You Will Be My Witnesses

Summary and Goal

In His final words to His closest followers, Jesus reminded them that they would be His witnesses, locally and globally. Acts 1:8 is as much a reality for Christ followers today as it was 2,000 years ago. As we continue to be witnesses for the living Savior, may we always be focused on the foundational truth of the gospel.

Main Passages
Acts 1:8; 2:22-36

Session Outline
1. Spirit-Fueled Witnesses (Acts 1:8)
2. God’s Promises Fulfilled in Jesus (Acts 2:22-31)

Theological Theme
The Holy Spirit empowers the witness of believers in Christ.

Christ Connection
Jesus commissioned His disciples to continue the same prophetic witness He had modeled in His earthly ministry.

Missional Application
All believers are called and equipped to engage the world with the gospel, building the kingdom of God through His empowerment.
**Purpose**
To give an accurate account of the birth and growth of the Christian church.

**Author**
Luke (a Gentile physician)

**To Whom Written**
Theophilus and all lovers of God

**Date Written**
Between A.D. 63 and 70

**Setting**
Acts is the connecting link between Christ’s life and the life of the church, between the Gospels and the Letters.

**Key Verses**
“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.” – Acts 1:8

**Key People**
Peter, John, James, Stephen, Philip, Paul, Barnabas, Cornelius, James (Jesus’ brother), Timothy, Lydia, Silas, Titus, Apollos, Agabus, Ananias, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, Luke

**Key Places**
Jerusalem, Samaria, Lydda, Joppa, Antioch, Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea, Malta, Rome

**Special Features**
Introduction
What types of things do you most readily recommend to others? Can you remember the last thing you recommended? Why were you so passionate to offer your endorsement?

Personal witness is a powerful thing. In this week’s session, Jesus commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses throughout the world once the Holy Spirit empowered them. As promised, the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost and led Peter to bear witness to who the Scriptures showed Christ to be and who he knew Christ to be personally.

1. Spirit-Fueled Witnesses (Acts 1:8)
Instead of the preconceived notions of the power they would enjoy in a restored Israel, Jesus told them of the divine power that would enable them to carry out this new commission. It was this empowering by the Holy Spirit that would not only embolden them to speak on Christ’s behalf, but also make their speech effective for the gospel. Just as the Holy Spirit had descended on Jesus as a dove at His own baptism, now the Holy Spirit would also inaugurate the beginning of the apostolic ministry of Jesus’ disciples.

Why do you think it’s important to remember that the Holy Spirit was the One who was promised to give their witness power?

How does Jesus’ commission to His disciples help you understand the manner in which God can use you to make His name known?

2. God’s Promises Fulfilled in Jesus (Acts 2:22-31)
When the Holy Spirit came upon the believers in the Upper Room, they began speaking in every language represented at the festival of Pentecost, communicating the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit so that all peoples could understand it in their own language. What an incredible sound it must have been! After some of the scoffers in the crowd accused the believers of being drunk, not understanding the language the Holy Spirit was allowing the believers to speak, Peter corrected their false accusations.
by utilizing the prophecy from Joel 2:28-32. As his sermon continued, Peter used the prophets’ writings to demonstrate how Jesus of Nazareth was the ultimate fulfillment of those Messianic promises from God.

How does Peter’s survey of Old Testament prophecies enhance your understanding of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus? What crucial characteristics of God does it highlight in your mind?

If someone were to ask you to explain how Peter could use the Old Testament to teach about Jesus, what would you say? What other passages would you point to?


Having masterfully stated his case under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Peter moved to personal testimony. The initial part of his sermon dealt with what the Scriptures (Old Testament) said about Jesus the Messiah. At verse 32, he pivoted to include the collective personal witness of the believers—“we are all witnesses of this”—when speaking of Christ’s resurrection. This was the glorious difference between Jesus and the most famed king in Israel’s prior history—David. David, for all his accomplishments for Israel, died, was buried, and remained in the grave. Jesus, however, exceeded the historic glory of king David in that He died and was buried, but He did not remain dead. He was resurrected by God and every believer there, speaking the gospel in various tongues, was prepared to testify to that truth.

