

New York Times BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

MAX LUCADO



BIBLE STUDY
WORKBOOK

OUT
LIVE
YOUR
LIFE

JOINING GOD'S PLAN
TO CHANGE THE WORLD

 LifeWay
Biblical Solutions for Life



MAX LUCADO

Curriculum Developed by

MICHAEL KELLEY

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CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	4
INTRODUCTION	5
WEEK 1	7
<i>Our Once-in-History Opportunity</i>	
WEEK 2	35
<i>Let God Unshell You</i>	
WEEK 3	63
<i>Don't Forget the Bread</i>	
WEEK 4	91
<i>Stand Up for the Have-Nots</i>	
WEEK 5	117
<i>Blast a Few Walls</i>	
WEEK 6	145
<i>Pray First. Pray Most.</i>	
END NOTES	173

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Since 1985, Max Lucado, has taken pen to paper, sharing his heart and his stories with readers around the globe. His books have been translated into more than 38 languages worldwide.



Max crafts memorable books for readers of all ages, races, and creeds. He has written best-selling books for both children and adults, from illustrated storybooks to nonfiction and biblical commentary.

Yet all these books and products find their wellspring in a single source: the pulpit at Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas. All of Max's books for adults have been birthed as sermons for the congregation at Oak Hills Church, where he has served for 22 years.

Max Lucado is a minister who writes and a writer who preaches. He and Denalyn have three grown daughters—Jenna, Andrea and Sara, one son-in-law, Brett, and one sweet, but lazy golden retriever, Molly.

Michael Kelley is a writer, speaker, husband, and father from Nashville, Tennessee. Meet him online at www.michaelkelleyministries.com.

Dear Friend,

May I take just a moment to introduce you to a story that is very dear to my heart?

It's a story of hillbillies and simple folk, net casters and tax collectors. A story of a movement exploded like a just-opened fire hydrant out of Jerusalem and spilled into the ends of the earth: into the streets of Paris, the districts of Rome, and the ports of Athens, Istanbul, Shanghai, and Buenos Aires. A story so mighty, controversial, and head spinning that two millennia later a middle-aged, redheaded author from Texas would be writing a book that wonders:

Might it happen again?


This is the hope of this book, *Outlive Your Life*. Walking through the first 12 chapters of Acts, we see firsthand how a few faithful people can change the world. And we're asking, "Lord, do it again."

These are devastating times: 1.75 billion people are desperately poor, natural disasters are gouging entire nations, and economic uncertainty still reigns across the globe.

We are given a choice—an opportunity to make a big difference during a challenging time. What if we did? What if we rocked our world with hope? Will you join me in praying for a resurgence of compassion and outpouring of service? Will you ask God to do it again in this generation?

Let's hear it for the difference makers. I'm thanking God that you are one of them.

