

Jesus' Plan for the Nations

Jesus has a plan for the nations. His plan is that the message of Jesus be brought to every grouping of people on earth. As we will see in the book of Acts the first disciples trusted Jesus' plan and followed his lead. They became people who were willing to suffer the loss of everything in order to tell others what they had seen and heard about Jesus. They weren't concerned about the cost; their concern was simply to be loyal to Jesus. As a result, the news of Jesus began to spread to the nations one heart at a time. Jesus is still seeking that His message be brought to the nations through His loyal followers. If you are a believer in Jesus, YOU are part of this plan.

Opening Discussion: What are you looking forward to about the new sermon series on the book of Acts?

Read Acts 1:1-14

1. What is the "first account" that Luke mentions (v. 1)? And what does Luke say he did in that account?
2. Luke says that during the forty days that Jesus was on earth after his resurrection he made sure the apostles were convinced of his resurrection, and he spoke about the kingdom of God (v. 3). Why was it going to be vital that the apostles were convinced that Jesus had truly been resurrected for Jesus' plan to work?
3. Jesus commands the apostles to not leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised – the Spirit (v. 4). What role does Jesus say the Spirit will play in His plan?
4. In verse 8, is Jesus giving a command or a promise? Explain.

Steve said:

As we go through Acts we will see that Jesus' original followers were **empowered** to be Jesus' witnesses both near and far. They said and did things that went far beyond their human effort; they received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. And thousands of people believed and were baptized from Jerusalem all the way to Rome. The plan is the same for us. The vast majority of us are called to represent Jesus here at home. A few of us will be called to go to other cultures and be his witnesses there. In both cases, we need to believe that the indwelling Holy Spirit will empower us to tell others about Jesus. We'll talk about what that means throughout this series. But today I want you to be honest with yourself (and the God) about **whether or not you believe that the Holy Spirit will empower you to be a witness to others.**

5. How do you feel about this question? Do you truly believe that the Holy Spirit will empower YOU to be a witness?

6. After speaking of the promise of the Spirit, Jesus ascended back to the Father before the disciples' very eyes. Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. What is this experience like of hearing Jesus' final words and then seeing him depart? What are you feeling and thinking?

7. The angels promise the disciples that Jesus will return in the same way that they saw him depart (v. 11). Why do you think it was important for the apostles to know this?

8. The disciples do exactly what Jesus told them to. They return to Jerusalem wait. But they didn't just wait, they devoted themselves to prayer. What do you imagine the content of these prayers might have been?

Steve said:

Would you commit yourself to respond the way they responded? If we are going to be like the disciples in Acts . . . we have to be people who pray about Jesus' plan for the nations. Is there anything mentioned in today's passage that got your attention?

- Maybe you recognized unbelief - that you really don't believe that the Holy Spirit is willing or able to empower you to share the gospel with people. Confess your unbelief and talk to God about that.
- Maybe as I was talking God brought to mind specific people in your life who need Christ. Pray for opportunities to tell them your experience and to share the gospel.

Let's trust God and be people who believe that Jesus knew what he was talking about when he said, "You will be my witnesses."

9. Is there anything in Steve's message that got your attention?

The BLESS Model

The BLESS model is a great way to get started with being a witness for Jesus. It offers simple steps that we can take to build bridges of friendship and which can help us be witnesses for Jesus. It all begins with prayer. Take a moment and ask God for whom you can be praying. And then write down their names and begin to pray regularly for these people that God will open their hearts to the message about Jesus and that God will give you opportunities to listen to them, eat with them, serve them, and share what God has done in your life!



BLESS is an effective method and missional rhythm of sharing your faith with others in an easy-to-understand acronym.

Begin with prayer. Pray for the people in your life. Pray that God would create spiritual curiosity in them.

Listen. In your interactions, take up the posture of a learner – be a listener who learns about people’s hopes, pains, challenges and dreams. Practice being present.

Eat. Who can you eat with (or have coffee with) that is far from God? A co-worker over lunch? A neighbor?

Serve. Who can you serve this week. How can you meet practical needs?

Share. Share how God has blessed and made a difference in your life. Share “bite size” stories.

I am praying for . . .
