



EMPOWERED

Dunamis is a Greek word. It means power. In scripture, it is usually used to describe the power of God working through His people. That power still exists and it lives inside of followers of Christ. Christ has empowered us to live with power in this big playground called earth. When you look at our world, it is not hard to see we are in need of a great move of God's power again. The problem is many people don't think this is possible anymore or maybe ever. But it has happened before.

The book of Acts is the historical account of the birth of the early church and the spreading of the Gospel all over the world. It is an incredible book and the stories in it could not be made up. You cannot study them without getting excited and dreaming of what God could do through us to change our world.

This is why we are going to study through a short section of this book. We will not come close to covering all of it, but I want to use a few sections of it to inspire us and make us dream of what could be. I want us to be challenged to be a part of the mission God has called us to so we can see our churches, families, schools, communities, and world changed.

Here is how the study will unfold:

Lesson 1: The Mission

Lesson 2: The Message

Lesson 3: The Response

Lesson 4: The Fallout

My goal in writing this study is to awaken the hearts of adults and young people alike to what could be. We have work to do and it is time we go to it. God is powerful and He has instilled some of that power in us. It is time we unleash that power. It is time we see a mighty move of God that we have not seen in a while and maybe never before. It is time for us to let God work in us and through us to change our world. Join with me as we embark on this life-changing journey.

Buck Baskin

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LESSON 1: THE MISSION

Everyone say Dunamis. It is kind of a funny sounding word, isn't it? But it's a very important word. You see the New Testament of our bible was not written in English but was actually written in Greek. Then it was later translated into English. Sometimes it is good for us to look back at the original language the text was written in. This is because there are times where the English translation just does not quite capture the whole meaning of the Greek word. Dunamis is a word that shows up in scripture a few times. It is a great word that means power. It is usually used to refer to the power of God working in and through those who follow Him. You see, if you are a Christian, a follower of Christ, you are empowered by His power living inside of you. And when we come together, allow that power to work through us, and live life the way we have been called to, incredible things can happen. You could see your friends come to Christ. You could see your campus changed. You could see needs met in your community. You could see poverty ended, and you could see the world changed.

To understand all of this we are going to look at the first part of the book of Acts, which was authored by Luke. This is the same Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke. It is basically the sequel to His first book that tells what happened after Jesus rose from the dead. Acts is a historical account of the birth and spread of the early church. This book also serves as an incredible inspiration to the church of what we can accomplish when we live as Christ has called us to and trust in the power He has given us.

Before I continue, let me be clear. When I say the church, I mean Christians all over the world, not the building you attend locally. So when I talk about the church living a certain way, I mean Christians all over the world coming to do these things.

How many of you are involved in a club, team, or organization? What is the goal or mission of that organization? Any good organization or movement has a mission. In your situations, it might be to win a championship, be leaders on your campus, or increase membership.

Think about your student ministry, small group, Sunday school class, etc. What is its mission? Hopefully it has a mission and you know what it is. I also hope it lines up with the mission we are going to talk about today.

Today we are going to look at the mission Christ gave us to live out as the church while we are on Earth. Then throughout this series, we are going to see how the early church lived out this mission and saw the world change. That sentence might be the key to this whole study.

It is not enough to just have a mission, but you must actually live it out for it to mean anything.

You cannot say you want to win a championship and then sit on the couch all day. You cannot say that as a group you want to reach your campus or change the world and then expect anything to happen if you stay huddled up in the room or building you meet in. You must go out and actually do some work to complete your mission.

So let's start with the beginning, Chapter 1 of Acts, and see what truth it holds for us as we seek to live out the mission God has for our lives.

BEFORE WE READ, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE MISSION IS THAT CHRIST HAS FOR OUR LIVES?

Read Acts 1:1-8

As is often the case, there is a lot going on in this passage of scripture. For one, we see evidence in verse 1 that Luke wrote this book as it mirrors the beginning to his Gospel and actually references that Gospel. Then it begins to pick up where the story left off and mentions how Jesus, after He rose from the dead, appeared at various times for 40 days. From this and other parts of scripture we know He appeared to at least 500 witnesses, just in case anyone had doubts about whether the resurrection was true. Then things begin to pick up. There are two major things I think we can learn from this passage.

1. SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO WAIT.

You would think after Jesus had come, suffered, died, and rose from the dead fulfilling His mission on Earth, He would have been in a big hurry to send out the troops. But He was not. He told His disciples to wait. This verse surprises me every time I read it. This goes against everything we are used to. We barely even have an idea out of our mouths before we are ready to take it and run with it. But this is not always what God wants, especially in this case. This is because Jesus knew something the disciples did not:

They needed to wait on the power of God.

We'll see this in the next lesson but the power of God had not yet descended upon them. Their work was not going to be effective at all without this power. We are the same way. We cannot change the world on our own. We need the power of God working in us and through us, and thankfully when we ask, God gives this to us.

We also need to notice how they waited. We will break this down later but they went and prayed without ceasing.

Waiting God's ways is not sitting like a bump on a log.

We may be waiting on God's timing but we are still out living, we are still praying, we are still meeting together, we are still ministering, until the moment God sends us out for this big mission He has for us.

2. WE HAVE A MISSION.

In Acts 1:8 we are given our marching orders as followers of Christ. This is often referred to as the Great Commission. While this is a great and fitting name, I would also like to refer to this as the great mandate. This is because I want to make sure it is clear that living this verse out is not optional. We must do the things Christ called us to if we claim to be followers of Him. Let's break down exactly what this mission is.