All the best,



BEGINNING TO OUTLIVE YOUR LIFE

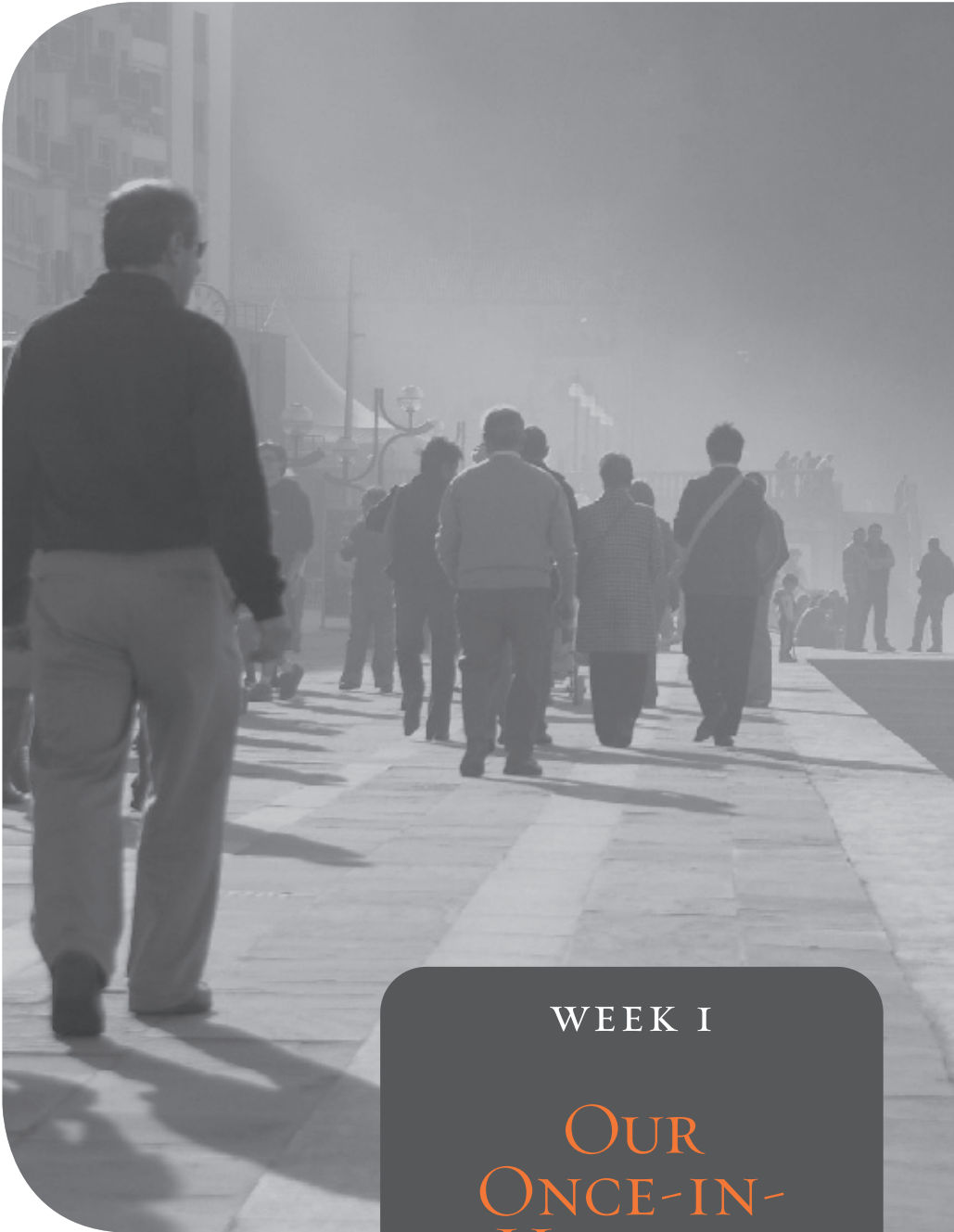
Welcome to your six-week study of the Book of Acts, a story that will lead you to some principles to *Outlive Your Life*. Hopefully, this study is only the beginning of a journey of life-changing experiences through which you can have a lasting impact on the world. Here's how the study works.

At the beginning of each week, you'll get together with your Bible study group to view a video message from Max Lucado focusing on a key passage in the story of the Jerusalem church. Following the message, your group will be guided to respond to what you've heard.

During the next week, five daily readings and Bible studies will help you review that message, go deeper in your understanding, and then apply what you're learning to your daily life. Day 1 of each week starts with a chapter from the book, *Outlive Your Life* by Max Lucado. Days 2-5 will guide you through questions, activities, and Bible study designed by Michael Kelley to take you deeper into the key concepts of the week, integrating those principles into your personal life.

The Jerusalem church joined God's
plan to change the world.

Let's get started doing the same ...



WEEK I

OUR
ONCE-IN-
HISTORY
OPPORTUNITY



INTRODUCING OUTLIVE YOUR LIFE:

Welcome to your first small-group discussion of *Outlive Your Life*. It's going to be a great journey together, one in which you will discover the truths that motivated and empowered the first century world to be flipped upside down.

Introduce yourself to the group by sharing: (1) your name and brief information about your family; (2) where you spend most of your time during the week (home, school, business, etc.); and (3) why you chose to participate in this study.

This study's title is *Outlive Your Life*. What does that phrase mean to you?

Share with the group one person you have known personally who outlived their life. How did they do so?

Think about the following three questions:

1. Had you been a German Christian during World War II, would you have taken a stand against Hitler?
2. Had you lived during the Civil Rights movement in the South, would you have taken a stand against racism?
3. When your grandchildren discover that you lived in a day in which 3 billion people were desperately poor and 1 billion were hungry, how will they judge your response?

How would you like to be able to respond to the third question? How would you currently have to respond to that question?

VIEW DVD MESSAGE

“OUR ONCE-IN-HISTORY
OPPORTUNITY”

You are the only chance the _____ has to experience what you have to bring.

There is something within you that makes you want to _____.

You want to live in such a way that the world will be glad _____.

Ours is the _____ generation in the history of the church.

