



18 DAYS OF ACTS 1:8

Devotion Guide

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit
has come upon you, and you will be My
witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”
- Acts 1:8

Day 1

The Acts 1:8 Challenge

Read Acts 1:1-14.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” - Acts 1:8

Have you ever had one of those nightmares where you are trying to get out of your house, but the bolt lock and doorknob are nothing but wobbly rubber? Despite twisting, pulling, and even using both hands, the door seems hopelessly stuck. Upon waking, you are immediately relieved to know doors open as they should.

Name at least one thing that seems impossible to you right now. List a current challenge you face that is responding to your efforts like “wobbly rubber” _____

After three years with Jesus, His disciples had endured the pain of seeing their Master crucified. Then when Jesus was resurrected to life again, they were ready to become their country’s liberators. But Jesus had a bigger vision in mind that would require more than human effort.

Circle the things you might attempt in a given day. Next, underline those things that require you to get someone else’s help.

Get dressed

Carpool to work

Witness

Love your family

Forgive a wrong

Fly to another town

Put out a brush fire

Recover from a heart attack

Find a competent babysitter

Think about Jesus being fully human and fully divine. As a human, the Lord knew His disciples at that time and down through the ages would need supernatural help for a supernatural task. What does the Holy Spirit give all Christians the power to become? _____

Praise God that Jesus’ followers have power and don’t have to rely on self-strength.

Lord, thank you for promising your Holy Spirit’s power so that we can be Your witnesses. Thank you that we can be genuine for you and not “wobbly rubber” Christians!

Day 2

Jerusalem

Read Acts 2:1-47

“Repent,” Peter said to them, “and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” - Acts 2:38

In what city or county do you live? _____

What comes to mind when you think of your city? _____
(List shopping centers, recreation or cultural arts facilities, official buildings, major events, groups, or teams, universities, natural/geographical, social commonalities.)

In Acts 1:8, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would help us be witnesses in Jerusalem. Yes, you have a Jerusalem – and a Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth, also!

During the Jewish festival of Pentecost (50 days after Passover), the Holy Spirit came while the disciples were praying expectantly. The Holy Spirit did not reverse what God did at the Tower of Babel, so that everyone spoke the same language. Instead, He empowered His disciples to speak in multiple tongues, the heart language of the people visiting Jerusalem.

Think about the people around you that need someone to speak their “language.” Describe the type of people who have something in common with you.

Education: _____

Income: _____

Sports: _____

Neighborhood: _____

Hobbies: _____

Language: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Other: _____

Jesus expected His disciples to be witnesses to people like them. On the scale below indicate how surprised you think the disciples were to realize they could relate to Jews visiting from all over the world:

Not very; it was expected Just another miracle; ho-hum Very surprised and delighted!

Sometimes Christians find it harder to be witnesses in their own city among their own type of people (friends, family, and co-workers) than out in a remote jungle or desert. Look for opportunities today in your normal routine to be a witness right here in your city or county.

Lord, open my eyes to the people around me to whom I can be a witness.

Day 3

Judea

Read Luke 10:1-20

“The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” - Luke 10:2

Begin by testing your knowledge of your state:

What is the capital of your state?

How many people live in your state?

How many people are Southern Baptist?

How many Southern Baptist churches are there in your state?

What percentage of the people in your state speak a language besides English?

What percentage of Cooperative Program fund does your state keep and what percentage is forwarded to the SBC Executive Committee for distribution?

Your Judea is your state. In Jesus’ day, Judea was a province that was no more than 55 miles from north to south and east to west. It was the land that surrounded Jerusalem, just as your state surrounds your city or county. Judea was the land of the Jews and the people whom Jesus’ earthly ministry was focused. Galilee was considered part of Judea.

In the Acts 1:8 challenge, the disciples quickly resonated with Judea as it was their homeland. They had lived there, often visited its towns, and knew it well. Yet, it was in Judea that believers suffered the toughest persecution.

Describe Judea as reflected in Luke 10:1-2. Check all that apply:

- worth visiting
- required some travel
- receptive people
- over-harvested
- too much focus
- not enough workers
- God’s field
- plentiful

Think about your state in spiritual terms. In the list above, circle those qualities that best describe your state.

Jesus sent His followers to their own country to prepare the people to hear the Good News. In Judea, Jesus healed, raised the dead, and preached. Re-read Luke 10:1-20. Name one or more ways that you can participate in the Lord’s “harvest field” called (*your state*).

Lord, thank you that our church cooperates with hundreds of churches across our state. Please keep calling out workers for our state’s harvest field.

