

Acts 2:14-41

Outward Church: A Gospel Witness

Jonathan M. Romig
CornerstoneWestford.com

We talk a lot about **sharing our faith** with others here at Cornerstone. But have you ever gotten into a **situation** where you had the **chance** to share the gospel and you **froze** because you felt like you **didn't know** what to do? Can you **think back** to the last time a **friend** or **family** member brought up something about **Christianity** or the **Bible** and you thought, "What a **great opportunity!**" as it **sailed** right **past you**? Today, I want us to look at how the **Apostle Peter** shared the gospel as an **example** of how we can share the gospel with others so that we **don't miss** these opportunities.

Acts is a **historical record**, which means everything in it is "**descriptive**" and not necessarily "**prescriptive**." In other words, it **describes** what happens but that doesn't mean we have to **copy** that in our own lives, or that it is the **typical pattern** for believers. Otherwise I'd have to **preach** to you in **German** and I don't know how to speak German... So as we review Peter's example today, know this is only **one way** to share the gospel. There are **other** options. For example, Peter doesn't use a **personal story** when sharing, but if we were to flip to **Acts 26** we would see the **Apostle Paul** sharing his **testimony**.

In **Acts 2:14-41** I find **seven steps to sharing the gospel** with others. What's the **first step**?

1. Engage with objections (Acts 2:13-14)

Peter is not afraid to have a **hard conversation** with people who are **mocking** the believers. Let's back up for just a moment. It's **Pentecost**. The **Holy Spirit** has **descended** on the **church body** in a **special way** and is **filling** the believers and disciples. They're speaking in **foreign languages** "declaring the wonders of God" (Acts 2:11). It's like If I were to begin preaching in **fluent Mandarin** with **no American accent**.¹ You'd be amazed, right? You'd **instantly believe** in Jesus if you didn't already, right? **Not necessarily**.

Acts 2:13 (NIV) Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Have you ever had an experience like that when you're **sharing** some part of the gospel or its **impact** on your **life** and people **laugh** at you? When I worked in **banking** out of **college** I was on the road with some **coworkers** and we started talking about **Christianity** over **dinner** and I pulled out a **pocket New Testament** and one **girl** laughed at this because it was like I had **planned** the whole thing. Well, **she was right**. I probably deserved that. But we **keep going**, keep sharing.

That's what Peter does. He **could** have **walked away** feeling **alienated** and **harassed**, but instead he and the other **eleven** Apostles **stand up**, and full of the power of the Holy Spirit he **engages with their objections**. He says, "**Fellow Jews...** let me **explain** this to you..." **Instead of shutting down** he **powers up**.

One of the things I like about doing **CrossFit** is you never know when someone is going to ask you a question. When I first started there one of the **coaches** who knew I was a Christian asked me **point blank** about the **abuses** in the **Catholic priesthood**. It took me aback, but it also gave me the **opportunity** to talk about how **Jesus loves the little ones** and is a **God of justice**.

In 2019 Barna found that **86-92%** of **Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Elders** either “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree” that “When someone raises questions about faith, I know how to respond.”²As Christians, we have **good answers**. 1. *Engage with objections*. Step two is...

2. Share Scripture (Acts 2:15-17)

Now if you're like me, you'd probably **prefer** step #2 to be “**share a personal story**.” That's one option. **1 Peter 3:15b** says to “Always be prepared to **give an answer...**” (NIV) Maybe that's the answer the Lord gives you. But I don't want us to **miss the opportunity** to share Scripture. Scripture is powerful.

Isaiah 55:11 (NIV)

so is my word that goes out from my mouth:

It will not return to me empty,

but will accomplish what I desire

and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

When I share my personal story I don't know if some part of it will **resonate** or not, but I do know that God's word has a **power my words do not**. That's why when we share **faith stories** at Cornerstone I always want there to be some meaningful **Scripture passage** included. Not only is **Peter speaking Scripture** empowered by the Holy Spirit, but he **quotes the Old Testament**. His **audience is Jewish** so he shows them where the **prophet Joel** said what they are witnessing **would happen** (see Joel 2:28-32).

