

“Let’s Go”

Acts 1:1-11

Dr. Jarrett Stephens | Champion Forest Baptist Church

August 22, 2021

I am so excited about beginning this new series today out of the book of Acts. With summer coming to a close and the start of Fall upon us, it’s a GREAT time to start something fresh...start something new here at the church.

This is of course, *Promotion Weekend* for us here at Champion Forest and so our children and students are moving up into their new classes that are age appropriate and grade specific. We’re also putting a bright light on our Life Groups today.

If you are not in a life group, we really encourage you to get into one. You can go by our welcome desk in the atrium or our Connections desk in the Lobby right outside our worship center after services and get information on our Life Groups.

We’ll give you two or three options to check out. It really is how we break our big church down into small groups so that relationships can be developed, friendships can be made. It’s a place you can use your spiritual gifts to minister to people as well as a place you can be ministered to.

We have a so many great people serving in leadership capacities within our church and I just want to say THANK YOU to all of you who are giving of yourselves in this way. The way you serve Jesus and his Church so faithfully and sacrificially is making a difference.

I have a friend that has made a statement to me through the years that has seared into my mind...he simply says this: “There is nothing like the church when the church is working right.”

I believe this statement and it's the perfect setup for where we are going today and really throughout this series because the book of Acts is all about the Church:

- How the Church was birthed...
- How the Church grew...
- How the church advanced and moved FORWARD (as we are calling this series).

We'll see in our study through what is properly known as *The Acts of the Apostles* what the Church is capable of when the Church is working right. And what we are going to find is that the Church is:

- NOT a building...
- it's NOT an organization...
- it's NOT an institution...

The Church as God designed it is a people...a redeemed and called out people that when fueled and filled with the Holy Spirit, there is ABSOLUTELY NOTHING that can stop it.

And so, with all this being said, let's jump in and get started. I'm calling the message today, "**Let's Go!**" – that's how I feel about beginning this series and I'm praying this is how you will feel by the time you leave here today.

Now, as we look at Acts chapter one, it's important that you know this is essentially a continuation of the gospel of Luke. This is volume two if you will from the physician and missionary we know of as Luke.

Luke was a historian of sorts. He was interested...perhaps even commissioned by this man named Theophilus we'll be introduced to in just a moment to write an account of the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus.

In fact, listen to how Luke starts out his gospel: **Luke 1:1-4** – "**Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those**

who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”

We don't know who Theophilus was...many suggest because Luke honors him with the title “most excellent” that he was probably someone that carried some weight from a dignitary standpoint. His name is Greek, so we know he was a Gentile and his name also means “beloved of God” or “lover of God”.

And so, in one sense, while the intended recipient of Luke's writings was to a real person at a real time in history, I don't think it is too far of a stretch to say that it is also intended for us!

God in his sovereignty intended Luke's gospel and the *Acts of the Apostles* – Volume 1 and 2 to be it to be read by all of those down through the centuries that would be “lovers of God”.

Luke sets out to write an orderly account...some Bible translations use the phrase, “carefully investigated” – the word emphasizes his work in the process of compiling all this – what Luke wrote in his gospel he did so with “painstaking detail” and with an extraordinary amount of care and concern.

And he carried this same approach into Acts. Let's look at it together:

Acts 1:1-3 – “In the first book, O Theophilus (The Gospel of Luke), I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”

Luke's first writing was all about what Jesus began to do and teach up until the day he ascended. He's setting the stage that this second writing is going to deal with all that happened AFTER that!

- What took place AFTER Jesus ascended?
- What did the disciples do WHEN Jesus was no longer physically present with them?

This is what Volume 2 – Acts, is all about! Luke starts with the ascension of Jesus and carries us through the history of the early days and early years of the Church.

Now, this is going to be a fascinating study and I want to divide our text today in a way that we can easily digest. I want us first to see what I'm calling: **The Mandate.**

Acts 1:4-5 – “**And while staying with them** (them being the disciples – 11 of them after Judas...if we were to read ahead toward the end of ch. 1 they elect one more disciple and v. 15, we'd find that there were only 120 or so that would have been identified as followers of Jesus – 120! That's going to change pretty quickly!) **he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”**”

I want you to imagine what it would have been like to be one of the disciples of Jesus in this moment in time. I can't speak for you, but I know me and my personality. I'm a Type-A! I'm a go-getter! I'm more of a “Go, set, ready” kind of guy than I am a “Ready, set, go” kind of guy.

