

Bible Stories for Adults

The Great Commission and Ascension

Acts 1:1-11

Opening

Gathering: Why are so many Christians so hesitant to share their faith when given the opportunity?

Today's Focus: Before ascending into heaven, Jesus commanded all of His followers to be His witnesses and He gave His Spirit and power to enable us to do so.

Key Verses: *He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*
Acts 1:3

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

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Understanding (*John 14-16*)

After Jesus rose, did He spend as much time as possible with His disciples for final preparations?
John 20:19, 26; 21:1, 14

Did He not need to spend more time because they were well trained and understood everything?
John 14:8-11

Did they not understand because they were too dense?
John 16:25

Why hadn't Jesus explained the things He said?
John 12:49-50

Why would Jesus waste His effort saying things that couldn't be understood?
John 14:24b-26

Did the things Jesus say have any purpose until the Spirit came and explained them?
John 16:33

Did Jesus say everything that needed to be said so that the Spirit could then explain it?
John 16:12

So are all the things Jesus didn't get around to saying lost?
John 16:13-15

How long would this Counselor be around to explain things?
John 14:16

Grief to Joy (*John 16:19-22*)

How did the disciples feel about trading Jesus for the Holy Spirit?
John 16:5-7

How long would they feel this way?
John 16:19-22

Were they filled with joy as Jesus had promised when they saw Jesus?
John 20:20, 28; 21:7

Was it only the apostles that Jesus appeared to?
1 Corinthians 15:5-8

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Prophecy Fulfilled (*Luke 24:44-49*)

What reason other than giving proof of His resurrection did Jesus appear to people?

Luke 24:44-45

How did His return to life help complete this fulfillment?

Luke 24:46

How would the coming weeks and years further show this fulfillment?

Luke 24:47-48

Would the fulfillment of taking the Good News to the world depend on these witnesses?

Luke 24:49

New Beginnings (*Acts 1:3*)

How long did Jesus go around showing Himself?

Acts 1:1-3

What is meaningful about this length of time between the ministries of Jesus and the disciples?

Matthew 4:1-2

Where do we first see the use of the number 40 representing a new beginning?

Genesis 7:4

How did God make a new beginning with His people when they didn't trust Him?

Numbers 14:27, 29, 33-34

Was He just punishing them or was He really making a new beginning?

Deuteronomy 8:2-5

Moses' New Beginnings (*Acts 7:17-43*)

How was Moses' life filled with examples of these new beginnings?

Acts 7:21-24, 29

Acts 7:30, 33-34

Deuteronomy 34:7

Deuteronomy 9:9

Deuteronomy 9:16, 25

Deuteronomy 10:10-11

Other New Beginnings

What other significant new beginnings do we find in His Story?

. Joshua 14:7

. Judges 3:11-12

. Judges 13:1

. 1 Samuel 4:18

. 2 Samuel 5:4

. 1 Kings 11:42

. 1 Kings 19:2-3, 8, 15

. 2 Kings 12:1

. Jonah 3:4-5

To what New Beginning have we been called?

2 Corinthians 3:6-8

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Wait For the Spirit (*Acts 1:4-8*)

Were the apostles to start this New Beginning immediately after Jesus left?

Acts 1:4

How long would they have to wait and how would they know it was time?

Acts 1:5

Why was it important for the apostles to wait for the Spirit instead of beginning on their own?

Acts 1:6

How did Jesus show that He understood why they could still ask such a stupid question?

Acts 1:7

When would they ever understand the answer to this and their many other "dumb" questions?

Acts 1:8

Witnesses (*Ephesians 3:4-11*)

Of what were the disciples were to be witnesses?

Ephesians 3:4-6

Was Paul able to understand these mysteries because he was a studied Pharisee?

Ephesians 3:2-3

Did Paul receive this revelation because he had been prepared through his studies?

Ephesians 3:7-9

Did anyone besides Paul receive this calling?

Ephesians 3:10-11

Being a Witness (*Acts 4:20*)

How are we to know what to say when we witness?

