join them. Through prayer and meditation over God's Word, they were certain about the call on this new disciple's life.

Consider the example set by the early church in Acts 1. When they found themselves at a crossroads, they turned to the same resources we have available today: prayer, biblical community, Scripture, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As you prepare to lead your kids this week, be encouraged that you are using the same tools to prepare for your family ministry as the early church used. God is faithful to use us for His kingdom purposes just as He faithfully used the early church to complete the mission He gave them.

## **The Holy Spirit Came**

(Acts 2)

In Acts 2, we find the fulfillment of Jesus' promise from Acts 1:8. Jesus' followers devoted themselves to one another and to His mission, and we can observe their unity in the first verse of this passage. They experienced the power of the Holy Spirit together as a church body unified by more than mere proximity.

What was the significance of the Holy Spirit's arrival on the day of Pentecost? How did His presence lead to the furtherance of Christ's mission? Many devout Jews traveled to Jerusalem to observe the harvest festival as usual, but the Holy Spirit offered new meaning to their celebrated traditions of old. On this day of celebrating God's provision through the old covenant, Pentecost now signified the new covenant made possible through faith in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit's presence meant that Jesus kept His promise to provide comfort and help. His provision came as His Spirit fell upon them in this new, tangible way. With visions of fiery tongues and the sound of rushing wind, the room where the followers expectantly gathered was filled with a stirring like never before.

Jesus declared they would receive power through His Holy Spirit, and their identity as His witnesses was forever secured. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ's followers broke down barriers to communicate the gospel in languages they had never spoken before. What a mighty act of God through such a miraculous feat! His people were empowered to declare His magnificence in these new languages of praise.

Help your kids see that Jesus' followers are to speak His praises just as they did in this story. The day of Pentecost points to who Christ is: the Savior who seeks out the lost and breaks down barriers. Explain how the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, too, when we trust in Jesus. The faithfulness of Christ's people on the day of Pentecost led thousands to come to faith. May we, too, be just as eager to live on mission and communicate the gospel just as faithfully.

January 26, 2025 (Unit 29, Session 4)

## **The Holy Spirit Changes Us** (Galatians 5)

Today's passage from Galatians illustrates the Holy Spirit's power in Christ followers' lives. Written by the apostle Paul to the non-Jewish congregation in Galatia, this letter outlines the importance of pursuing righteousness by faith as opposed to the works of the flesh.

How are believers today at risk of pursuing legalism or lawlessness rather than the love of God just as the church in Galatia did? Why is it essential to live in step with the Holy Spirit's guidance instead of false doctrines or the whims of our flesh?

Though thousands of years have passed since Paul first penned this writing to believers in the place known today as Turkey, today's Christians still wrestle in the faith as they did back then—between the belief that we must earn salvation and the tendency to forgo good works altogether. For the Galatians, the issue at play was a mistaken belief that circumcision was necessary upon coming to faith.

Paul discussed how being led by the Holy Spirit in faith is our hope of righteousness; it is not our works that save us, but faith in the work Christ did on our behalf. Even so, good works are the evidence of His power in action within our lives. Christ kept His promise to send the Holy Spirit, and He in turn empowers and enables us to be His witnesses on mission to the world through our words and our actions.

The balance between legalism and lawlessness could never be attained by doing more good things or by avoiding being bad; rather, the steadiness we seek is only found in following the Holy Spirit's guidance. The proof of our following is the fruitfulness in our lives, as seen in the ways we love God and our neighbors.

As you prepare to study Galatians 5 with your kids, consider sharing how the Holy Spirit's guidance has shaped your own spiritual journey. May we all continue to grow in fruitfulness as we yield to the power of the Spirit in our own lives.