And if I had been an eye-witness to the death of Jesus...and more than that the resurrection of Jesus. If I had been around and seen him “present himself alive” and “offering proofs” that he wasn't a ghost or a spirit...for forty days I'm listening to him speak of the Kingdom of God (v. 3) and having conversation with him.

Let me tell you something, if I'm in the room, I'm feeling unstoppable! I'm feeling untouchable! I'm thinking, “Jesus, tell me

what's next because I'm ready to roll! If death can't hold you down, and I'm on Team Jesus – what's next, just say the word! Let's go!"

Here's the thing though, Jesus knows something they don't. He knows A LOT that they don't!

He knows that he is about to leave them. He's going back to the Father and so, the word he has for them...the command he gives to them...is WAIT!

This is the mandate. Before there was EVER a command to "GO!", which we'll see in just a moment, there was a command to "WAIT".

And notice what they are waiting on...or I should say, notice WHO they are waiting on. Luke refers to him as "the promise of the Father"...they are waiting on (v. 5c) the Holy Spirit.

It's the Holy Spirit – the third person of the Trinity that is going to CHANGE the name of the game for these disciples.

Now, we have to pause right here and talk about God, the Holy Spirit – who is often mischaracterized and misrepresented. In some churches He is made so much of it leads to craziness and dysfunction and in some churches he is avoided at all costs and that's not any good either!

Illus. Growing up in Church/Holy Ghost – almost a fear! He was hardly ever talked about or mentioned. (story growing up).

What we see here though and will see throughout our study in Acts is the Holy Spirit is THE difference-maker in the lives of the disciples and in the birth, growth, development and advancement of the Church.

One commentary I read made the notion that a better name for the book instead of *The Acts of the Apostles* might be *The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles*.

As we read through this book, we will see some pretty significant players in the early church. Names like Peter and Paul. Steven and Barnabas. Silas, Timothy and James. These are pillars in the early church.

But the main player that's making it ALL happen behind the scenes...he's invisible. And sometimes his work is noticed and sometimes it's not, but make no mistake, he's always there!

He is the one working in and through each person and circumstance and conflict. He's the one prompting and leading. He is the one giving insight and opening and closing doors. He is the Holy Spirit...the promise of the Father.

Why is he called the Promise? Well, let's do a little excurses here. Turn with me to John 14. The most teaching we have by Jesus on the person, work and ministry of the Holy Spirit is in John's gospel.

Now, understand when we teach as a church the Holy Spirit, we say he is the third person of the Trinity. We serve ONE God, in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Illus. Show ESV chart – May be easier if I show it in this way. Notice three distinct persons – personhood is this idea that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit can think, feel, communicate and act volitionally. One God: Three Persons.

Now, you could be looking at this and saying, “I don't understand that at all!” And it's going to take longer than a minute to wrap your mind around. I get that!

My encouragement is that this is one of those divine mysteries that we don't really need to try so much to figure out as we just need to learn to rest in and accept.

That being said, let's answer the questions, "Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?"

John 14:16-17 – “**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be (Future tense) in you.**”

John 15:26 – “**But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.**”

Notice, the Spirit of God will make much of Jesus! He will point people to Jesus. He will draw people into a relationship with Jesus.

John 16:5-15 – **READ.** So, notice what the work and role of the Spirit of God is:

- He is sent by God the Father to believers in order to help them and empower them...
- He bears witness to Christ, working “behind the scenes” if you will as the disciples minister and serve in Jesus’ name...
- He guides believers in truth and convicts unbelievers of their sin, thus drawing people to God...

Do you see why Jesus told the disciples to go back to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit?

- Without his leadership...
- Without his guidance...
- Without his direction...

Without the Holy Spirit of God coming upon them...baptizing them, they would accomplish NOTHING the Father desired or that Jesus commanded them to do!