Luke 21:13-15

Is that how the great witness, Paul, knew what to say?

Acts 26:15-16

What about the other apostles? Did they try to become wise to explain the gospel?

Acts 4:19-20

Is a witness expected to perform with a slick, well-rehearsed speech?

Proverbs 12:17

Wiersbe: A witness is someone who tells what he has seen and heard. When you're on the witness stand in court, the judge is not interested in your ideas or opinions; he only wants to know what you know.

Funk & Wagnalls: A person who has seen or knows something, and is therefore competent to give evidence

The Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18*)

How many people need to hear this good news before we can stop witnessing?

Mark 16:15

How can we even begin with such a large goal?

Acts 1:8b

What specific instructions did Jesus give us to accomplish this witnessing?

Matthew 28:19-20a

Why is this so important?

Mark 16:16

How did Jesus promise to help us with this large and important effort?

Matthew 28:18, 20b

Will this power be available to us or will He just be there to tell us what to say?

Mark 16:17-18

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Jesus Leaves (*Acts 1:9*)

What did Jesus do after giving these instructions?

Acts 1:9

What do some find significant about the cloud hiding Him from their sight?

Exodus 24:15-17

Where was Jesus when He did this?

Luke 24:50-51

Where in the vicinity of Bethany?

Acts 1:12

Witnesses in Waiting (*Acts 1:10-14*)

What did the disciples do when Jesus left?

Acts 1:10-11

What did the disciples do after hearing the angels?

Luke 24:52-53

Did they immediately begin witnessing of the Good News of Jesus?

Acts 1:13-14

Without telling next week's story, did the disciples witness with Jesus' power as promised?

Mark 16:19-20

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I been a witness to others of what Jesus has done for me?
(*Acts 1:8; 4:19-20; 22:14-15; 26:15-16; Prov 14:25; Is 6:8; 43:10-12; Luke 21:13-15; 1 Peter 3:15*)
2. Who needs Christ's love in my Jerusalem (family, close friends, confidants)?
(*Acts 1:8; 10:24, 27, 44-48; John 1:40-41; 1 Corinthians 7:16; 1 Peter 3:1*)
3. Who needs Christ's love in my Judea (regular acquaintances – coworkers, neighbors, associates)?
(*Acts 1:8; Matthew 10:32-33; Mark 2:13-15; John 1:45-46*)
4. Who needs Christ's love in my Samaria (regular contacts – little in common, may even dislike)?
(*Acts 1:8; 6:8-10; John 4:4-10, 28-30, 39-42; 9:13-17, 24-33; 1 Cor 9:19-23; Colossians 3:11-17*)
5. Who needs Christ's love in my ends of the earth (encounters – may or may not know)?
(*Acts 1:8; 22:21; 26:28-29; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Colossians 4:3-6*)

God's Plan

When Jesus ascended into heaven, the angel Gabriel came to Him and commented, "Master, you must have suffered terribly for men down there."

"I did", He said.

Gabriel asked, "Do they know all about how you loved them and what you did for them?"

"Oh, no," said Jesus, "not yet. Right now only a handful of people in Palestine know."

Gabriel was perplexed. "Then what have you done to let everyone know about your love for them?"

Jesus said, "I've asked Peter, James, John and a few more friends to tell other people about Me. Those who are told will in turn tell other people about Me, and My story will be spread to the farthest reaches of the globe. Ultimately, all of mankind will hear about My life and what I have done."

Gabriel frowned and looked rather skeptical. He knew well the sinfulness and irresponsibility of people. "Yes," he said, "but what if Peter and James and John grow weary? What if the people who come after them forget? What if way down in the 21st century people just don't tell others about You? Haven't You made any other plans?"

Jesus answered, "I haven't made any other plans. I'm counting on them."

Twenty centuries later ... He still has no other plan. He's counting on you and me. His early disciples adopted His priorities and devoted themselves to reaching their world. Christ counted on them and they delivered. Have we done as well?