

Acts 1:12-26

Outward Church: Before the Mission

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When I graduated college I wanted to take an **epic motorcycle ride** with my dad before I moved out to Washington DC. In May my dad, a friend, and me rode motorcycles on a **230 mile loop** starting in my hometown of Estes Park, Colorado. We rode up and over **Trail Ridge Road**, which is a beautiful ride that winds back and forth as it gets higher and higher and higher. It goes as high as 12,183 feet.¹ Right now that road is closed because of snow, often **higher** than **cars**, but it had just finished melting on our trip. The **snow-covered rockies** were beautiful but I was **freezing**. I should have worn **more layers**.

We rode down the mountain and we were so eager to get some **miles** under our **tires** that we **didn't stop for gas** and the next gas station wasn't for **50 miles**. As we were riding through **beautiful views** all around us but I kept worrying, "Am I going to run out of gas? Am I going to make it?" My motorcycle had a **reserve tank** that would get you a few more miles but I didn't want to have to use it. I don't know if I did or not but **thankfully** I did make it to the gas station. I was so **happy** I took a picture of it. After this we drove into a **rainstorm** and I started freezing again.

I wasn't as **prepared** for this trip as I should have been. I didn't wear enough **layers** and I didn't have enough **fuel**. Although I enjoyed the ride, and the views, and this is a **great** memory, I think I could have enjoyed it even **more** if I had been **better prepared**. In the book of Acts, God is calling us to **a grand mission** to go out and **share** the **message** of **Christ Jesus** with our world. We're going to **encounter beautiful vistas**, lives changed by Jesus Christ, God at work, but we're also going to encounter **difficulties** and **hardships**, snow, rain, and running out of motivation. There are some things we need to do *before the mission* to be **prepared** and **enjoy** the **journey**.

As we continue **Acts chapter one** we will see **how** the **disciples prepared** to go on their mission, which will show us how to prepare **for ours**.

We need power for our mission. (Acts 1:8-9)

Before Jesus sends his disciples out to share the **gospel** (the good news about him) with the whole world, what does he promise? He promises **power** through the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 (NIV) 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."

The Greek word for "power" is δύναμις (dune-a-mis), which sounds like our word for dynamite or dynamic. **This power** is the **type of power** than can...

- **Transform** people's **hearts** (Luke 1:17);
- **Conceive** a baby in a **virgin** girl (Luke 1:35);
- **Cast out demons** (Luke 4:36; 9:1);
- **Heal** the **lame** and the **sick** (Luke 5:17; 6:19; 8:46);

- **Perform miracles** (Luke 10:13, 19; 19:37; Acts 2:22; 3:12; 6:8; 8:13; 19:11); and...
- Make people **listen** when the **gospel** is shared (Acts 4:7, 33).

This power is the **Spirit's** power (Luke 4:14; 24:49). This power is **Jesus' power** (Luke 22:69; Acts 10:38).² Did you know that more of the **sun's power** strikes the earth **in one hour** than the **entire world uses** in one **year**?³ Enough **solar** energy hits the earth in one hour to supply our whole world with power for an **entire year**. **Christ's power** is **even greater**. If we're going to be his **witnesses** in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, we need to **access** his power.

The **original** name for Acts is the "**Acts of Apostles.**" **The Bible Project** points out that "a more accurate name" is "**The Acts of Jesus and the Spirit.**" Aren't the apostles and disciples doing all the work? The Holy Spirit is working through them. The work that takes place in Acts is first Christ's work. He's the **primary worker**. He's the **conductor**. He's the **hero**. Look at what Jesus does right after he gives them the mission.

Acts 1:9 (NIV) After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Where did Jesus go? This is what Jesus promised those who were **condemning** him at his **trial**.

Luke 22:69 (NIV) But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

When Jesus **ascended** into heaven he sat down at the **right hand of God**. He is **seated in heaven** right next to our **Heavenly Father** right now (Rev 5:13). This is a place of **glory, authority, and power**. Jesus is seated on his throne, **ruling**, and **reigning**, and **taking care of business**. In order to do **his mission**, we need **his power**. **Why?** Because...

Christ's power is unstoppable. (Acts 1:12-26)

Do you remember what **Jesus promised** Peter in the gospel of Matthew?

Matthew 16:18 (NIV) And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Jesus is going to **build his church** through the **power** of the **Holy Spirit** and the **deeds** of his **people**, and nothing will be able to stop it. **Newton's first law of motion** says that an "**object in motion stays in motion.**" His law clarifies this is only the case if that object **doesn't run into something** or **encounter resistance**.⁴ **Jesus' promise** is **even greater**. He promises his church will **keep growing** and **going despite** resistance. **How?** Jesus sends the **Holy Spirit** to help them (Acts 1:4).