What about someone’s personal testimony of their experience makes their witness so significant? What personal experiences in your walk with Christ would you be sure to include if someone asked you to give a reason for the way you believe?

Conclusion

Why do you think it is tempting for believers to take an unbiblical portion of responsibility for what happens when they are witnesses for Jesus? Do you think taking on that responsibility makes it more or less likely that a person will share their faith with someone? Explain.

Describe a time when someone’s personal witness about how Jesus intervened in their life impacted you greatly. What do you remember about that person’s story? What does that indicate about the power of your own story?

When you consider what it means to be a witness for Christ, what images come to mind? What routes that you use frequently in a normal week offer you opportunities to be a witness for Christ?
Introduction

Moving must be one of the most stressful experiences in life—particularly when the distance of the move is between different cities. Aside from the selling of residences, packing boxes, forwarding mail, and so on, there is the larger matter of uprooting a life neatly ordered by structures and routines. In place of those old structures and routines, the new community brings new questions. What doctor should I use? Where is the most reliable auto shop? How far am I from my nearest movie theater? What are the schools like? The questions can seem limitless. In facing all of that uncertainty, desiring to make wise choices instead of foolish ones, one develops an insatiable quest for local testimonies of good doctors, great restaurants, school districts that are the best fit, and various community activities.

Personal witness is a powerful thing. It offers answers from the “every man” perspective. Commercials and pop-up ads scream superlatives of all kinds for every business, park, and service. However, these ads only increase the desire to find someone with first-hand experience that can share if they found these claims to be true or false.

When Jesus commissioned His followers to be His witnesses throughout the world, a similar responsibility—yet with much greater consequences—was entrusted to all those who know Christ as Savior. This thought would be paralyzing if it weren’t for the fact that the Holy Spirit is the One who empowers and directs believers in their faithfulness. Unpacking this week’s text in Acts 2:22-36, we see Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, bore witness to Christ in a way that brought much glory to God.

What is the best referral you have ever been given for trying a new restaurant? How did that experience shape your perception of the person who gave you advice?

When you begin eliciting guidance for a decision from others, what personal traits do you look for in those you seek guidance from? Why is this so?
What types of things do you most readily recommend to others? Can you remember the last thing you recommended? Why were you so passionate to offer your endorsement?

Session Summary
In this week’s session, Jesus commissioned His disciples to be His witnesses throughout the world once the Holy Spirit empowered them. As promised, the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost and led Peter to bear witness to who the Scriptures showed Christ to be and who he knew Christ to be personally.

1. Spirit-Fueled Witnesses (Acts 1:8)
Prior to this verse, Jesus was asked a question regarding the restoration of Israel. In response, Jesus refocused the attention of His disciples. His disciples were still struggling to relinquish the cultural expectations of the Messiah that had become so ingrained in their Jewish faith over centuries. Consequently, when Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection, they expected that Israel would finally be free from its earthly oppressors and restored to its prominence from the days of King David. Jesus only momentarily addressed the matter before commissioning His followers to something eternally more significant than the restoration of a physical kingdom.

Instead of the preconceived notions of the power they would enjoy in a restored Israel, Jesus told them of the divine power that would enable them to carry out this new commission. It was this empowering by the Holy Spirit that would not only embolden them to speak on Christ’s behalf, but also make their speech effective for the gospel. Just as the Holy Spirit had descended on Jesus as a dove at His own baptism, now the Holy Spirit would also inaugurate the beginning of the apostolic ministry of Jesus’ disciples. Scholar F.F. Bruce notes, “This work would be a work of witness-bearing—a theme which is prominent in the apostolic preaching in Acts. An Old Testament prophet had called the people of Israel to be God’s witnesses in the world (Isaiah 43:10); the task which Israel had not fulfilled was taken on by Jesus, the perfect Servant of the Lord, and shared by Him with His disciples.”

Why do you think it’s important to remember that the Holy Spirit was the One who was promised to give their witness power?

How does Jesus’ commission to His disciples help you understand the manner in which God can use you to make His name known?