Day 4

Samaria

Read Luke 10:25-37

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” - Luke 10:27

Millions of people from other ethnic groups live around us. Royal Ambassadors, a Southern Baptist mission education organization, trains boys to befriend and witness to those from a diverse ethnic or religious background. When a Turkish Muslim teenager moved to the United States with this family, his intent was to help his father, an architect, build mosques and convert Americans to Islam. One of the mosques they built was one block from the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio office in Columbus. God had something different in mind. In 1982, this Muslim young man became a Christian through the witness of an RA, named Jerry Tackett. Jerry cared enough to involve himself in the Muslim teenager’s life. After converting, Ergun Caner shared his faith with his family who rejected his testimony, but through his persistent witness his brothers, mother, and grandmother have come to faith in Christ. Today, Ergun Caner is a professor and author who debates Muslims regarding their beliefs.

Dr. Caner might have appeared to Americans as a Samaritan might have appeared to the Jews of Jesus’ day. In the Acts 1:8 challenge, Jesus listed Samaria as a place His disciples must take the gospel. The parable of the Good Samaritan described the cultural animosity between Jews and Samaritans. Yet, in Jesus’ wisdom, the parable lifted these outcast people to the stance of “neighbor.”

Take this true/false quiz based on the 2000 United States Census:

- ___ One of every 10 residents of the United States were born in another country.
- ___ Hispanics are the largest minority in the United States (39 million).
- ___ The number of Jews in Israel outnumber those in the United States.
- ___ More Christians are in China than in Canada.

Most of the world’s 11,120 ethnolinguistic peoples (groups of individuals, families and clans who share a common language and ethnic identity) break out into sub-cultures and sociological groupings. These layers of culture can insulate peoples from the gospel, but you can partner with the North American Mission Board to cross barriers and actually use diversity as bridges upon which the gospel can flow to our “neighbors.”

Lord, helps us love people who are different from us. Help us to boldly reach across barriers with your heart of love in North America.

(Answers: T,T,F,T)

Day 5

Ends of the Earth

Read Matthew 28:16-20

“Then Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” - Matthew 28:18-20

Among the very first Southern Baptist foreign missionaries was a young man from Richmond, Virginia. At a Baptist meeting, when the offering plate was passed, he scrawled on a piece of paper, “I give myself.” Those who counted the offering found the slip of paper and gave it to the meeting’s leader who called for the writer to stand and be recognized. J. Lewis Shuck stood that day. J. Lewis and his wife, Henrietta, served 10 years in China prior to the establishment of the Southern Baptist Convention. Henrietta Hall Shuck died in China in 1844. J. Lewis was appointed by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1846 and continued to serve in China.

The Great Commission captured in Matthew 28:19-20 uses the word “nations” in most English versions. In the original Greek, the word is “ta ethne” from which was get the word “ethnics.” In the Acts 1:8 challenge, “to the ends of the earth” describes the “peoples” of our planet.

Pancakes are flat and syrup runs everywhere when applied. Some think that countries are like that, too. Just pour on the sweet gospel and it’ll run everywhere. But the nations are full of culturally-specific peoples. The world is more like a waffle! Describe in your own words why waffle-thinking is better than pancakes for taking the Gospel to people as effectively as possible:

Advantages of “waffle thinking”:

Of the 11,120 people groups in the world, some 3,500 have no born-again believers. More than 500 of these people have more than 100,000 in population – with no missionaries, Christian workers, or reproducing churches! Southern Baptist are praying for and even going to these unengaged people groups. They work like missionaries do. Circle the things one needs to do to reach people groups:

Understand their culture

Send out workers

Respect their religion

Work in their language

Constantly learn

Boldly witness whenever possible

Avoid discouragement

Provide financial support

Pray without ceasing

Lord, thank you for your promise to be with us to the end of time. We praise your authority in Heaven and on Earth.

Day 6

On Mission

Read Acts 8:4-15, 26-40

“So Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning from that Scripture” - Acts 8:35

Mark Custalow was saved, baptized, called to serve the Lord, and ordained through the ministries of a Southern Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. Since 1991, Mark's missionary service has been primarily focused among Native Americans for the North American Mission Board. Recently, he began to serve on the church planting staff coordinating training events and resources for church planters and partnering churches throughout North America. Mark says that the single question that drives him is, "What would it take for every person in every people group in North America to hear the gospel and be gathered into a [relevant] New Testament church?"

In Acts 8, Philip was a Greek Jew who fled from Jerusalem, witnessed in Samaria, and tracked down Ethiopian royalty on a road in Gaza. The Holy Spirit made the difference. Phillip was an on mission Christian!