Acts 1:12-13 (NIV) 12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

All eleven disciples are present (Luke 6:14-16). Judas betrayed Jesus and is gone so **Peter** gets up and talks about why the disciples should **actually** number **twelve**.

Acts 1:15-17 (NIV) 15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) 16 and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.

Quoting the **Psalms**, Peter explains how the Spirit **accounted** for **Judas's betrayal** (Psalm 69:25; 109:8).

Acts 1:20 (NIV)

“For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:

“‘May his place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in it,’

and,

“‘May another take his place of leadership.’”

This means God **knew**, and even **allowed**, Judas to betray Jesus. Judas was a part of **God's big plan**. **Evil cannot stop** Christ's plans. Christ causes **all things**—the good things and bad things, the things we don't understand or can't see past—to work out for good (Rom 8:28). *Christ's power is unstoppable.*

There's a story in the **Old Testament** of a young man named **Joseph** whose **ten older brothers** sell him into **slavery**. While in slavery, things seem to get **better**. He gets a **good job** and get's **promoted** but then he gets **betrayed** again and this time **thrown into prison**. After **years** God raises him out of prison to become **Pharaoh, King of Egypt's, right hand man** (Genesis 41:39-43). Then a **famine** hits the land and Joseph's **brothers** who betrayed him come to Egypt for **food**. After they **discover** Joseph is **still alive** and **ruling Egypt**, they are **terrified** Joseph is going to kill them. But Joseph says this:

Genesis 50:20 (NIV) You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Joseph is the **son** who was **betrayed**, but God used it for good. **Jesus** is the **Son** who was betrayed, and God used it for **our good**. **What happened** to **Joseph** lead to the **saving** of **many lives**. What happened to **Jesus** leads to the **salvation** of **many more lives**. If you **repent** and **believe in Jesus**, your life will be saved too.

They **replace Judas** with another disciple because God is showing you **can't stop his plan**. The Bible **identifies** the **12 tribes of Israel** as the **people of God** in the **Old Testament** and **Christian believers** as the people of God in the **New Testament**. Jesus chose 12 disciples (apostles) to signify that this new thing was a **continuation** of the **old thing**. **Revelation 4:4** talks about the **twenty-four elders** seated on the **twenty-four thrones** surrounding **Christ's throne**—12 tribes, 12 disciples, one continuous people. When we step back and see the big story God is telling it shows just how **powerful** and **unstoppable God's plans** are.

God has called us to a **big mission**—to make, mature, and multiply disciples in **Westford**, on our **frontlines**, across **social** and **cultural barriers**, and even in **foreign nations** (Acts 1:8). I have two questions:

1. Do you believe Jesus has the power we need?

Do we **really believe** Jesus can **change lives**? Do we believe Jesus can **work through us** to change lives in **Westford** and on our **frontlines** (our everyday places) and around the **world**? If yes...

2. Do you want Jesus to empower us for our mission?

Do we want to be **led** by the **Holy Spirit**? I don't think that's a **quick yes** because God doesn't give us the Holy Spirit so that we can just **have nice Christian lives**. He empowers us so we can go out into a **fallen** and **broken** world, **live for Jesus**, and **tell others** about him.

We need power for our mission. Christ's power is unstoppable. How do we **access** the **power** of the **Son**?

His power comes through prayer. (Acts 1:14, 24)

What do the **disciples** and the **women** and **Mary the mother of Jesus** do right when they get back to Jerusalem after seeing Jesus **ascend** into heaven? They **pray**.

Acts 1:14a (NIV) They all joined together constantly in prayer...

The **NASB** says, “These all with one mind were **continually devoting themselves** to prayer...” Here we find 120 followers of Jesus continually pouring out their hearts to their Heavenly Father. **Jesus ascended** on the **40th day** and the **Holy Spirit** came on the **50th day at Pentecost**. We get this **image** of those 120 people **constantly praying together** for those **ten days**.

Acts 1:24 (NIV) Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen

They **covered** their **leadership decision** in prayer and **cast lots** because they **trust Jesus** to make the **ultimate decision**. That **doesn’t mean** we should cast lots today. We have the **Holy Spirit** and **wisdom** and **Godly brothers** and **sisters in Christ** we can ask for **advice**. The **twelve apostles** wanted to make **abundantly clear** that Jesus was still **head of his church** and would decide what would happen.

