

## Jesus Makes a Promise

Tamyra sighed deeply when she looked at her number: 56. The large LED sign in the Department of Motor Vehicles read: 35. She took a seat on a window ledge a few feet away from a woman who was staring intently and frowning at her phone.

“They just called 35. I’m number 53. I’ll be there when I get done,” the woman said irritably.

Tamyra looked at the woman and gave a smile and a greeting. Her name was Velinda, and Tamyra gave her reassuring prompts as she overheard the phone conversation. She picked up that not only did Velinda seem irritated about the DMV, but with her boyfriend’s attitude as well.

“I guess I’m frustrated and tired,” said Velinda.

“I know some help for that,” Tamyra said.

“What?” Velinda said suspiciously.

Tamyra began sharing her salvation and conversion story.

“I used to go to church regularly,” Velinda said. “But how can I believe stuff from so long ago?”

“I’m a witness to what God is doing,” Tamyra replied.

“I know the Lord’s heart, and He loves both of us.”

Velinda seemed to relax, and Tamyra continued to share the goodness of God that she had come to know.

“Fifty-three!”

“That’s me,” Velinda said, jumping up. “Thanks for talking to me. I will text you when I get out of here. Let’s keep in touch.”

“That would be great!” smiled Tamyra.

- 1.** *What does it mean to be a “witness” for Jesus?*
- 2.** *What role does the Holy Spirit play as we witness for Jesus?*
- 3.** *Why do we need to be a witness for Jesus wherever we are?*

**LESSON FOCUS:** Witness everywhere—starting where you are.

## Many Convincing Proofs

*Acts 1:1-3, KJV*

1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

*Acts 1:1-3, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach <sup>2</sup>until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. <sup>3</sup>After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

What is unique about the Book of Acts (and the Gospel of Luke) is that both were written to an individual named Theophilus. Luke addressed him in his Gospel as “most excellent,” which seems to indicate he was a high-ranking Roman official.

The former book Luke refers to, of course, is the Gospel of Luke. So, in a sense, the Book of Acts is a sequel to the story of Jesus revealed in the third Gospel. Luke told Theophilus that Jesus gave many “proofs” (vs. 3) of His resurrection. Among these were the empty tomb and the apostles seeing, touching, and eating with the risen Christ. Hundreds of eyewitnesses saw Jesus after the Resurrection. For 40 days, Luke said, in a sense, Jesus “tied up all the loose ends” for these 11 men, teaching them more about “the kingdom of God,” which they would soon be sharing with the rest of the world.

**4.** *To whom was the Book of Acts written?*

**5.** *What time period did Luke cover in Acts 1:3?*

## You Will Receive Power

*Acts 1:4-8, KJV*

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

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

7 And 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.

8 But 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.

*Acts 1:4-8, NIV*

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>6</sup>Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

<sup>7</sup>He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>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.”

On one of the 40 days Jesus was with the disciples, the Lord had a very specific command for them. They were not to leave Jerusalem until they had received a gift from the heavenly Father. And what was this gift to be?

Jesus said that His relative John had baptized with water—but the one to come, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, would baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16). These are the words Jesus echoed

when He told the apostles what they were to expect. The heavenly Father would give them the Holy Spirit, as He told them about previously (see John 14:15-27). Jesus gave no timeline as to when this promised Holy Spirit was going to arrive, or even what the Spirit was going to look like or do. They were simply to stay put, wait, and watch.

Sometimes old, entrenched beliefs die hard. All of Jerusalem, including these Jewish disciples, cultivated the hope in their hearts that the Messiah would deliver Israel from its oppressors (whoever they happened to be at the time). When that happened, the Messiah would restore Israel to the political and economic power it enjoyed at its peak during the reigns of David and Solomon. Yes, Jesus the Messiah was clearly back with them—but Rome still held an iron fist over their lives. Now that Jesus was back from the dead, perhaps now He would begin the political revolution? At least the disciples could ask.

Jesus does not rebuke their belief that Israel will one day be restored. He did remind them, however, that the timing of this event was entirely in the hands of God—and He had not revealed when or how that would happen. But instead, Jesus gave them global marching orders that reflected His words in the great commission. They were to begin to preach about the kingdom of God where they were most comfortable (Jerusalem), and then to extend their reach into Judea (again, do-able), and then to Samaria (which was very dangerous), and then into the great unknown—the ends of the earth.