Ours is the most educated generation in the history of the church.

Ours is the _____ generation in the history of the church.

Ours is the most technologically advanced generation in the history of the church.

Ours is the _____ generation in the history of the church.

Two percent of the world’s grain harvest, if shared and distributed, could eliminate hunger and malnutrition. There is enough food on the planet to provide every human being with a 2,500 calorie a day diet.

There are 132 million _____ worldwide.

OUTLIVE YOUR LIFE

There are over _____ million Christians in the United States alone.

If 6.49 percent of Americans adopted children, they could provide homes for every child orphaned by the AIDS epidemic.

The problem isn't the _____; the problem is in the _____.

This session is available for download at www.lifeway.com/downloads.

GROUP RESPONSE

What do you think it felt like to be part of the church in the time of the Book of Acts?

What do you think is the biggest obstacle to seeing things like those recorded in Acts happen today?

To which of these statistics presented in the video do you feel most personally connected? Why?

Do you agree with Max that the problem isn't in the supply but the distribution? Why or why not?

What is the responsibility of the Christian in light of both the supply and the demand?

What is the one thing you want people to say about you after you die?

LIVE

Day 1

OUR ONCE-IN-HISTORY OPPORTUNITY

By the time you knew what to call it, you were neck deep in it. You'd toddler walked and talked, smelled crayons and swung bats, gurgled and giggled your way out of diapers and into childhood.

You'd noticed how guys aren't gals and dogs aren't cats and pizza sure beats spinach. And then, somewhere in the midst of it all, it hit you. At your grandpa's funeral perhaps. Maybe when you waved good-bye as your big brother left for the marines. You realized that these days are more than ice cream trips, homework, and pimples. This is called life. And this one is yours.

Complete with summers and songs and gray skies and tears, you have a life. Didn't request one, but you have one. A first day. A final day. And a few thousand in between. You've been given an honest-to-goodness human life.

You've been given your life. No one else has your version. You'll never bump into yourself on the sidewalk. You'll never meet anyone who has your exact blend of lineage, loves, and longings. Your life will never be lived by anyone else. You're not a jacket in an attic that can be recycled after you are gone.

And who pressed the accelerator? As soon as one day is lived, voilà, here comes another. The past has passed, and the good old days are exactly that: old days, the stuff of rearview mirrors and scrapbooks. Life is racing by, and if we aren't careful, you and I will look up, and our shot at it will have passed us by.

Some people don't bother with such thoughts. They grind through their days without lifting their eyes to look. They live and die and never ask why.

But you aren't numbered among them, or you wouldn't be holding a book entitled *Outlive Your Life*. It's not enough for you to do well. You want to do

good. You want your life to matter. You want to live in such a way that the world will be glad you did.

But how can you? How can I? Can God use us?

I have one hundred and twenty answers to that question. One hundred and twenty residents of ancient Israel. They were the charter members of the Jerusalem church (Acts 1:15). Fishermen, some. Revenue reps, others. A former streetwalker and a converted revolutionary or two. They had no clout with Caesar, no friends at the temple headquarters. Truth be told, they had nothing more than this: a fire in the belly to change the world.

Thanks to Luke we know how they fared. He recorded their stories in the Book of Acts. Let's listen to it. That's right—listen to the Book of Acts. It cracks with the sounds of God's ever-expanding work. Press your ear against the pages, and hear God press into the corners and crevices of the world.

Hear sermons echo off the temple walls. Baptismal waters splashing, just-saved souls laughing. Hear the spoon scrape the bowl as yet another hungry mouth is fed.

Listen to the doors opening and walls collapsing. Doors to Antioch, Ethiopia, Corinth, and Rome. Doors into palaces, prisons, and Roman courts.

And walls. The ancient prejudice between Jew and Samaritan—down! The thick and spiked division between Jew and Gentile—crash! The partitions that quarantine male from female, landowner from pauper, master from slave, black African from Mediterranean Jew—God demolishes them all.

Acts announces, "God is afoot!"

Is He still? we wonder. Would God do with us what He did with His first followers?

Heaven knows we hope so. These are devastating times: 1.75 billion people are desperately poor,¹ 1 billion are hungry,² millions are trafficked in slavery, and pandemic diseases are gouging entire nations. Each year nearly 2 million

children are exploited in the global commercial sex trade.³ And in the five minutes it took you to read these pages, almost ninety children died of preventable diseases.⁴ More than half of all Africans do not have access to modern health facilities. As a result, 10 million of them die each year from diarrhea, acute respiratory illness, malaria, and measles. Many of those deaths could be prevented by one shot.⁵

Yet in the midst of the wreckage, here we stand, the modern-day version of the Jerusalem church. You, me, and our one-of-a-kind lifetimes and once-in-history opportunity.