Acts 2:17 (NIV)

“In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

Peter is saying, “This is it! This is the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. The men and women you see standing before you are doing what God promised.” This is **powerful stuff**. When we see how the Old Testament ties perfectly into the New, it **builds our faith in God**.

I recently had a party at my house where **I tried** (emphasis on “tried”) to get some of my **Christian friends** and **non-Christian friends together** to talk about **theology**. For our first bit of theology one of my **Christian friends** quickly brought up the **dead sea scrolls**. I won't say who it was because I don't want to **embarrass Terry** but I actually think the dead sea scrolls are a powerful reason to believe the gospel, especially **The Great Isaiah Scroll**. It **predates the birth of Jesus** by about 125 years and you can flip to **Isaiah 53** where it speaks of the “**Suffering Servant**,” which is a prophecy of the **sacrificial death of Jesus**.³ It predates Jesus and clearly points him. 1. *Engage with objections*; and 2. *Share scripture*.

3. Rely on the Spirit (Acts 2:18-21)

There's something very “**meta**” going on as Peter preaches. He is **full** of the **Holy Spirit** as he explains the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). Something significant has changed at Pentecost. No longer does God's Holy Spirit **reside** in the **tabernacle or temple**, his Holy Spirit resides in his **church body, his people**.

Acts 2:18 (NIV)

Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

This means God's Holy Spirit resides in us, and through us can do great things. Last week I told a story of God using an **American friend** of mine to preach the gospel to some **Afghanis** in their **native language** and he speaks **English**. That's amazing and that's just the **kind** of thing **Jesus promised**.

John 14:12 (NIV) Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

We'll see the disciples doing "greater things" in the book of Acts (healing the sick and raising the dead). As **believers** we **also have** the Holy Spirit. That means God can do "**greater things**" through us, but we need to **ask him** what he wants to do, and spend that time **seeking him**. I actually preached Acts 2:1-21 **my second week at Immanuel Church** back in July 2013. As I was reviewing that sermon I rediscovered a story **Ron** shared with me. After I preached my **Associate Pastor candidate** sermon at Immanuel about sharing the gospel he shared a story with me a **story** of a time he shared the gospel.

Many years ago Ron was on a **business trip** to the **upper Peninsula** in **Northern Michigan**. He had several flights to get back to Chicago and when he got on the plane only a handful of people were onboard. There were more **flight crew** than passengers. After the plane took off the **flight attendant** walked by Ron and asked him, "Why do you look so **happy**?"

"**Because I got Jesus in my life**" Ron said, without any hesitation, and then immediately thought, *Where did that come from?* Well, it came from the **Holy Spirit** because that's not something Ron would normally say.

The flight attendant sat down and said, "Tell me more" and for the remainder of the trip Ron shared the **gospel** with her. Scripture came pouring out that he didn't even know he had inside. On every single stop to Chicago **nobody got on or off** the plane. The Holy Spirit had arranged their whole time together.

When Ron left his hotel that morning he took its copy of the **four spiritual laws** a **church** had placed, which is a simple booklet outlining the way to salvation **using Scriptures**. The church that had placed the booklet was actually from the **flight attendant's hometown**. She put her **faith in Christ** on that flight. Apparently she was **crying** and the crew and passengers were giving Ron all sorts of **weird looks**.

The Holy Spirit **orchestrated** the whole thing. The **booklet**, the **flight**, the **question**, the **time to have a conversation**, the **tender heart** to the gospel. We need to **pray** for his help. *1. Engage with objections. 2. Share Scripture. 3. Rely on the Spirit.* Step four is **less popular** because we **don't want to offend**...

4. Talk about sin (Acts 2:22-23)

Peter doesn't shy away from **their sin** and **responsibility** to God.