Read John 3:34 and check *one* thing Jesus told His disciples:

- He was about to die.
- He was going to Jerusalem.
- Love one another.
- His purpose was do His Father's will.

As Jesus sought to do His Father's will, did He do things by Himself or with others?
 alone with others

The disciples began the Commission of Christ only when empowered by God to do so. Some, like Philip, were called to work alone, but in Samaria, Phillip quickly alerted the church at Jerusalem to what God was doing. Their cooperation caused a movement of born-again believers.

There are times when individual believers will need to be alone on mission; solo under the authority of the Holy Spirit. Yet, the bigger perspective of reading through Acts shows that believers worked in teams and through cooperating churches. Mark Custalow's earnest plea to fellow believers is to invest every day, as if it is your last, in "on mission" service with the Father.

Name one way you can be an on mission Christian:

Name one way your group or church can be "on mission" with God:

Lord, today I want to praise You that I am not alone when doing Your will in missions. Thank You for being with me.

Day 7

Learning about Missions

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

“You must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand” - Ephesians 6:13

The missionary’s voice cracked as He related what God was doing among a predominately Muslim people group in South Asia. He described how five of seven evangelists sent out by the churches had preached boldly on street corners, but they were soon martyred. This new missionary turned to God’s Word and prayer. He poured over Scriptures and wondered what he was missing. The Holy Spirit used Luke 10 to remind the missionary how Jesus sent out His disciples to find a “Person of Peace.” It made all the difference and soon a church-planting movement was underway with thousands coming to Christ.

Spiritual warfare requires Acts 1:8 Christians to be fully prepared by putting on the full armor of God. Spiritual armor in a missions context is the only way to overcome new and challenging experiences.

Match the spiritual armor to its Acts 1:8 purpose against the powers of evil.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|---|
| a. Truth (belt) | ___ | All kinds of requests, requires Christians to be alert |
| b. Righteousness (breastplate) | ___ | Source of truth, learning, inspiration and encouragement |
| c. Ready to Witness (shoes) | ___ | Loss of hope, mental anguish, alternative beliefs, doubting |
| d. Faith (shield) | ___ | Confrontations with false accusations and deceptions |
| e. Salvation (helmet) | ___ | Apathy and indifference to the lost |
| f. The Bible (sword) | ___ | Shady practices, hypocritical living |
| g. Prayer | ___ | Lies perpetuated by non-Christians |

Learn from your encounters in missions. Over analysis is unhealthy, but Christians should be hungry for the meat of God’s Word. Describe in your own words stories or Bible verses that you have learned since coming to faith in Christ that helped you learn about missions:

Learn from others engaged in missions. Stay in touch with ways that God is at work through your Acts 1:8 partners, videos, websites, publications, classes, etc.

Lord, remove any resistance I may have to learning more about how You are at work and how I can be an Acts 1:8 Christian against the spiritual barriers that Satan devises.

(Answers: g., f., e., d., c., b., a.)

Day 8

Pray

Read 2 Thessalonians. 3:1-13

“Finally, pray for us, brothers, that the Lord's message may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you” - 2 Thessalonians 3:1

David was a teenager when he first went to jail for violent crimes. He was being held in a juvenile detention center when prison chaplain Joe Driver began to work with him. Joe is the director of the Gospel Jail Ministry in Virginia. Joe prayed for David and challenged him to accept Christ, but David showed no interest. He would get out of jail and repeat crimes, which led to being arrested again and again. Yet, Joe has kept praying for David. During a recent visit, Joe began to see a noticeable change. David had been reading the Bible in response to a challenge from Joe. Today, David is still in prison, but through the patient, persistent prayer of a faithful chaplain, he is turning to the Lord. Joe asks that Christians pray for David to give his heart to Christ.

Today's devotion is tailored to help you spend extra time in fervent, focused prayer so that the gospel “may be spread rapidly and be honored.”

- Pray for a fresh vision for a lost world and ways to respond.
- Pray for one people group that God puts on your heart. Seek out prayer requests from the missionaries working among them. Also pray for ways the Lord will lead you to be personally involved.
- Pray over your wallet, checkbook, or purse. Dedicate your tithes, offerings, and gifts to God's service as an Acts 1:8 Christian.
- Pray the “10:2b Virus.” Jesus commanded us in Luke 10:2b to pray that God would “send workers into the harvest.” *Spread the idea!*
- Pray for tenacity to be bold in your witness and cross-cultural missions opportunities.
- Pray to carry out missions as part of our church's Acts 1:8 challenge.
- Pray for strength for all missions efforts to withstand the attacks of Satan.