Ours is the wealthiest generation of Christians ever. We are bright, educated, and experienced. We can travel around the world in twenty-four hours or send a message in a millisecond. We have the most sophisticated research and medicines at the tips of our fingers. We have ample resources. A mere 2 percent of the world's grain harvest would be enough, if shared, to erase the problems of hunger and malnutrition around the world.⁶ There is enough food on the planet to offer every person twenty-five hundred calories of sustenance a day.⁷ We have enough food to feed the hungry.

And we have enough bedrooms to house the orphans. Here's the math. There are 145 million orphans worldwide.⁸ Nearly 236 million people in the United States call themselves Christians.⁹ From a purely statistical standpoint, American Christians by themselves have the wherewithal to house every orphan in the world.

Of course, many people are not in a position to do so. They are elderly, infirm, unemployed, or simply feel no call to adopt. Yet what if a small percentage of them did? Hmmm, let's say 6 percent. If so, we could provide loving homes for the more than 14.1 million children in sub-Saharan Africa who have been orphaned by the AIDS epidemic.¹⁰ Among the noble causes of the church, how does that one sound? "American Christians Stand Up for AIDS Orphans." Wouldn't that headline be a welcome one?

I don't mean to oversimplify these terribly complicated questions. We can't just snap our fingers and expect the grain to flow across borders or governments to

permit foreign adoptions. Policies stalemate the best of efforts. International relations are strained. Corrupt officials snag the systems. I get that.

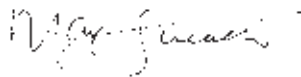
But this much is clear: the storehouse is stocked. The problem is not in the supply; the problem is in the distribution. God has given this generation, our generation, everything we need to alter the course of human suffering.

A few years back, three questions rocked my world. They came from different people in the span of a month. Question 1: Had you been a German Christian during World War II, would you have taken a stand against Hitler? Question 2: Had you lived in the South during the civil rights conflict, would you have taken a stand against racism? Question 3: When your grandchildren discover you lived during a day in which 1.75 billion people were poor and 1 billion were hungry, how will they judge your response?

I didn't mind the first two questions. They were hypothetical. I'd like to think I would have taken a stand against Hitler and fought against racism. But those days are gone, and those choices were not mine. But the third question has kept me awake at night. I do live today; so do you. We are given a choice ... an opportunity to make a big difference during a difficult time. What if we did? What if we rocked the world with hope? Infiltrated all corners with God's love and life? What if we followed the example of the Jerusalem church? This tiny sect expanded into a world-changing force. We still drink from their wells and eat from their trees of faith. How did they do it? What can we learn from their priorities and passion?

Let's ponder their stories, found in the first twelve chapters of Acts. Let's examine each event through the lens of this prayer: Do it again, Jesus. Do it again. After all, "We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (Eph. 2:10, NLT). We are created by a great God to do great works. He invites us to outlive our lives, not just in heaven but here on earth.

Here's a salute to a long life: goodness that outlives the grave, love that outlasts the final breath. May you live in such a way that your death is just the beginning of your life.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nancy J. ...".

“After David had done the will of God in his own generation, he died and was buried.” **ACTS 13:36, NLT**

PRAYER

O Lord, what an amazing opportunity You have spread out before me—a chance to make a difference for You in a desperately hurting world. Help me to see the needs You want me to see, to react in a way that honors You, and to bless others by serving them gladly with practical expressions of Your love. Help me be Jesus’ hands and feet, and through Your Spirit give me the strength and wisdom I need to fulfill Your plan for me in my own generation. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.

Excerpt from Outlive Your Life (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), chapter 1.

Day 2

OUR KAIROS MOMENT

SUCCESS

Congratulations. You have been given the greatest gift in the universe: one human life. And you've only got one shot at it. But one shot at what exactly? To make money? To have a family? To excel at work and gain a little bit of power and prestige? Certainly that's how our culture encourages us, for it is by these marks that much of the world around us defines "successful living."

How do most people around you define *success*? What's your personal definition of *success*?

How do you think God defines *success*? (Use Scripture passages or Bible stories to show God's definition.)

Though only God knows for sure the specific plans He has for you in this world, we can all say certainly that God wants us to change the world.