Acts 2:22-23 (NIV) 22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Peter is addressing "men of Jerusalem" but he's also addressing all the people from the various regions we read about in Acts 2:9, "Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia..." The festival of **Pentecost** has drawn people from all over the **known world** even if they **identify primarily** as men of Jerusalem. At the end of his sermon **3,000** people become Christians, which implies even **more were listening**. The point is, whether these people were the ones to mock Jesus and call for his crucifixion, they are still guilty of Jesus' death. They're **corporately guilty**.

Does that mean we're **innocent**? I think this is **also our sin**. Whether or not we **drove the nails through Christ's hands**, today whenever we **choose sin over him** we are showing that **same heart of rejection**. Did you know that **Mel Gibson** is in the movie *The Passion of the Christ*? **His hands** are the ones that **nail Jesus to the cross**. Gibson said, "It was me that put him on the cross. It was my sins."⁴

The first step in coming to Christ is realizing we're **sinful** and **broken** and **need a Savior**. Peter was bold. He pointed out their sins. The Holy Spirit **may ask** you to do the same. But remember, **whenever we point one finger** at someone else there are **three fingers pointing** back at **ourselves**. Whenever we talk about someone else's sins we have to do so **humbly** and I think one of the ways we can do that is to **admit** our own **sin** and talk about how we've received **forgiveness**. **Peter denied Jesus three times** (Luke 22:54-62). He's not there as a **perfect** man but as a **forgiven** man. *We can't be afraid to talk about sin*. But we also can't leave it there. A **recognition of sin** leads to a **desire for grace**. Number five...

5. Emphasize the resurrection (Acts 2:24-32)

Peter preaches on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead for the next nine verses. He starts with this verse:

Acts 2:24 (NIV) But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Then he outlines how **King David** prophesied the Messiah (God's special King) would one day die and rise again from the grave. **Quoting Psalm 16:8-11**, a **Psalm of David**, Peter says:

Acts 2:26-27 (NIV)

26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,

27 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.

Recognizing that David obviously wasn't talking about **himself** because he's dead, Peter points to one of David's **descendants**, who God promised would sit on his **throne forever** (Acts 2:30). And then, Peter **nearly repeats** the prophecy of verse 27 again in verses 31-32.

So what's all this tell us? The **resurrection really matters**. I did a **little research** and I found that an estimated **60 billion people** have lived on **planet earth** since the birth of Christ. Do you know how many of them have **returned permanently** from the **grave**? **Only one, Christ Jesus**.

The odds of me dying this year are 0.16%.⁵ Not bad, right? But if I were to change it to "**the odds of me dying**"—those are **100%**, someday (unless Christ returns). We're all going to die one day and **this could be your year** (Matt Chandler).⁶ Wouldn't it be nice if someone could promise you that one day you'll wake up to eternal joy and happiness from death? Then showed you they **weren't lying** by **doing it themselves**? That's Jesus! *The resurrection is powerful. Let's emphasize it*. But we can't forget the most important part.

6. Bring it to Jesus (Acts 2:21, 33-36)

Peter said this back in verse 21:

Acts 2:21 (NIV)

And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Then he points to **Jesus** as the **one who is Lord** (as **affirmed** by **King David**).

Acts 2:36 (NIV) “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

At the end of the day we can get **so wrapped up** in **reasons why to believe in Jesus** that we **forget** to talk about **Jesus**. But Jesus is “**Lord**,” a name used for **God himself** in the Old Testament; and he’s “**Messiah**”—**God’s special King**, the **Savior**. To come to Jesus as **your Lord, God, Messiah**, and your **Savior King** is **what it means to be a Christian**. Jesus offers salvation to any who believe in him (Acts 4:12).

Jesus is the one who **lived without sin**, **took on our sin at the cross**, and paid the **penalty for us** so that we **might receive eternal life**. Our **friends, neighbors, coworkers** and **strangers** all **need to hear**.

Number six; *bring it to Jesus*. Is that where it ends? Once we get to him we...

7. Call for repentance and faith (Acts 2:37-41)

Those listening were “cut to the heart” and asked what there were supposed to do (Acts 2:37). See, the Holy Spirit was speaking **through Peter**, but he was also **moving** the **hearts** of those listening.