The Trajectory of God’s Mission
Acts 1:8 can be thought of as the Table of Contents for the book of Acts. According to F.F. Bruce, “You will be my witnesses” “might be regarded as announcing the theme of the book; ‘in Jerusalem’ covers the first seven chapters, ‘in all Judaea and Samaria’ covers 8:1 to 11:18, and the remainder of the book traces the progress of the gospel outside the frontiers of the Holy Land until at last it reaches Rome.”
The source of their power was made as clear as their purpose. The disciples were not to expect grand fame or personal exaltation from the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Rather, the purpose of His coming was to send them everywhere. Jesus described an outward spiral of influence for the gospel through His followers. There was nowhere the disciples would go that was beyond the reach of the Holy Spirit. He would be continually with them, bringing fruit for the gospel, directing their paths, and giving them utterance.

### 2. God’s Promises Fulfilled in Jesus (Acts 2:22-31)

When the Holy Spirit came upon the believers in the Upper Room, they began speaking in every language represented at the festival of Pentecost, communicating the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit so that all peoples could understand it in their own language. What an incredible sound it must have been! After some of the scoffers in the crowd accused the believers of being drunk, not understanding the language the Holy Spirit was allowing the believers to speak, Peter corrected their false accusations by utilizing the prophecy from Joel 2:28-32. As his sermon continued, Peter used the prophets’ writings to demonstrate how Jesus of Nazareth was the ultimate fulfillment of those Messianic promises from God.

Peter continued to point to the manner in which Jesus fulfilled God’s prophetic promises as the Messiah. In doing so, he reminded his hearers of their guilt for Christ’s death. Referring to Jesus as being attested by God through miraculous works reminded them of the incredible things they themselves had witnessed Jesus do on numerous occasions. Those works could have only been possible if, in the words of Luke 7:16, “God has visited His people.” The tension of mounting conviction only increased, as Peter pointed out that though it was God’s determined plan that all of these events come to pass, the Jews were still guilty for their role in Jesus’ crucifixion.

The death Jesus died, however, was not in any way the final chapter. As Peter pointed out using Psalm 16, even Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection were part of God’s determined plan. Thus, it was beyond the power of death to hold Him because it was only on God’s authority that He died in the first place.

How does Peter’s survey of Old Testament prophecies enhance your understanding of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus? What crucial characteristics of God does it highlight in your mind?
If someone were to ask you to explain how Peter could use the Old Testament to teach about Jesus, what would you say? What other passages would you point to?

Continuing his explanation, Peter pointed out that the passage from Psalm 16 could not refer only immediately to King David, as he wrote it. After all, the psalm stated that God would not allow His holy one “to see decay.” David’s body, on the other hand, did see decay. His body was still in the tomb in which he was buried. Even as he wrote his psalm, then, God inspired David to write of things that exceeded his own lifetime. To be clear, all of the Old Testament—including this psalm—points to Jesus as the Promised One of God.

During King David’s life, God promised him that he would always have an heir on the throne of Israel. Peter spoke of that promised heir as further evidence that Jesus is the Messiah and, therefore, the only One in whom all the prophecies found their realization and fulfillment.


Having masterfully stated his case under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Peter moved to personal testimony. The initial part of his sermon dealt with what the Scriptures (Old Testament) said about Jesus the Messiah. At verse 32, he pivoted to include the collective personal witness of the believers—“we are all witnesses of this”—when speaking of Christ’s resurrection. This was the glorious difference between Jesus and the most famed king in Israel’s prior history—David. David, for all his accomplishments for Israel, died, was buried, and remained in the grave. Jesus, however, exceeded the historic glory of king David in that He died and was buried, but He did not remain dead. He was resurrected by God and every believer there, speaking the gospel in various tongues, was prepared to testify personally to that truth.

Peter offered as evidence of his witness the present working of the Holy Spirit among the believers at Pentecost. Jesus’ throne was greater than the throne of David, to which the cultural expectation of the Messiah was bound. Jesus’ throne was at the place of honor at the right hand of God, from which He imparted the Holy Spirit to His followers to continue His gospel work on earth. In verses 34-35, Peter once again returned to the psalms (Psalm 110) to demonstrate Christ as Messiah. Though David penned the words initially, the glorious description exceeded what could rightly be ascribed to David. David’s divinely inspired verses must have another in mind in order for them to find fulfillment.
What about someone’s personal testimony of their experience makes their witness so significant? What personal experiences in your walk with Christ would you be sure to include if someone asked you to give a reason for the way you believe?