How does that statement make you feel? Check the box applicable to you below.

- Excited
- Nervous
- Happy
- Skeptical
- Sad
- Other:

**Have you ever thought of yourself as a world-changer?
Why or why not?**

It's a world that desperately needs changing. Consider again the startling statistics you encountered in yesterday's reading (pp. 12-13).

**What images come to your mind as you read those statistics?
Does one of them stick out more than the others? Why?**

What critical needs exist in the people of your own city?

Because these issues are so large and so complex, it's frankly much easier to ignore them. We wake up, eat a bowl of cereal, watch TV for a few minutes, and get in the car. And when we come home, we watch a little more TV, eat dinner, turn out the lights, and sleep well. We aren't bad people for living like that; we're not hurting anyone.

Then again, we aren't really doing anything to help either. The Jerusalem church had to face the immensity of the task before them, too. And just like us, they probably felt a little under qualified to so.

**Read Acts 1:3;9-14. How were the believers different after the
40 days they spent with the post-resurrection Jesus?**

Huge task. Small people. Similarly, here we stand in the midst of the wreckage of the world, the modern-day version of the Jerusalem church. But there is

one word that can transform all our doubts into hopes. That word can alter our perspective from fear to expectation, from tragedy to opportunity. The word is *kairos*.

KAIROS

Its simple translation is “time.” That doesn’t seem like a perspective-changing concept at first, but let’s keep digging. There are actually two Greek words translated as “time” into English. The first word is *chronos*. That word is used for ordinary measurements of time, as in “the time is 3 o’clock.” But *kairos* is used in a different sense.

It’s used to describe “the times.” As in, when “the times reach their fulfillment” (see Gal. 4:4). *Kairos* is about a God-ordained, divine moment. This was such a time for the disciples. If we dig into the historical context of Acts, we see that the Lord had been working behind the scenes for quite some time to pave the way for what was about to happen.

Describe a situation when you experienced a *kairos* moment.

For the first time in human history, there was a network of roads connecting the major urban centers in the Roman Empire. Those roads were also guarded by Roman guard, for the world was in the middle of what was to be known as the *Pax Romana*, or the Roman Peace. One could travel to and fro throughout the empire without much threat of danger.

Also, a common language was spoken for the first time throughout the world, making communication easier and more efficient. People of all different races and cultures were, for the first time, moving into urban areas. Through these seemingly chance events, can you see the sovereign hand of God at work?

How did these factors set up the mission of the disciples?

What factors are occurring in our day that will allow for the church to make a greater difference in the world?

And here we stand, the modern-day version of the Jerusalem church. You, me, and our one-of-a-kind lifetimes and once-in-history opportunity. Is it too much of a stretch to believe that maybe God has been creating a kairos moment for us, too?

God has not given us these resources, this education, this money, and these abilities for no reason. He has not positioned us so favorably so that we might live well and pass money down to our children. The problem is not one of resources; the problem is one of willingness. And action.

The problems are great. So are the resources. But most importantly, so is the God we serve. Here we stand and the road is forked. The choice is one of inaction or action. So which will it be? What will we tell our kids?

We can respond with hope rather than despair. Optimism rather than defeat. Faith rather than doubt.

The task is big but so is the opportunity.

PRAYER

God of abundance, You have given richly to equip Your people for such a time as this. Thank you for the chance to live large lives. Help us to catch a world-changing vision of what we might be a part of in Your kingdom. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Day 3

GOD'S MASTERPIECE

THE BAD NEWS

We are given a choice ... an opportunity to make a big difference during a difficult time. What if we did? What if we rocked the world with hope? Infiltrated all corners with God's love and life? What if we followed the example of the Jerusalem church?

They certainly didn't have the pedigree to be a world-changing force. At best, this rag-tag group was ordinary. At worst, well ...

And yet in the Book of Acts we find them taking the social issues, political systems, and spiritual lostness of the world by storm. We have no choice but to step back and wonder at the artistry of a God who can take the ordinary and make it extraordinary.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Make a list below of the adjectives Paul applied to his readers in verses 1-3.

Which of those terms is most descriptive to you? Why?

Dead. Disobedient. Children of wrath. That's not a great beginning to our story, but we've all been there. Crushed under the weight of condemnation. Face down in the sea of our own sinfulness. And if God, as the Master Artist, wanted to paint a picture of that situation, it would undoubtedly be the kind

of painting that would stop you and make your mouth drop open. Lifeless eyes. Corpses. Darkness. No shades of bright colors representing hope. But then we come to Ephesians 2:4, and with two small words the picture morphs into something else.

