

Everyday, Part 4

At CCC, we're starting 2010 with a series called "EVERYDAY" - so we can learn (or relearn!) some of the biblical steps that build us into disciples. None of them are dramatic. None of them are quick fixes. And none of them work if we only do them sporadically or if we quit after a week or two. But all of them are powerful if we just take a few minutes "EVERYDAY" to invest strategically in the only part of our life that will outlive our life! Some things you just need to do EVERYDAY.

Today we want to talk about the third of "five discipleship habits" ...

ENLIST (ministry)

VOICE (prayer)

EXTEND (evangelism)

READ (Bible)

YIELD (time, talent, treasure)

Our church is to be commended for the way you have responded thus far in this series – THANK YOU to those who have already decided to ENLIST in ministry and VOICE your prayer and praise EVERYDAY! But today's message is the critical component of this series in our church.

Acts 6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Acts 1:8 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.

The church was promised POWER in Acts 1:8. The Holy Ghost was given primarily to empower an evangelism effort that would impact their city and region (Judea) and then EXTEND to include a cross-cultural witness (Samaria) and – ultimately – a global presence. However, the narrative contained between Acts 1:8 and Acts 6:7 covers a period of about ten years. During this time, the Jerusalem church was blessed with divine visitation and grew in spite of persecution, opposition, and even internal disputes. **But it all happened inside Jerusalem!**

What about the 99.9% of people in the world of their day who did not live in that one city? And what about the other cultures that God specifically told them to reach? All of these issues beg us to answer a similar contemporary question: How many more blessings, services and callings does the church have to receive before she is ready and willing to wholeheartedly fulfill the Great Commission left by Jesus Christ?

WHO WILL EXTEND THE REACH OF THE CHURCH?

In many of our conferences, campmeetings, conventions and church services, the attention has become centered on our "Jerusalem" – that it may grow and prosper so that it may continue to minister to US! We have "received power" (the first promise of Acts 1:8) but we have not "become witnesses" (the second promise of Acts 1:8). **The real test of any visitation of God is whether it results in evangelism!**

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

The early church started out in obedience to Acts 1:8, but stopped too soon. They wanted to reach out merely in Jerusalem – *among their own kind*. They wanted God to "restore again the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6) so they could sit in Jerusalem and have the nations come to them!

Luke 14:23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

Statistics show a nearly universal trend for Christians to disconnect from unsaved people the longer they are around the church. But that's not the way the Jesus or Paul did it! They were not isolationists; they were compelled to impact their culture with the gospel.

Matthew 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Acts 11:19-21 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

Antioch was a predominantly Gentile city, and it is *inconceivable* that the Christians who finally ended up preaching there should ignore all but a miniscule minority of Jews, assuming that they were the only ones God wanted to save. But that is exactly what they did, because their vision was limited only to the religious culture they already identified with.

Thank God there was a second group (from Cyprus and Cyrene, not Jerusalem) that targeted their efforts to reach the Greek majority of Antioch's population – **and the hand of the Lord was with them!**

This was a moment of destiny, when the church at Antioch was born. This moment is why the Apostolics would soon be known as those who “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) in the first century; this moment is why there is a church at all in the twenty-first century.

Jerusalem never got to send out history's greatest missionary – that honor fell to the church in Antioch because they had a missionary heart. **A MISSIONARY HEART DOESN'T START WHEN YOU CROSS THE SEAS – IT STARTS WHEN YOU SEE THE CROSS!**

The Jerusalem church was richly blessed and doctrinally sound, but God still turned His attention to Antioch because Jerusalem would not embrace His command to witness to the world. Antioch accepted that the Great Commission was at the very TOP of the Lord's priority list.

Acts 11:25-26 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, **he brought him unto Antioch.** And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. **And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.**

There are really only two New Testament church models, the Jerusalem Church and the Antioch Church. And only one EXTENDED the gospel!

C.T. Studd: “Some wish to live within the sound of church or chapel bell, I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.”

The greatest danger is always at the edge (where the church meets the culture). But so is the greatest opportunity for rescue and redemption. The New Testament church lived “on the edge” – never safe, always one step from disaster if God didn't intervene! Jude felt the tension:

Jude 1:22-24 And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

We are way too “safe” and “politically correct” in the twenty-first century! Church has become a comfortable, non-threatening place for many Apostolic people, a place that is always the same. That mentality is an affront to God, who calls us to EXTEND the gospel into our culture!

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“I want an Acts 2 church, where we preach the Apostles' doctrine!”
Acts 2 is not the whole pattern for the early church! We also need:

- An Acts 3 church where miracles happen at prayer meeting
- An Acts 4 church where services are literally shaken by God's power
- An Acts 5 church where we have church from house to house
- An Acts 6 church where saints do ministry so pastors can seek God
- An Acts 7 church where ordinary Christians are used mightily by God
- An Acts 8 church where we reach people of influence with the gospel
- An Acts 9 church where religious people are powerfully converted
- An Acts 10 church where we reach people who are not like us
- An Acts 11 church where even persecution spreads the gospel
- An Acts 12 church where God gives miraculous answers to prayer
- An Acts 13 church where we send out people to do missionary work

Matthew 9:37-38 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Do you know what Jesus did immediately after He asked His disciples to “pray for labourers”? He sent THEM out to be labourers! (Matthew 10:5)

Matthew 18:11-14 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

WHO WILL EXTEND THE REACH OF THE CHURCH?

Romans 1:15-16 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Isaiah 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, **Here am I; send me.**

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