

From creation to the resurrection...God's plan to restore us

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit

Revival and the birth of a new community

What the early believers did when they gathered

Discussion questions:

1. If we believe that Jesus was God among us, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, and rose again, we can become children of God. How did you learn this truth and who did God use to share it with you?
2. Jesus was clear that our source of power to share his life-saving message is the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). People experienced this when the Spirit came on them (Acts 2:1-4). Peter was filled with the Spirit and proclaimed the message with boldness (Acts 2:14-40). How have you experienced the Holy Spirit filling you, moving you, and giving you strength to share the message and love of Jesus?
3. Jesus told his followers that their ministry would occur in four distinct locations (Acts 1:8). How do you see God using you, your church, and the church at large to share the life-saving message of Jesus in each of the following places:
  - Jerusalem (your hometown/neighborhood)
  - Judea (your surrounding community and region)
  - Samaria (the tough places that many people avoid)
  - The ends of the earth (around the nation and world)
4. Along with sharing the message and love of Jesus, we are also called to share our resources/material goods, our meals/fellowship, and our lives/stories. How is each valuable and what can we do to share these more intentionally?
5. What sorts of conflict and spiritual battle did the early Christians face as they tried to share Jesus' message? How did they respond to persecution and resistance and how can this inspire us as we encounter people who push back against the message of God's love?
6. Peter (Acts 4:8-12), Stephen (Acts 6:8-15, 7:51-60), and later the apostle Paul were clear that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the only hope for salvation. How did people respond to their bold claim in the religiously diverse ancient world and how do they respond today? How do we continue sharing with boldness, even when others disagree with us?
7. Three thousand people came to faith in Jesus at Pentecost and their ranks swelled in succeeding days. Is our church seeing regular conversions and lives changed by Jesus? Is so, how can you celebrate and encourage this? If not, what steps can you take to help your church to reach out more effectively with the life-saving love and message of Jesus?
8. The risen Jesus called his followers to be his witnesses. Give an example of how we can share the message of the gospel in one of the following ways: by sharing the story of Jesus; by sharing the story of when we place our faith in the Savior; by sharing specific stories about the presence and power of Jesus at work in our life today.

Homework: The early Christians loved to open their homes for meals with others. In the coming weeks, make two invitations. First, invite a few Christians over for a meal and a time of sharing life and faith. Second, invite a few people you care about who are not yet followers of Jesus and have them share a meal with you and some of your Christian friends.

For next week: Please read Chapter 29 of The Story (Acts 13-14, 16-20; Romans 1, 2-6, 8, 12, 15; 1 Corinthians 1, 3, 5-6, 10, 12-13, 15-16; Galatians 1, 3, 5-6; 1 Thessalonians 1-5)