“BUT GOD ...”

What a great expression! But God. There was hopelessness, but God ... There was death, but God ... There was darkness, but God ... Surely we can apply those same two words to so many instances in our own lives:

The cancer was advancing, but God ...

My son was wayward, but God ...

I was content to live for the best money could buy, but God ...

My marriage was in shambles, but God ...

What is your “but God” moment?

Can you remember the exact time God stepped into the equation? If so, when?

Was the change immediate or gradual? How so?

Everyone who has moved from Ephesians 2:1-3 to the rest of Ephesians 2 has had a “but God” moment. It’s when, at the moment of deepest darkness, of most profound despair, of most inescapable hopelessness, God stepped into our lives and made us alive. Again.

Read Ephesians 2:4-10. How do the adjectives change after Ephesians 2:4?

If God were to paint the new picture based on these words, what would the painting look like?

That's our story in general terms. Death ... but God ... Life. But what then? We often think that's the end of the story; that once eternity is secure for us, once we have moved from being children of wrath to children of God, the picture of our lives is complete. But that great change, dramatic as it is, is not the end; it's the beginning.

Look back again at Ephesians 2:10 and see the Artist at work. The image of that verse is one of creativity. In other words, we are God's masterpiece. Much like an artist might step back and, with a great sense of accomplishment, look at the lines and squiggles that have come together to make up the work of his life, so God gazes in pride at His children.

It's been hard work, but He has steadily formed all our experiences, all our hopes, all our dreams, all our losses, and all our gains into one, dramatic picture. And it is beautiful. And unique! You are the masterpiece of the Divine Artist.

UTILITY

But here is the difference between God's masterpiece and those hanging in museums across the world: utility. Ultimately, any artist's masterpiece's utility is measured exclusively in beauty. That's what every painting, sculpture, or other artistic expression is for. It is meant for the purpose of beauty.

There is a similarity between God's masterpiece and all others in this fact. Surely no one can honestly gaze at the human body and not see beauty and creativity. We can't help but be in awe at the wonderful intricacies of human life. The same thing is true of people's stories. We can't help but be amazed at the way God weaves our experiences together to make us who we are. So in both of those senses, the purpose of God's workmanship is beauty. But there is another aspect, a different one, that separates both God as an Artist from other artists and us a creation from other masterpieces. Once again, the difference is found in Ephesians 2:10.

We weren't created to sit in a museum, to exclusively draw stares from those who admire our craftsmanship. We were crafted, created, and formed to do good works. And God has been preparing those good works ahead of time.

Are you more likely to live like your moment of salvation was the beginning or the end? Why?

How does it make you feel to know that God planned works in advance for you to do?

What types of things might stand in the way of you engaging in those good works?

How amazing. Much in the same way that God had been orchestrating events around the world to pave the way for the massive spread of the message of Jesus in the first century, He's been planning beforehand the good works for us in which we are to be involved. The plan of God is worldwide and individual; general and yet specialized; all-encompassing and yet unique.

These works are for you. Just you. It's true, you can't do it all, but God hasn't asked you to. He has, however, asked you to do what you are supposed to do. And you are meant to follow in the footsteps of the Jerusalem church. God is the Grand Orchestrator, the Master Painter. And He's got a wonderful plan for His masterpiece.

It's a plan for us to be useful, to be the changers of the world. And that plan takes into account everything that we are.

PRAYER

Creator, Former, and Redeemer, thank You for bringing life out of death. Please help us to see that we were created in Christ to do good works. May we grab on tightly to what You have for us to do in this life. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Day 4

“YOU SHALL BE WITNESSES TO ME ...”

“DO IT AGAIN, LORD. DO IT AGAIN ...”

That’s the cry ringing in our ears as we look at how these ordinary people of the early church turned the world upside down. In the span of one generation, everything changed. These people went from the epitome of ordinary—the very definition of “everyday” and “common”—to leaders of a worldwide movement. As surprising as that is, it’s exactly what Jesus said would happen.

Read Acts 1:8. What jumps out at you about the verse?

Was it a promise, a command, or both? What does that imply?

“You shall be witnesses to Me...”

It’s a command and a promise, a directive and a prophetic word all at the same time. It is at once an invitation and a prediction, and surely no one who heard Jesus say it fully grasped exactly how far it would go. Let’s start with the first word: you.