Seek a partner to daily pray the 10:2b Virus that God would continue to call out workers into the fields which are ready for harvest.

Lord, please send me to be that worker that you need in your harvest. I want to be where You are working! Break down the barriers that prevent your Kingdom from advancing.

Day 9

Giving ‘til You Know It’s Right

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

“Now as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us – excel also in this grace” - 2 Corinthians 8:7

When Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, Southern Baptist volunteers responded by serving millions of meals, assisting people by performing thousands of cleanup and recovery jobs and provided hundreds of showers – all in the name of Jesus Christ. In addition, contributions to the North American Mission Board disaster relief funds were in the millions. This type of response is often high profile.

While it does not get national or world attention, did you know that in 2005 Southern Baptists gave more than \$499 million dollars in regular tithes to support mission efforts through the Cooperative Program?

Draw a circle around the biblical reasons for giving. Use your Bible to look up Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-37; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; and Philipians 4:15-19.

Meet needs

Generosity

Cheerful

Required for membership

The Lord loves it

Despite poverty

Privilege

To remove sin

Share resources

Aid in a crisis

Missional support

Guilt

In the 1920s, Baptists were becoming affluent and a number of worthy Christian causes clamored for financial support. Church leaders knew missionary support could become sidetracked. The more sensational emotional appeals were often sapping the church’s financial strength, too. So, in 1925, Southern Baptists agreed on a powerful financial sharing plan called the Cooperative Program (CP).

Today, money given through the Cooperative Program helps fund missionaries, seminaries, ethical and religious issues, and church staff retirement. By continuing to cooperate, Southern Baptist can “excel in giving” which equates to more missions personnel and resources all for the purpose of doing everything possible to fulfill Christ’s Great Commission

Lord, all we have is Yours. Please help me be a cheerful giver knowing that You are honored by both my planning and my sacrifice.

Day 10

Serving: What is a Missionary?

Read Romans 12:1-8

“Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship” - Romans 12:1

“You don’t want to be a missionary when you grow up,” my mother warned.

“Why not?” I challenged at the impressionable age of 10 or so. My head reeled with possibilities.

“Missionaries have to use toilet paper instead of Kleenex.”

Nothing about headhunters, malaria, or homesickness...just “TP.” But for her it worked as an excuse until my mom made her first volunteer mission trip to Trinidad and Tobago. She served as a dental assistant to my dad for two weeks. She caught the missionary vision and the Lord has blessed her – toilet paper or not – on 15 trips so far.

Missionaries are gifted by the Holy Spirit and set apart for special purposes for work among those without Christ. They cross cultural barriers and travel great distances with the gospel.

Crossing cultural barriers distinguishes a missionary from someone who is called to be an evangelistic witness. All believers are called to be witnesses, but not all are called to be missionaries. My mom was not a missionary by biblical standards. But she, as an active, Spirit-led Christian could trust the Lord to lead her to people who needed Jesus. The Acts 1:8 challenge is not so much about clergy or laity designations as it is following God’s call to go and serve.

The key to evangelism and missions is dying to self on the sacrificial altar as Paul described to the Romans. When that dying happens, God can use us in His redemptive plan.

Describe next to each phrase how Romans 12:1 relates to your role in missions:

Living Sacrifice: _____

Holy and Acceptable to God: _____

Reasonable Service: _____

Transformation: _____

Surrender to God’s call to become personally involved as an Acts 1:8 Christian.

Lord, take my life. I lay down any reservations and surrender it to you for your holy purposes. Thank you for receiving this commitment as a life-long priority.

Day 11

Telling

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-23

“For to those who are perishing the message of the cross is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is God's power” - 1 Corinthians 1:18

During a recent summer, 25 members of Grove Avenue Baptist Church traveled to Colombia where they worked with Joanna, a third year Journeyman missionary with the International Mission Board. The team from the church taught Vacation Bible School, led a pastor's class, conducted door-to-door evangelism, construction, and encouraged local believers. One church met at an intersection of a town – on the street! When visiting one older woman to tell her about Christ, the team noticed that her daughter-in-law hovered nearby. The next day, the daughter-in-law explained that even though her mother-in-law had not accepted Christ, she saw the team's visit as a direct answer to her prayer for God to send someone to tell her family the Good News!

While they saw many come to faith, they also saw others reject the team's message of salvation in Jesus.

What is the word that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 1:18 to describe how non-Christians view the gospel message: _____.

Though the team told the Good News of salvation in Colombia, each one learned to witness in the states. The same message may be rejected or received. The Acts 1:8 challenge is based on Christ's command to share what our Scripture today describes as the “power of God.”

Check the opportunities that you have participated in that our church offers to help you share your faith in Christ.