A. WE ARE TO SHARE THE GOSPEL.

Being a witness means telling others about what Christ has done for you and for them. It means telling them how He offers forgiveness, a fresh start, and eternal life that begins now. It means telling them how He is inviting them to be a part of His plan to change and restore the world. Then it means discipling those people and helping them grow in their faith, because sharing the Gospel is not a one-time, hit-and-run thing, and sadly most Christians will not even make it this. Less than 50 percent of all Christians will ever share their faith. The Gospel is about people experiencing life change, becoming part of a life-long community, and then going out and helping others experience this same life change. (If you have time, train your group in sharing the Gospel.)

B. WE SHARE THE GOSPEL IN OUR JERUSALEM.

This means we share it in our homes, neighborhoods, schools, inner circles etc. This is sharing the Gospel with those who are close to you, those you are around each and every day and those with whom feel comfortable. You need to look around you. Does everyone around you know Christ? Most likely not. Statistics show that only 4 percent of your generation will follow Christ so someone around you is probably lost and separated from God. You need to make sure YOU share the Gospel with them. If you don't and just hope someone else will, they may spend eternity in Hell. Do not take this risk. Do not worry about offending someone whether they are lost or not. Have enough love for God and them to share the greatest gift of love and grace imaginable.

C. WE SHARE THE GOSPEL IN OUR SAMARIA.

For the people Jesus was speaking to, Samaria meant many things. For one, Samaria was their geographical neighbor. For another thing, the Jews Jesus was speaking to didn't like people from Samaria. They considered them half-breeds and sometimes almost sub-human. They did not associate with them let alone fellowship, worship or reach out to them. Yet now Jesus is telling them that His message of salvation is for exactly these people. What does this mean for us? Without getting too complicated, I think it means we have to get outside of our comfort zone. We have to reach out to those who we normally do not associate with or may even look down upon. For some of us, this could mean reaching out to those at a rival school. For others, we will have to witness to people of other races or people who live on the "other side of town." Many of us will simply have to walk across the lunchroom and sit with people who no one else will even give the time of day. Whatever it is for you, reach out and be a witness to your Samaria.

D. WE SHARE THE GOSPEL TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

Simply put, in case anyone has been left out go share the Gospel with those people. The Gospel is for all people and we should be out sharing the Gospel to the ends of the Earth. The Gospel is not limited by race, socioeconomic level, or nationality. It does not care how great a sin someone has committed against you or someone else. It does not care what someone looks like or where he or she is from. The Gospel is simply God's message of grace and salvation to the world and that grace never runs out. Go out and share the Gospel with all people you come across.

3. PRAYER WORKS.

Read Acts 1: 9-14

Jesus ascends into Heaven and the disciples do what? They go and pray. We will see how effective these prayers were in the next lesson but right now we must see that we are supposed to pray. But I want you to know that I am not talking about token prayers at meals or at the end of the bible study. I am talking about real, corporate, passionate prayer. That is what this passage is talking about. The scripture says they were continually devoting themselves to prayer. If you want to see God move in your home, your church, your school, your community, and your world you must pray as you never have before. Trust me. Prayer works. We see it in scripture and we sit in our world today. If you do not believe me, talk to someone who has been a believer for a while and ask how God has worked in their life through prayer. If you are still unsure or maybe think you are too young to pray with power, I encourage you to read a book called "Red Moon Rising." It tells the story of a movement of young people praying 24-7 all over the world and seeing God move in mighty ways.

If you have been praying and God has not moved as you would hope in your family, school, community or world, I encourage you to pray more. Pray without ceasing. Pray in community. Fast if necessary. Get on your faces and seek God until He shows up, and then pray some more.

4. WE CANNOT DO THIS ALONE.

Read Acts 1:15-26

Luckily since we cannot do this alone, we do not have to. We get some help along the way. First of all, we get the power of God working in us and through us which we will see in the next lesson. But God also provides something else for us. He gives us community with one another. Jesus modeled this as He walked the Earth and ministered with His disciples and then His disciples followed His example. Notice how they met together and prayed. They also added a disciple to fill the hole left by Judas who betrayed Jesus. We will see this theme of community again and again in our short study of Acts and we must take this lesson to heart. Hopefully you are studying this lesson right now with a community of people and you need to continue to do this and bring others into

your community. Yes God gives us power to accomplish His mission but if we go at it alone we will not be successful. We need the love, support, encouragement, and accountability of others followers of Christ.

So we have found out what our mission is and some of the things we need to complete our mission. Now let's look and see what happens when we actually go out and let the power of God work in and through us.



LESSON 1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Is there ever a time you have had to wait for God? What happened? What did you learn?**
2. **What is the mission of your church? Your youth group? Your small group?**
3. **Does it need to change in light of this lesson? How?**
4. **Have you ever shared the Gospel before? What happened?**
5. **If you have not shared the Gospel, why not? If you have, why have you not done it more?**
6. **Who do you need to share the Gospel with in your Jerusalem?**
7. **What would it look like for you to share the Gospel in your Samaria? What group or person would that involve?**
8. **What ways is your group involved in sharing the Gospel to the ends of the Earth?**
9. **Do you have community or are you doing the Christian life alone?**
10. **Take sometime to talk about community and maybe finding accountability/ministry partners. Then take a few moments to pray like you never have before for each other, for the lost, for your community, for your church, for the world, etc.**