Jesus’ confidence in this verse is amazing. Looking out at who He was talking to, you wouldn’t think He would brim with such gusto. Yet He did. There was no quaver in His voice, no hesitation in His statement. There was no “I hope” or “Maybe.” Rather, in a note of absolute certitude, He smiled at the ordinary and told them that they would be extraordinary. *You shall.*

And it happened. They were. The very fact that you are reading these words is proof that they were. We are their legacy—living, breathing, reading testimonies that they indeed did. We are because they were.

Will we?

We're not fishermen. We didn't walk step for step with the Son of God. We aren't staring into the face of a Roman Empire. We didn't directly hear these words come out of Jesus' mouth. Nevertheless, we are part of the "you." The same statement Jesus made in Acts 1:8 applies to us. But do we really believe that it does?

How is Acts 1:8 applicable to your life?

What sorts of things might stand in the way of making that directive and promise the driving force in our lives?

WITNESSES

We may not have walked in the footsteps of Jesus, but we nonetheless carry the mantle from Acts 1:8. Because we do, we too are "witnesses."

On the scale below, mark how favorably you react to the word witness.

Unfavorable

Favorable

Why did you answer the way you did?

Make a list of the top three things you think of when you hear the word witness.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

It's sort of an intimidating word, right? You might think of someone in protective custody because they know something they're not supposed to know. Or you might have a vision of a chair in the front of a courtroom where a person will sit to spill their guts about an accident or crime. Or maybe you thought of going door-to-door with gospel tracts, asking strangers about what they believe. Perhaps a guy on the corner wearing a sandwich board with the word "Repent!" painted on it flashed in your mind. It's no wonder we're content with being regular folks; being a witness is a big job with big implications.

I won't deny the bigness of the responsibility of being a witness. But I will say that perhaps it's a little simpler than we might think.

How would you define *witness*?

What do you have to know to be a witness? What do you have to do to be a witness?

A witness is someone who carries a piece of vital information because of something they have experienced. They have seen a car wreck and know who is at fault. They were privy to information and know where the trail of e-mails ends. They saw something, heard something, felt something, experienced something, and whatever that something is, is valuable.

That's it. No sandwich boards. No protective custody. Just the simple act of revealing what a person has experienced. That's what Jesus asked of His followers—what you have seen, heard, and experienced—you are to be witnesses of that.

Though there's always a verbal component to being a witness, there is also a tangible quality to it. Being a witness means caring for the sick. It means visiting those who have no one to visit them. It means bringing food to the hungry or rocking little babies in the neonatal unit of the hospital. It means preparing hot meals and singing carols at nursing homes. In all of these things, we are witnesses, because in all of those acts of grace and compassion we are bearing witness to what we ourselves have already received.

ORDINARY IS GOOD

And that's why being an ordinary Joe Pot Roast is actually good for us. Because we are so radically and unequivocally ordinary, there was absolutely no good reason for Jesus to do what He did for us. We are unimportant, misguided, and half-hearted. We are preoccupied and two-faced. But we are also something else: loved.

Read Romans 5:8. Using the space below, sketch out a brief timeline of the happenings recorded in this verse.

What is significant about the “when” of Christ’s death?

He didn't wait for us to get our act together, to fully appreciate Him, or to completely understand exactly what was happening for us. While it might have looked different for all of us in certain ways, the universal truth for all Christians is this: While we had no hope and were absolutely lost, Christ died for us, not because we deserved it but because He loved us.

Because we are so ordinary and Christ died for us, we know what it's like for everyone else in the world who is ordinary. It is out of the extraordinary experience of ordinary people that we are witnesses. When we move out and testify as witnesses of the fact that Christ died for us, we bring hope to everyone in the whole wide world who is also ordinary.

In that sense, the very experience we have had with Jesus, whereby He invaded the ordinariness of our lives and graciously redeemed us, is what qualifies us to be witnesses. When we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and verbally share the gospel, we are becoming extensions of the grace of God within us.

We are, in essence, just replaying in various forms and fashions what we have already experienced. As witnesses, we become conduits of the grace of God in our own lives. That's what it means to be true witnesses—those that live out what they have experienced. What they have seen. What they have felt.

We become conduits, re-players of
our own experiences with Jesus.

