

Unit III: The Church and Its Teachings

Values, Money, and Experiences

DEVOTIONAL READING: Zechariah 8:18-23

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Jonah 3:1-10; Malachi 3:7-12; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:6-8; 13:1-3; 26:12-20; Romans 1:14-16; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:1-15

PRINT PASSAGES: Acts 1:6-8; 2 Corinthians 8:3-9

Key Verse

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9, KJV)

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Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Explore your congregation's mission statement in consideration of Jesus' Great Commission.
- Nurture an attitude of generosity toward others.
- Fulfill the Great Commission.

*Key Terms

Authority (Acts 1:7)—Greek: *exousia* (ex-oo-see'-ah): "power" (KJV) to act; right; jurisdiction.

Power (Acts 1:8)—Greek: *dunamis* (doo'-namis): (miraculous) might; strength; ability; force.

Restore (Acts 1:6)—Greek: *apokathistēmi* (apok-ath-is'-tay-mee): to reestablish; to return to a former state; reconstitute.

Service (2 Corinthians 8:4)—Greek: *diakonia* (dee-ak-on-ee'-ah): ministry; office; relief; support; "ministering" (KJV).

Testify (2 Corinthians 8:3)—Greek: *martureó* (mar-too-reh'-o): to bear witness, give evidence; give testimony; "bear record" (KJV).

Witnesses (Acts 1:8)—Greek: *martus* (mar'-toos): martyrs; records; spectators of anything.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



Overview

The book of Acts describes the launch and rapid growth of the early church through the power of the Holy Spirit. One disciple, Peter, boldly confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, yet later denied Him and fled in fear along with the others (see Mark 14:30, 50). After Jesus rose from the dead, those same disciples received the Holy Spirit and courageously proclaimed the Gospel. When persecution drove believers from their homes, they carried the message of Christ wherever they went, igniting the rapid spread of the church.

The movement originated among Jews in Jerusalem but quickly spread to people of diverse backgrounds. Paul, once known as Saul, played a significant role in this expansion. As Saul, he zealously hunted down Christians, convinced he was serving God. He even held the coats of those who stoned Stephen, one of Christ's faithful servants. Everything changed on the Damascus road when Saul encountered Jesus. Through prayer, he received the Holy Spirit and became Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (see Romans 11:13). From then on, Paul devoted his life to proclaiming the risen Savior. Throughout the world, sinful and broken people have experienced transformation through God's saving grace in Jesus Christ.

In today's lesson, Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would empower them to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. We also see Paul gathering an offering to help poor believers in Jerusalem, demonstrating that genuine faith naturally inspires compassionate action.

Life Happens

In many churches, when we talk about stewardship, we start with the tithe—and rightly so. Our giving a portion of what we earn is an act of obedience, a declaration that everything we have comes from God. But stewardship doesn't end there. It includes how we spend, how we serve, and how we carry what we've learned and lived into the lives of others.

Some people give faithfully on Sundays but never consider that their mission is also active on Mondays—at work, in their group chats, at school pickup, or across the table from someone going through a hard season. Stewardship is about alignment. It's about asking, *Does the way I handle my money, my time, my relationships, and my influence reflect what I believe about God?* Mission is what happens when our values show up in real life—not just in what we say, but in how we live.

The early church didn't separate generosity from discipleship—they shared what they had. They brought meals, opened their homes, and met needs. And they gave—not out of guilt, but out of joy. Their generosity became part of their witness. Today, that call remains. We give financially because we trust God. And we give of ourselves because we want others to know Him.

Questions

1. Look at your bank statement and calendar from last month. What do they reveal about what you believe about God and priorities?
2. When has your generosity (time, money, presence) opened a door to share your faith? Tell the story.
3. Where do you spend most of your time Monday through Friday? How could your "mission be active" in that specific place this week?

Inquiring Minds (*Acts 1:6-8*)

KJV

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.

NIV

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


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

8 “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.”