THIS is how important the Holy Spirit of God is! NOTHING is accomplished for God apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

Illus. Glove (fellowship, encouragement, discipleship)

Listen, these disciples...they can't even understand spiritual truths apart from the Holy Spirit (same goes for me and you btw!). You see this in the question they ask Jesus in (v. 6).

Acts 1:6 – “So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

They had been with Jesus for three years...time after time after time, Jesus had taught them that his kingdom was NOT of this world. In their mind, the disciples were still looking for a political kingdom...a military rule to be set up so that they were no longer dominated and under the oppression of Roman Rule.

They wanted national sovereignty. They were thinking earthly power. Jesus had a spiritual kingdom in mind, but without the Holy Spirit, they could never understand this. It was the Holy Spirit who was needed to enlighten them...and he was on the way!

So, Jesus firmly, but I imagine ever so gently tells them in: **Acts 1:7 – “He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.”**

And he transitions here to share with them this shared mission they will enter into once the Holy Spirit comes. The Mandate was to wait. Here in (v. 8) we see: **The Mission**

Acts 1:8 – “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

What are they waiting on? The promised Holy Spirit. And how will they know when he comes? They will receive power. Luke

closed out his gospel (Volume one) with this same sort of language.

Luke 24:49 – “And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

So, get the process. They are to wait. They are to wait until the Promised Holy Spirit comes. When he comes, they will receive power – it’s this idea of being capable and able. That’s what power means! They will have the ability and capability to do what?

(v. 8b) – “be my witnesses.” The power is there to be witnesses of Jesus. The word, “witness” is a legal term. It described someone who testified in court to what they had seen or heard.

Notice the direct correlation between receiving Holy Spirit power for the direct purposes of worldwide proclamation. THE reason the Holy Spirit was coming was so to give the disciples power to be a witness throughout the world.

They were to start in Jerusalem...then go to all Judea...then to Samaria and ultimately to the world and this just so happens to outline the book of Acts – we’re going to see the disciples do just this! We’ll track it throughout this series:

- Chapters 1-7 covers them being witnesses in Jerusalem...
- Chapters 8-12 covers them being witnesses in Judea and Samaria...
- Chapters 13-28 covers them being witnesses throughout the known world at the time.

Power to be a witness! Holy Spirit power given FOR worldwide proclamation. Now, we’ve got to pause here and just take a pulse on how we are doing in being a witness for Jesus.

If you’ve been saved, you too have been clothed from on high with the Holy Spirit. The disciples received his power at Pentecost –

we'll cover this next week. You received his Holy Spirit power upon salvation.

So, how are you doing in being a witness for Jesus? Are you testifying to what God has done in your life?

Illus. Lifeway Research – Lifeway research produced this study in December of 2019...so not that long ago (**Show Graph**). It surveyed over 2900 Protestant Church goers...

I don't show this to depress or discourage...I'm simply pointing out that from Acts 1:8, we were given Holy Spirit power for worldwide proclamation and I'm just wondering the state of how we are doing.

If Lifeway came to Champion Forest and polled 2900 of us, would the statistics be any different?

- Are we being witnesses for Jesus in our Jerusalem? (that's our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our schools?)
- Are we being witnesses for Jesus in our Judea and Samaria? This is why we started the CF Connect so that we can more aggressively start churches and partner with churches and go on mission trips to churches that are being planted all over North America and give you more opportunities to go and be his witness.
- How are we doing in our worldwide witness? I'll tell you, you are very generous in your giving to mission. What about your personal going?

The need is so great and I just want to call on us to do more! To give more...to pray more...to go more! This is one if not the main reason why we've been given Holy Spirit power. It's for worldwide proclamation.

Illus. William Carey (SHOW IMAGE) - who in 1793 left his home in England to go to the distant land of India never to return home again. For 41 years he served Jesus in India. He would end up burying two wives and three children while on the mission field and didn't see his first convert until his seventh year on the ground. **“It is the duty of those who are entrusted with the Gospel to endeavor to make it known among all nations.”**

Did you know that currently...right now:

- There are 7,000 languages in the world and only 550 of them have the whole Bible in a language they can read. There are about 1,800 languages that still have none of the Bible translated in a language they can read. When you give to missions, we actually help support some who are working in this very way.
- I've been preaching now right at 20 minutes...did you know by the time I am finished here that you will have heard more of God's word in 30 minutes than 3 billion people have heard in their entire lifetime? Think about that!
- There are currently...right now somewhere between 6900-7300 unreached people groups that total a population of over 3 billion people. That means they have less than a 2% evangelical witness living among them – most with none at all!