PRAYER

We all have a story to tell, Father. Help us to not only be faithful witnesses but excited ones. Impassioned ones. Vibrant ones. Help us to have the kind of excitement and passion that is infectious and contagious to a world in need. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Day 5

YOU AREN'T IN IT ALONE

ALL OF YOU

If you look back at Acts 1:8 and consider the commissioning of the first church, it's striking to realize that although they were a group of individuals, Jesus didn't make individual assignments at that time. Remember His commission? "You [all of you collectively] will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8, NIV).

We can only conclude that Jesus chooses to work in community.

Why do you think Jesus chooses to work in community?

Is that encouraging for you? Why or why not?

Changing the world is a group project. We are to corporately come together in the church with everything we have—all our talents, gifts, and resources—and team up to do something bigger with our lives.

You see the same emphasis, at least in part, in Jesus' prayer for His future disciples recorded in John 17.

UNITY ISN'T OPTIONAL

Jesus saw the need well before we did. In fact, our unity was so important to Jesus that He devoted time to it in His prayer the night before He died.

Read John 17:20-26. What specifically did Jesus pray in these verses?

Why do you think unity in the church is so essential for the world to believe in Jesus?

There in the garden, with His head beaded with drops of blood, Jesus approached the throne of His Father. And He prayed that His followers might be brought to complete unity.

Perhaps there is both a psychological and a practical reason for the vital nature of unity in the church. When you think about it, the gospel is much more than an invitation to heaven. It's a call to drastically and completely reorder your entire life. We are asking people to trust in a message that seems foolish. We are asking them to live their lives diametrically opposed to the culture around them. We are asking them to trust their entire lives, both in this world and the next, to a historical figure who we say was resurrected from the dead.

If we, in the church, are so drowned under backbiting and arguing, is there really any good reason for them to listen? If we can't agree amongst ourselves about what is truly important, why in the world would anyone listen to what we have to say about the most vital issues of life and death? When we come together in unity, we make a bold statement about the truth of the gospel to the world around us.

But there's a certain practicality to unity too. We've already discussed the magnitude of the task in front of us. We've delved into the immense and complicated problems of hunger, human trafficking, and spiritual lostness. We've looked these issues in the eye, and we've freely admitted that they are enormous. And we are small.

Unless we work together. What if Christians began to pool all their financial resources in order to eliminate poverty? What if we began to think strategically together about how to most effectively verbally share the gospel in areas of the world where Christ is not yet named? What if we put our homes on the line in order to welcome in the millions of orphaned children in the world?

We certainly can't do it alone. But together, the possibilities are endless.

What specifically do you think could be accomplished if the church decided to team up?

If so much more can be accomplished, why do you think Christians have such a hard time with unity?

What are three ways you might play a part in helping unify the body of Christ?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In the light of the vastness of the mission, arguments and petty disagreements have a way of disappearing. Perhaps, then, the answer to the disunity we often find in the church is for the church to begin to ask itself, “What exactly are we here for?”

Are we really here to choose the color of carpet? Are we here to decide who has the most appropriate form of music? Are we here to endlessly debate the finer points of the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Or are we here to change the world? Are we here to outlive our lives?

GROUP PROJECT

God wants us to outlive our lives, and He wants us to do it together.

Read Romans 12:1-10. Write out Paul’s message in your own words.

What specifically do you think your specific role is?

What is God’s will for your life? His will is that you play your essential role in the continuing mission of the church. That we come together in a group project and get busy about the work of His kingdom.

We’re not all teachers. But the teachers should teach. We all don’t have endless pocketbooks, but those who do should give. We all can’t work to develop strategic plans, but those who can should. You don’t have to do it all. But you do have to do something.

You don't have all it takes to complete the mission, and you're not supposed to. But you do have what you need to play your part in the massive group project of the kingdom of God.

The church cannot be who she's supposed to be until you are willing to be who you're supposed to be.

PRAYER

Creator God, thank You for forming and molding us as individuals. Help us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought but to see ourselves as an integral part of the team of the church. May we give ourselves freely to each other for the greater good of Your mission. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

OUTLIVING YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK

Scripture Memory: "After David had done the will of God in his own generation, he died and was buried" (Acts 13:36, NLT).

Action Plan: Schedule time with someone you admire who's making a difference. Ask these questions:

1. Why did you choose to live this way?
2. What motivates you?
3. What did you have to learn?
4. How did you begin?

WHAT IF YOU LIVED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE WORLD WAS GLAD YOU DID?



We're living in devastating times: 1.75 billion people are desperately poor, natural disasters are gouging entire nations, and economic uncertainty still reigns across the world. But we've been given a choice—an opportunity to make a big difference during a challenging time. *What if we did?*

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