As we look at the lives of the apostles, we see that they did this very thing. But they only did that after they had received the strength, fortitude, and courage to fulfill this command by being filled with the Holy Spirit—whenever He arrived.

**6.** *What did Jesus command the disciples to do?*

**7.** *What did Jesus promise the Holy Spirit would do for the disciples?*

## The Ascension

*Acts 1:9-11, KJV*

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

*Acts 1:9-11, NIV*

<sup>9</sup>After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

<sup>10</sup>They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup>“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Jesus then began to ascend into heaven and eventually disappeared into a cloud. As the disciples watched Him ascend into the sky, they were clearly perplexed as to what just happened; so they kept staring.

To clear up this confusion, two men dressed in white (presumably angels) asked them why they kept staring into the sky. They clarified that Jesus would return to them in the same way He departed—they just did not know when. It’s interesting that the angels used the phrase “taken from you” to describe what happened. They had felt that before, as the Roman soldier arrested Jesus, flogged Him, and then nailed Him to a cross. Now that Jesus was leaving them again, they may have felt something similar. However, this time, they had hope. One day, Jesus would return to earth in bodily form, in the same way that He left.

**8.** *How did Jesus depart from His disciples?*

**9.** *What did the messengers of God say to the disciples as they looked into the sky?*

## Be the Jesus They See

While searching for her favorite dessert in the grocery store, Charisa heard a screaming toddler. She calmly soothed the toddler and then turned to the young mother and said, "Don't worry. God will strengthen you over this time. Have a blessed day." The mother looked at her in bewilderment and said, "Thank you."

Later that day, Charisa was sitting at the bus stop when she saw an elderly man carrying a package too heavy for him. She took the package from him and walked him to where he was going. When the elderly man thanked her, she simply replied, "God bless you."

While riding the bus home, Charisa sat next to a troubled teenager girl. She smiled at the girl and said, "Jesus loves you." The girl looked confused. Charisa asked her if she could tell her about Jesus' love. The girl nodded her head. Then Charisa simply and briefly explained how Jesus came to live on earth, died and was resurrected that we may experience His love and know Him personally. She concluded by explaining how to accept Jesus through prayer and grow in Him through reading the Bible and Christian fellowship.

When Charisa finished, the girl smiled at her and said, "I needed to hear that today. Thank you."

Charisa listened to the Holy Spirit that lived within her to know how to exemplify Jesus to others. She wasn't a preacher and had never gone to Bible school or into full-time ministry. Yet, she knew that God had called her to be a witness for Him. No matter where Charisa went, she was the "Jesus people could see."

**10.** *What role does the Holy Spirit play in the lives of the witness and the listener?*

**11.** *What are some ways you have seen others be a witness for Jesus?*

**12.** *Are you the Jesus others can see at home, work, and in your community? Explain your answer.*

## Lifestyle Witnessing

Is witnessing when you go out with the evangelism team from church, share a Gospel tract with someone, or give a few dollars to a hungry person? All of these are kinds of witnessing. Jesus calls us to a lifestyle of witnessing. The chorus from the old hymn “Lord, Lay Some Soul upon My Heart” by Leon Tucker explains the approach to witnessing with our lives: “Lord, lay some soul upon my heart and love that soul through me; and may I ever do my part to win that soul for Thee.”

► *Ask God to help you be a witness for Jesus in your life. Daily pray and obey the Holy Spirit’s leading. He led the disciples; He will lead you as well. Write here some daily opportunities you have to witness (on social media, when eating out, with a neighbor, etc.).*

### KEY VERSE

But 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. —Acts 1:8, KJV

“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.” —Acts 1:8, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

#### Week of May 1 through May 7

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 68:17-19, 24-35—God’s Strength Revealed.
- Tues.** John 14:15-27—The Spirit of Truth.
- Wed.** John 16:1-15—The Spirit Testifies of Jesus.
- Thurs.** Psalm 16—The Lord My Chosen Portion.
- Fri.** Acts 2:1-13—Amazement at the Spirit’s Power.
- Sat.** Acts 2:14-28—The Promise Fulfilled.
- Sun.** Acts 2:29-42—Receive the Gift of the Spirit.