



Repentance Tabernacle Church

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To the Ends of the Earth

Focus Verse: Acts 1:8 - 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.

Lesson Text: Acts 1:4-8

Truth About God: God's church will reach to the ends of the earth.

Truth For My Life: I will be a witness for Jesus to my world and to the whole world.

Luke's descriptions in Acts 2 of the seventeen groups of people underscores the impact of Pentecost on the world. Jesus presented them with a strategy of worldwide evangelism that started where they were and expanded regionally across cultural barriers. Finally, they shared the gospel worldwide. When Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, he shared the message of salvation (Acts 2:38) and continued in verse 39 to say: "*For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*" **Spreading the gospel was a call for the disciples—and us today—to start where we are and then begin to reach further.**

An overlooked but obvious point of Acts 1 and 2 is that Jerusalem had become quite a multicultural city. Apparently, Peter and other disciples had not embraced the mandate of Jesus or the message of Pentecost because scholars suggest that ten years had passed between Acts 2 and 10. Only then did Peter witness to the Gentiles, literally due to divine intervention.

Cities today often naturally divide cultures into neighborhoods. The church's persecution led many Jesus followers to move out of Jerusalem to Judaea and Samaria. Jews and the Samaritans had a long history of hatred between them. The Samaritans were a culture stemming from the Jewish people who had intermarried with other people groups. When revival spread to Samaria, it crossed cultural barriers. Many Samaritans believed in John 4, and Jesus spent two days ministering to them. And many more Samaritans believed in Acts 8, and Jesus poured out His Spirit on them, and He uses Jews to preach the gospel and pray for them.

Our society is familiar with prejudice, racism, and bias. It is a scourge in our day that creates perpetual division in people's lives. Almost everyone knows someone whose life has been affected by prejudice. Racism is a sin before God and an obvious barrier to evangelism. **We were all created in the image of God**, and one day, Heaven will teem with persons from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Revelation 5:9).

The narrative of Acts shows a progressive movement toward global evangelism. Before the gospel spread globally, the early church began by impacting their local community. A principle of evangelism teaches us to grow where we are planted and not neglect the souls in our own locale as we look toward global revival.

The Lord directed Peter in a vision to begin preaching to the Gentiles. At the same time, God spoke to a Gentile, a Roman centurion named Cornelius to send for Peter. As Peter began preaching the gospel to Cornelius and his household, the Holy Ghost fell on **all** of them even before Peter gave the altar call. However, Peter still struggled with his personal bias, like many other Jews, that the Gentiles were not worthy of the gospel. **That prejudice had been passed down through the generations.** It was a big step for the disciples when Jesus revealed His commission to evangelize all nations—so much so that Peter needed a vision from God to overcome his reluctance.

Are there people that we have difficulty connecting to? Have we formed opinions of other cultures based on what we see in the news or through the media? Has tradition or our upbringing inappropriately shaped our posture towards others not like us? In many cases, we are uncomfortable with what is unfamiliar. Often cultural bias is because of a lack of relationships.

Fulfilling the Great Commission and accomplishing the mission of God's church (making disciples for Jesus) means starting where we are and reaching past the barriers of ethnicity, culture, and language. Therefore, we should see and value each other as we are rather than ignoring or despising our differences. That is seeing each other like God does, as we are. As we celebrate our diverse cultures, we grow together, valuing the masterpiece God has created in each of us. Like the apostles, let us be led by the Lord and take the steps necessary to reach all nations. **All nations will be in Heaven; let us do our part to help them get there.**