Before we go on mission or **choose church leaders** or **try anything** as a church, we have to pray. Do we pray because it makes us “**better Christians?**”⁵ No. We pray because we want to **know God**. We pray because we want to **experience the Holy Spirit**. **Prayer is not an end in itself**. Prayer is the **means** to an **end, knowing and experiencing Jesus**.

As a church, we want **revival**. That means we want **lots** of people to **come to know Jesus**. But are we willing to pray for it? Here are **some of the ways** we are **already praying** at Cornerstone.

- **Prayer Network:** Emails-based prayer requests group.
- **Friday Night Community Group (6:30-8pm):** Weekly gathering to pray.
- **Sunday Morning Prayer (8-8:45am):** Prayer for mission and church.
- **Elders & Deacons Meetings:** We pray before meetings, sometime 30-45 minutes.
- **Other Prayer:** Personal, one-on-one, community group, ministry team prayer times.

This should **encourage** us that we have places **we are praying** at Cornerstone, but it should also **challenge** us because I **know** some of these prayer times are **struggling**. I know we’re all busy so it can be **really hard** to **stop** and **pray** as a **church body**, but **something special** happens when we do. Jesus said that when **two or three gather, he’s with us** (Matt 18:20). I want Jesus to be with us. When he’s with us, stuff happens.

Paul also says to “**pray continually**” (1 Thess 5:17). That means we can pray **as we go**. When you’re on your frontline, **pray** for your **coworker** to **come to know Christ**. When you’re going to the **grocery store**, pray for the **cashier** to **meet Jesus**. When you’re going to **Dunkin Donuts**, pray for staff to **know Christ**. When you’re driving through **Westford** or **Littleton** or **Acton** pray for **homes** as you **drive by them**—that those who **live there** would **hear the gospel, repent, believe, and be saved**, and that if it’s his will he would **use you** to share the gospel with them.

Before the mission... we need power for our mission. Christ’s power is unstoppable. His power comes through prayer.

I want to close with a **story of prayer leading to revival**. Some might say that revival **never** comes without prayer. Here's a story that shows prayer can lead to revival. I hadn't known about this one before so maybe it's **new** to you as well.

For eight years a sculpture of a man praying on a park bench inviting those walking by to join him was outside **Columbus Circle** in **upper Manhattan**.⁶ The sculpture is called "**Invitation to pray**" and now resides at a local Christian college.

This sculpture is of a man named **Jeremy Lanphier**. Jeremy Lanphier lived in New York City in the 1800s. He became a **Christian** and began telling others about **Christ**. He worked as a "**clothing wholesaler**" during the day but talked with people and gave out **tracts** after work. Pretty soon a **church hired** him to visit **members, witness** around the church, and hold **Bible studies**. It **drained** him **spiritually** but he felt **recharged** if he spent his **noon hour in prayer**. He realized if prayer could **recharge** him it could recharge others, so he handed out **20,000** flyers to a noon prayer meeting, but **nobody came**.

He knelt down to pray. **30 minutes** in a man joined him, then **another** and another. Every **week** more and more joined until he had to **rent a bigger building**. Pretty soon he had "**forty businessmen**" praying with him every day. A **financial crisis** struck the city and more and more people began joining **noon and evening prayer gatherings**. The **newspapers** picked it up then people in **other cities**, "**Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland**" began praying. Thousands of people began praying and this **contributed** to "as many as a million people [being] **converted** or **renewed** in the **revival** that followed." *We need power for our mission. Christ's power is unstoppable. His power comes through prayer.*

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.

¹ Trail Ridge Road. https://www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/trail_ridge_road.htm Accessed Jan 9, 2020.

² Satan sometimes produces a counterfeit power. See Acts 8:10.

³ Rebecca Harrington, Tech Insider. This incredible fact should get you psyched about solar power. Published Sep 29, 2015. Accessed Jan 9, 2020. <https://www.businessinsider.com/this-is-the-potential-of-solar-power-2015-9>

See also: Solar FAQs <https://www.sandia.gov/~jytsao/Solar%20FAQs.pdf>

⁴ Newton's First Law. The Physics Classroom. Accessed January 9, 2020. <https://www.physicsclassroom.com/class/newtlaws/Lesson-1/Newton-s-First-Law>

⁵ Kennedy, Jared. Before the Lord, Before the Church: "How-To" Plan a Child Dedication . Sojourn Network. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Alissa Wilkinson. New York City Landmark Sculpture Relocates to King's Lobby. May 29, 2015. Accessed Jan 10, 2020. <https://www.tkc.edu/stories/new-york-city-landmark-sculpture-relocates-to-kings-lobby/>