

# YOU

Bible Study

**Sermon Series:** How to Share Christ  
**To be used with:** Our Commission  
**Sermon Title Possibilities:** Tell Everyone  
**Scripture:** Acts 1:1-11

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study How to Share Christ, these sermon outlines will follow the same theme as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

**Introduction:** An old church tradition holds that the book of Acts was written by a former slave. Does that surprise you? It did me. In the Roman Empire, the slave class often included people we would consider professionals, such as doctors and lawyers. Tradition holds that Luke was a former slave, and the man Theophilus (whom he addressed in the opening verse) was his former owner. According to the tradition, Luke came to know Jesus as his Savior while he was still in slavery, and then he led Theophilus to Christ.

After Theophilus became a believer, he set Luke free, enabling him to travel with Paul and the other early missionaries. Some years later, when Luke set out to write an account of the life of Jesus, Theophilus financed the project. Notice how Luke referred to his “former treatise” in verse one? He was likely referring to the Gospel that bears his name. Luke’s Gospel ends on a rather abrupt note, so he wrote Acts to tell us the rest of the story. As he noted in the opening chapter, Jesus had given His disciples a mission, and now he was telling how they carried it out. I submit to you that the church today still has a mission, and it’s the same mission that our Lord gave to His disciples.

## **The power for this mission.**

A. Jesus was preparing to return to heaven.

1. He had been with them for forty days.
  - a. He had shown Himself alive by “many infallible proofs.”
  - b. The Bible records at least eleven appearances of Jesus following His resurrection from the dead.
2. He instructed them to wait in Jerusalem.
  - a. He had already told them to proclaim His message throughout the world (Luke 24:46-47).
  - b. He still had to fulfill one last promise (John 14:16-17).

B. Why did Jesus tell them to wait for the Holy Spirit?

1. Jesus had given them a task they could not do on their own.
  - a. They had studied under the greatest Teacher who ever lived.
  - b. They had personally witnessed His miracles, including His resurrection from the dead.
  - c. In spite of all this, they still needed the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. We need that same power today.
  - a. Education and other forms of training have their place, but they are not sufficient by themselves.
    - Dr. Gray Allison used to say, “A sharp axe cuts more wood than a dull one.” He was right, and that’s why I always encourage preachers and other Christian workers to get as much education and training as they can. A good preacher never stops learning. Nevertheless, these things are meaningless without the power of the Holy Spirit.

b. Have we become more dependent on our own knowledge and modern technology than we are the Holy Spirit?

### **The particulars of this mission.**

- A. The disciples still did not quite understand why Jesus came.
1. They asked Him if He was going to “restore the kingdom to Israel”.
    - a. Most Jews expected the Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom.
    - b. The disciples’ hope for such a kingdom was dashed when Jesus crucified, but it was revived when He rose again.
  2. Jesus essentially told them it was none of their business.
    - a. He did not deny that He would someday establish such a kingdom. He simply said it’s not for us to know when.
    - b. Only the Father knows when Christ will return (Mark 13:32).
      - Every few years, some crackpot comes along and says he / she has figured out when Christ will return. Such people should be ignored, because they’re claiming to know more than Jesus Himself claimed to know.
- B. What are the details of our mission?
1. We are to be witnesses for Christ (Acts 1:8).
    - a. A witness in court does not have to be a legal scholar, and a witness for Christ does not have to be a Bible scholar.
    - b. Simply tell people what Jesus has done for you, and you might be surprised at the impact you make.
  2. We are to carry His message to the whole world.
    - a. “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria” – Some people see an order of priority in this verse: we should reach our hometown first, then our state, then our country, etc.). Personally, I think such views read more into this verse than our Lord intended.
    - b. Jesus’ point was, no part of the world is outside our responsibility.

### **The priority of this mission.**

- A. After Jesus finished giving these commands, He was “taken up”.
1. The word translated “taken up” is the Greek word “hupolambano,” which literally means “to take up and carry away”.
    - a. “A cloud received Him out of their sight” – Personally, I believe this “cloud” was the shekinah glory of God.
    - b. The disciples “looked steadfastly toward heaven”. The word in the original language means “to look intently”.
  2. “Two men in white apparel” – Some have suggested the two men were Moses and Elijah, but most likely they were angels.
    - a. They assured the disciples that Jesus would return someday.
    - b. He will return “in like manner” as they saw Him go to heaven. That means He will return visibly.
- B. What are we to do until Jesus returns?
1. We are to keep on spreading the Gospel.
    - a. A church’s top priority is to proclaim the good news of Christ.
    - b. We are to stick with this task until God takes us home.
  2. We should have a sense of urgency.
    - a. We don’t know when Jesus will return, but one thing is certain: His return draws nearer each day.
    - b. People today are scared because of the world’s uncertainties, and their only hope is the gospel.

**Conclusion:** When I was in my early teens, our local PBS station aired a program every Saturday afternoon called “Matinee at the Bijou”. As the title suggests, it featured an old movie, but it was structured like a cinema presentation from the 1930’s. That is, it began with a preview of coming attractions, and then it featured a newsreel and a cartoon (or some short film). Just before the feature presentation, they also showed an episode from an old movie serial. These were lengthy stories divided into short episodes, and each episode ended on a cliffhanger. That is, the hero would be in a desperate situation where it seemed there was no way out. Of course, at the beginning of the next episode, the hero would escape. My Dad explained that the serials were deliberately structured that way to keep viewers coming back week after week.

As W.A. Criswell pointed out, the book of Acts ends on a cliffhanger. The apostle Paul was in prison in Rome, waiting to go on trial before Caesar. Was that the end of Paul? Bible scholars still debate that question. Was it the end of the church? Not by a long shot! Yes, the church continued to face hardship and persecution, but the message of the Gospel continued to go forward. Let us continue to carry out our Lord’s mission in this world. People may not like us, and even the government may end up taking sides against us. We don’t need to worry. As an old gospel song says, we’ve read the back of the Book, so we know who’s going to win in the end!

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