Acts 2:38 (NIV) Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter calls them to **admit** their **sins**, to **recognize** their **responsibility** in Christ’s death, and to **believe**. They’re to **show their belief** by **publicly confessing Christ** through **baptism**. When you’re baptized it’s like you’re saying, “I **identify** with **Jesus** and his **death** and **resurrection**.”

When we share the gospel in **personal conversations** with friends, the step I almost always feel like I **fail to fully develop** is this call to **repentance** and **faith**. But that’s **key**. We could simply say something like, “Would you like to pray for **Jesus** to **forgive** you of your sins and to **accept** him as your **Lord** and **Savior**?” Let this be a **challenge** to us to make sure we talk about repentance and faith in Christ.

The seven steps to sharing the gospel are: *1. Engage with objections. 2. Share Scripture. 3. Rely on the Spirit. 4. Talk about sin. 5. Emphasize the resurrection. 6. Bring it to Jesus. 7. Call for repentance and faith.*

Although there’s **no guarantees**, Lord willing as we do this we’ll see people coming to Christ Jesus. About **3,000** people **repented** and were **baptized** that day (Acts 2:41). That’s a huge number, but Jesus and the Holy Spirit are still at work today. We can still see friends, family, and strangers coming to Christ. Let’s pray the Holy Spirit gives each one of us the **opportunity** to **share Jesus** this week.

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes endnotes and references, or share it through [Apple podcasts](#) or [Google Play Music](#). Read the [story of our church here](#).

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of objections have you encountered when sharing about your Christian faith? How did you handle the objections? If you could go back and do anything differently, would you?
2. Why is it important to engage with difficult questions and not brush them aside? When your child or teenager asks you a really tough question about God, how might you respond?
3. Why is it worthwhile to share Scripture when sharing the gospel with people who don't yet believe in Jesus? How is it different than just sharing a personal story or testimony? Do you have any Scripture passages you recommend sharing when presenting the gospel?
4. Why do we need the Holy Spirit to anoint or fill us in a special way to share the gospel effectively with others? What does the Holy Spirit need to be doing in them to prepare them for the gospel?
5. Why is it so hard to address sin with those around us? What do most people think of the concept of sin? How might you be able to communicate the idea that someone is indeed sinful in a way that is winsome even if it is somewhat offensive?
6. What is the gospel message? If you only had 60 seconds to share the gospel with someone, what would you say?
7. Why does the resurrection matter? What if Jesus hadn't risen from the grave? Would it make sense to be a Christian? See 1 Corinthians 15:14.
8. Who is Jesus to you? What does it mean that he is Lord and Messiah?
9. How can baptism act as a confession of faith in Christ?
10. Repent means to turn from your sin and to God. Does that mean I have to clean up all my sins before I can come to God? What does it look like for me to repent and believe in Jesus not just when I come to Christ but as I progress through my Christian walk?
11. Does it encourage you that 3,000 came to faith in Christ through Peter's sermon? How might this encourage you to share the gospel with your coworkers, neighbors, friends, and family members who don't yet know Jesus?
12. Who do you want to pray to come to know Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

¹ Matt Chandler explains this in a similar way in his sermon: Acts (Par 2) - The Church is Born - Matt Chandler. Published Feb 18, 2014 on YouTube at Truth Endures. Accessed Jan 23, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCIoCS4_7ak

² Year in Review: Barna's Top 10 Releases of 2019. Barna. Published December 18, 2019. Accessed January 25, 2020. <https://www.barna.com/research/top-10-releases-of-2019/>

³ The Great Isaiah Scroll. Accessed January 23, 2020. <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah>

⁴ *The Passion of the Christ* IMDB Trivia. Accessed January 23, 2020. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0335345/trivia?ref_=tt_trv_trv

Thanks Matt Chandler for including this illustration in your sermon.

⁵ Odds of dying for men and women. Accessed Jan 23, 2020. <https://www.finder.com/life-insurance/odds-of-dying> Male age 32.

⁶ Matt Chandler told this joke first. Same sermon as above.