They have never heard the message of the gospel – that the God of the universe wrapped himself in flesh and came to earth for them. They have never heard the message of the cross! That God went to the cross and died so that their sins can be forgiven. They've never heard the good news of the resurrection!

God has given us his Holy Spirit power for the direct purpose of world-wide proclamation and ALL of us have a part to play in this!

Acts 1:8 was NOT given to pastors! It was given to anyone who claims to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

- We can all go to our family members and friends that don't know this message...
- We can all give to World Missions and the work of the Church in the world...
- We can all pray that God would use us in his world-wide mission somehow, someway...

This is what we are given the Holy Spirit for! The calling on each of our lives is to be a “witness” for Christ in the world today. And a Spirit-filled believer will be a witnessing believer! Power and proclamation go hand in hand!

When I see this word “witness” two words come to my mind:

- 1. Opportunity**
- 2. Responsibility**

And I just want to ask in this moment are you seizing the opportunities made available to you and are you taking the responsibility of being a witness to heart.

I've read Acts 1:8 millions of times and I guess I just noticed it this week in my study, that it's not even a command...it's just a statement. When you have his power, you'll be his witness.

Illus. Robert Morgan – Go Tell It on the Mountain

Here's some homework for you as it relates to your witness: **Pray for sensitivity**. Start praying for God to make your heart sensitive to this...to give you a heart for the world starting with your own neighborhood and places of influence. For some, it's just not been on your radar...it hasn't been a priority. So, pray and ask OG dot make it a priority.

Then, **Pray for people by name.** Start praying for people you know that need Jesus by name. You'll be amazed when you start doing this what God will open your eyes to...because as you pray for them, the burden for them will begin to grow. (Pray for countries, mission organizations, what we're involved in).

Then, **Pray for open doors.** Pray that God would give you the opportunity to be his witness...the courage you need when a conversation heads in that direction.

In this, never suppress a generous impulse. If God leads you to give, give. If he leads you to support, support. If he leads you to go, go! Pray for open doors to walk through as a witness for Jesus.

Jesus gave them a mandate: Wait for power from on high. The Holy Spirit is coming. Jesus gave them a world-wide mission.

John Stott – “We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.”

They were to go into all the world. By the way, all the gospels underscore this:

- Matt. 28:19 – “make disciples of all nations...”
- Mark 16:15 – “preach the gospel to every creature...”
- Luke 24:47 – repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations...”
- John 20:21 – “As the Father sent me, so I am sending you...”

We have a mandate. We have a mission. Third, and finally we see:
The Motivation

Acts 1:9-11 – “And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, (clearly angelic)¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? (always kind of funny to me...did you just see what

we saw?) **This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.**”

What’s our motivation for Holy Spirit empowered proclamation?
What’s our motivation to be, live and stay on mission?

It’s THIS right here! Jesus is coming again in the same way he was taken up...literally. Physically. Jesus is returning. It’s going to happen! It’s like my friend Jay Strack says, “One day Jesus is going to blow the whistle and say, ‘Alright, everybody out of the pool!’”

And it’s this motivation - to be about his business when he returns that drives us to action. His last words:

Rev. 22:12 – “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.”

It hit me this week...you know the one thing we won’t do in heaven? Be witness. There will be no people in heaven that do not know him. When Jesus comes the opportunity to be his witness will be over. This is why there is such an urgency in sharing Jesus with people.

We don’t know when he is going to return...he didn’t set a date!
He just said, get to work and be on the watch for it!

It’s our motivation! One day, we will see Jesus and our work will be over. What will we have to show for it? What will YOU have to show for it?

Let’s not sit around...instead, I say to you, to me...to us all
Champion Forest, “Let’s go.”

Will you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.