During the forty days after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and taught them about the kingdom of God. The disciples had left their jobs, expecting better roles in what they thought would be an earthly kingdom. They assumed that since Jesus was the Messiah, He would overthrow Roman rule and establish a physical kingdom—one where they might hold positions of power. Instead, Jesus described a spiritual kingdom that God establishes in the hearts and lives of believers (see Luke 17:21). The Holy Spirit brings God’s presence to dwell within them.

Jesus told the disciples to focus on their calling, not on the timing of God’s plan (verse 7). He reminded them to be patient. Their questions reflected Old Testament prophecies that Israel would one day reign on David’s throne (see Acts 2:29-30). Jesus explained that only God determines the timing of events. He told them to prepare, not predict. Jesus instructed them to wait for the promised Holy Spirit (see Luke 24:49), who would empower them to be His witnesses (see Matthew 28:19-20). The Gospel would spread from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth—crossing every ethnic and cultural barrier.

This mission still applies today. Believers share the Good News not only through words but also through living in ways that demonstrate God’s love and truth. Faithful living inspires others to seek Him. Waiting is part of God’s plan and so is living as His witnesses with intention and courage.

 **What Do You Think?** How does your life today show a balance of patience and obedience to Christ’s calling? In what ways could embracing these qualities deepen your witness to others?

Spreading the Kingdom (2 Corinthians 8:3-9)

KJV

3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

NIV

3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,

4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people.

5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

6 So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

7 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

The kingdom of God grows when believers demonstrate compassion and a willingness to help others. Paul cared deeply for the poor Christians in Jerusalem and encouraged the Corinthian believers to support them. In his second letter, Paul reaffirmed his authority as an apostle, warned against false teachers, and informed the Corinthians about how others had already given to help the poor saints in Jerusalem. He urged the Corinthians to show their love in tangible ways.

Paul promoted freewill giving, using the Macedonian churches as an example of sacrificial generosity. Even though they had little, they begged for the chance to give, seeing it as a privilege rather than a burden. Paul initially hesitated to accept their gift due to their financial struggles, but their willingness revealed their deep devotion. More importantly, they gave themselves first to the Lord (verse 5). True generosity flows from gratitude. When believers understand that they belong to God, they recognize that everything they have also belongs to Him. Giving material possessions means little if their hearts do not belong to God.

Although Paul had already instructed the Corinthians to give (see 1 Corinthians 16:2), they had not followed through. Titus likely began the collection, and Paul urged him to finish it (verse 6). The Corinthians excelled in faith, speech, knowledge, eagerness, and love—but their giving did not reflect the same level of excellence. Paul did not command them but tested the sincerity of their love by comparing it with the eagerness of others. Christ, though rich, became poor for the sake of humanity so that through His poverty, believers might become spiritually rich (verse 9).

What Do You Think? How does Christ's example of self-sacrifice redefine what generosity means for you personally? In what ways could this shift your priorities when you give in the future?

Your Life

The Great Commission still applies today. The Good News reminds every believer of their calling to be God's witnesses. God's Word has not fully reached its intended destination because many—around the world and perhaps in your own family—have yet to hear and understand it. Living out that mission means intentionally seeking opportunities to share the Gospel.

Your World!

Even in a time when politics can feel divisive and discouraging, remember that God is calling you to be a witness for Him. Your life can serve as living evidence that there is hope in Christ. The greatest need today is not political power but the transforming power of the Holy Spirit working through willing believers.

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, guide and strengthen us as we work to fulfill Your Great Commission. Help us to spread Your kingdom through both our words and our actions. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, February 23	"Work Together for the Common Good"	(Nehemiah 4:15-23)
TUESDAY, February 24	"Welcome One Another in Christ"	(Romans 15:1-17)
WEDNESDAY, February 25	"Do Good Whenever You Can"	(Proverbs 3:27-32)
THURSDAY, February 26	"Fulfill Your Vows"	(Ecclesiastes 5:4-8)
FRIDAY, February 27	"Bear One Another's Debts"	(Philemon 10-21)
SATURDAY, February 28	"Provide for Others and Demonstrate Faith"	(James 2:14-26)
SUNDAY, March 1	"Love God and Love Your Neighbor"	(Mark 12:28-34)

Notes

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