How do the examples, offered by Peter, of David’s writings prophesying of the coming Messiah enhance your view of Scripture? What impact does it have on your desire to devote time to reading and studying God’s Word?

Having pointed to various promises in Scripture (Old Testament) regarding Jesus as Messiah, Peter closed his sermon with thunderous conviction. Peter pointed to the weight of evidence that Jesus is the Messiah. In doing so, he highlighted the difference between the way the world viewed Jesus and the manner in which God the Father treated Jesus. God had made Him Lord and Messiah. The world executed Him. Bruce explains, “The contrast is pointed between the treatment which Jesus received from his earthly judges and that which he has received from God. When he claimed to be ‘the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed’ (Mark 14:61), his claim was rejected as false and judged to be worthy of death. But God has vindicated his claim as true, and brought him back from death, exalting him to the highest place that heaven affords.”

**Conclusion**

Peter’s sermon at Pentecost offered immediate evidence of how Jesus’ disciples were to obey His commission. Ultimately, three thousand people came to Christ that day by the power of the Holy Spirit. When modern Bible readers read passages such as these, there is a dangerous temptation to view these texts as events that are encapsulated in our ancient past. However, there are important lessons to be learned from their careful study.

First, it is critically important to maintain a biblical understanding of God’s role in being witnesses for Christ. The text for this week clearly demonstrates that: (1) Jesus commissioned His followers to be witnesses; (2) God’s determined plan brought about the events we are witnesses of; (3) the Holy Spirit is the One who empowers our witness and gives it any degree of effectiveness for the gospel’s advance. The reason maintaining this biblical understanding of God’s role is important is because it prevents the believer from making the results of bearing witness for Christ inadvertently dependent on his or her own ability, charisma, persuasion, or anything else. The role of the believer is to bear witness; everything else in that holy moment resides in the domain of God’s divine power.
Second, the believer must strive to increasingly know Him to whom he or she bears witness. Look at the degree of scriptural insight that Peter included when presenting his defense of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. The breadth and depth of his response was captivating. So, too, believers today must consistently grow in their understanding of God’s inspired Word (the Bible) that bears witness to His incarnate Word (Jesus).

Third, Jesus commissioned His followers to be witnesses everywhere. The Holy Spirit indwells believers at the moment of salvation, which means He is always with them and in them. Because that is true, everywhere a believer goes is a mission field. Sometimes that may be an overseas trip; sometimes it may be the grocery store. Jesus sends His followers everywhere, empowering them through the Holy Spirit for gospel efficacy.

Fourth, a believer’s personal witness about Jesus is extremely powerful. Just as Peter buttressed his case for Jesus as Messiah based on the (Old Testament) Scriptures with his own personal witness, believers today must be able to share about the difference Jesus has made in their lives with others.

Why do you think it is tempting for believers to take an unbiblical portion of responsibility for what happens when they are witnesses for Jesus? Do you think taking on that responsibility makes it more or less likely that a person will share their faith with someone? Explain.

Describe a time when someone’s personal witness about how Jesus intervened in their life impacted you greatly. What do you remember about that person’s story? What does that indicate about the power of your own story?

When you consider what it means to be a witness for Christ, what images come to mind? What routes that you use frequently in a normal week offer you opportunities to be a witness for Christ?

Prayer of Response

*Pray and ask God to make you a faithful witness for Him. Pray for growth in your understanding and reliance on the Scriptures, as well as your willingness to share your personal witness of Jesus with others.*

Additional Resources

- *Tell the Truth* by Will Metzger
- *What Is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert
- *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* by Mark Dever
Session Title
- Your Story: Get Up and Walk

Main Passage
- Acts 3:1-10

Session Outline
1. Acknowledging Physical Need (Acts 3:1-3)
2. Addressing the Greater Need with the Gospel (Acts 3:4-8)
3. Transformation Draws a Crowd (Acts 3:9-10)

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

Daily Readings
- Monday - Acts 3:1-10
- Tuesday - Acts 3:11-16
- Wednesday - Acts 3:17-26
- Thursday - Acts 4:1-4
- Friday - Acts 4:23-31
- Saturday - Acts 4:32-37
1:8. Some have suggested that this key verse of our book may contain a three-fold table of contents: Jerusalem, Acts 2:42-8:3; Judea and Samaria, Acts 8:4-12:24; ends of the earth, Acts 12:25-28:31. We cannot know if Luke had that kind of division in mind, but the book unfolds in a fascinating manner somewhat along that pattern.

Notice that the call to witness is not limited to any select group of people since it spreads from the apostles to the 120 believers and on throughout the pages of Acts. Nor can we restrict it only to service in our own churches or to some kind of “professional ministry.” Every believer should be a “world Christian,” able to function for the Savior from the other side of the street to the other side of the world.

2:22-28. The Book of Acts contains twenty-three sermons or speeches, including seven by Peter and eleven by Paul. Verse 22 stands in the middle of Peter’s first public sermon. Verses 14-16 constitute the introduction; verses 17-21 make up the text; verses 22-36 form the body; and verses 38-41 offer the conclusion/application.

2:22. During Jesus’ time on earth his ministry was guaranteed by threefold evidence—miracles, wonders, and signs—precisely the marks of an apostle which Paul identified in 2 Corinthians 12:12. Interestingly, first-century Jews didn't deny Jesus’ miracles; that seems to be a theological characteristic of more modern times. The key term of the verse is surely the word accredited, used often in first-century Greek for people holding some official office. Jesus’ mighty acts pointed to divine power behind his life and ministry, thereby certifying that he was the Messiah.

2:23. Frequently the New Testament links predestination and free will, the two elements of a divine paradox. God handed over Jesus for crucifixion, but wicked men put him to death. So often people ask, “Does God choose us for salvation, or do we choose to believe the gospel?” Human reason searches for philosophical solutions, but the only biblical answer is a simple yes. Somehow in God’s eternal plan these two seemingly parallel roads come together.

2:24-28. Peter’s sermon progresses well; in typical New Testament form, he comes right to the point: resurrection. Verses 25-35 in this chapter contain four evidences of the resurrection: David’s tomb, the witnesses, that very Day of Pentecost, and the ascension witnessed by the eleven
disciples. God may have handed Jesus over for crucifixion, but he also raised him from the dead. As strange as it might seem to the human mind, Messiah’s death was God’s will.

Thus Peter turns to Psalm 16:8-11. Surely readers of the Old Testament up to this point had applied Psalm 16 only to David. Peter, speaking through the Holy Spirit, now certified it as a messianic prophecy. He did not use the psalm to prove the resurrection, but to affirm the messiahship of Jesus. Peter didn’t bother to prove the resurrection at all—he just proclaimed it. God raised Jesus to experience joy in your presence.

2:29-30. Something new has been added. Not only was David’s psalm a messianic prophecy, but the application of the psalm to Jesus is also linked with the fact that the Messiah came in David’s line. David may have considered himself a shepherd and a king, but Peter tells us he was also a prophet, whether aware of it or not. We see here a major key to understanding Scripture, namely—Christ is the unifying link between Old and New Testaments. Luke had already concluded his first report to Theophilus on precisely this point: “Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things’” (Luke 24:45-48).

2:31-32. Not only did David understand Jesus’ coming, he also foretold his resurrection. Standing in the crowd that day were many local residents who were familiar with the events that had transpired in Jerusalem less than two months earlier. Just in case their memories had lapsed, Peter raised again the broad banner of those courageous early Christians: we are all witnesses of the fact.

2:33-36. Peter wanted to proclaim the whole gospel, so he could not stop at the crucifixion and resurrection. In these verses he moves on to the exaltation and the coming of the Holy Spirit, bringing his listeners right up to the moment. Another quote from the Psalms (110:1) surely must have stabbed their collective attention. The humble carpenter of Nazareth was not only the Messiah, but now he lives in heaven and has caused all the Pentecostal commotion which evoked this sermon in the first place. Showing an enormous confidence in his God and his message, Peter used a phrase appearing only here in the New Testament (all Israel) and hammered home his final point: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. In fine homiletical style he returned to his original text (v. 21) and, along with the prophet Joel, extolled the messiahship of his Lord. The one you think dead is your living Lord, Master, and Messiah!5
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.