- ___ Monday Night Visitation
- ___ NetEvangelism Training
- ___ Sunday School classes
- ___ Sponsoring missions projects
- ___ Women on Mission and WMU
- ___ Resources in the library
- ___ Fall and Spring family festivals
- ___ Evangelistic sermons in worship
- ___ Mission trips

Put a star next to those you want to investigate further.

Lord we grieve when those without Christ reject your message like that mother-in-law in Colombia. Praise you, Lord, that she eventually gave her heart to follow You. May we be faithful in telling others how they can know you as their Savior.

Day 12

Multiplying

Read Mark 4:1-20

“But the [seed] sown on good ground are those who hear the word, welcome it, and produce a crop: 30, 60, and 100 times [what was sown]” - Mark 4:20

Farmers who grow corn know all about the harvest and how it got there in the first place. Farmers produce enough corn for their family to eat and sell, but the seed corn is a nominal portion that is guarded carefully for future use. Without seed corn, there will be nothing to plant for the next season. Plants that reach maturity multiply 30, 60, or even 100 times over what was originally planted.

How would you feel about a farmer who only sowed one seed at a time?

- Foolish and lazy
- Maybe needs to learn more
- Missing a blessing

Christians lead others to Christ. As a new Christian grows in the faith, they also begin to share their faith with their circle of friends. Could you imagine a Christian just witnessing once in their lifetime and thinking, “Whew, glad that’s over!”

Describe in your own words in the space below how the spiritual harvest can multiply some “30, 60, or 100 times” over what was planted:

New churches are planted, too. Like vegetables, they come in a wide variety. Here are just a few. Circle those that you would be interested in attending:

Cowboy church

Biker church

University church

Language-specific church

House church

City church

Trailer park church

Multi-housing (apartment) church

Healthy churches multiply, yet only 5 percent of Southern Baptist churches are involved in planting even one new church. Healthy churches don’t just plant a single seed at a time, they find ways to rapidly start new churches.

Lord, help me to be a multiplying “seedcaster” for you. Thank you for the challenge to be active in telling many, many people about Jesus and starting new churches in my state, North America, and to the ends of the earth!

Day 13

Acts 1:8 Christians are Called

Read Acts 22:1-16

“Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of His voice. For you will be a witness for Him to all people of what you have seen and heard’ - Acts 22:14-15

Ask the staff at a Crisis Pregnancy Center (CPC) why they work there and many will quickly say, “It’s a calling!” CPC volunteers work with those who are unprepared for pregnancy and those whose lives are touched by unplanned pregnancies. Pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, prenatal vitamins, material goods assistance, parenting classes and Bible Studies are just a few of the free and confidential services offered. Last year, through ultrasound technology, hundreds of young mothers viewed life as “fearfully and wonderfully” made.

A calling emerges out of a close relationship with Christ for a special task or purpose. Sometimes the calling arises when you sense an unmet need – spiritual, emotional, or physical. Circumstances don’t always have to be rosy for a calling. Despite suffering a tropical disease, three flat tires, rejection as a witness, and being overwhelmed by human need, Acts 1:8 Christians can be forever changed to the point of death for the sake of their call.

Many times a calling can come through the influence of godly people. When Paul defended his calling before the angry mob in Jerusalem, he told them how many years earlier Ananias of Damascus told him he was chosen for a godly purpose.

Match the callings to the task. Note the variety of Acts 1:8 callings:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ___ Moses | a. Prevent genocide Esther 4:14 |
| ___ Jesus | b. Go down a road in a desert Acts 8:26 |
| ___ Jonah | c. Take the Gospel to the Gentiles Acts 13:46 |
| ___ Esther | d. Preach village to village Mark 1:38 |
| ___ Paul and Barnabas | e. Release captives Exodus 3:10 |
| ___ Philip | f. Demand that an entire city to repent Jonah 1:2 |

We are called to be *incidental* witnesses with those we encounter. However, the Holy Spirit often calls us to an *intentional* task, career, or people group.

Lord, are you calling me? I am listening to your leading in my life and that of my family.

(Answers: e., d., f., a., c., b.)

Day 14

Acts 1:8 Christians Cross Cultures

Read Acts 19:1-20

“And this went on for two years, so that all the inhabitants of the province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord” - Acts 19:10

Gary and Lily Stone learned something ominous about the local witch doctors where they lived. Mayan magicians learned from the Spanish in the 1500s that there was “power in the blood of the cross.” Unfortunately, they superimposed these Christian ideas as a veneer over their pagan incantations! These men painted a huge red cross on their doors and placed metal crosses underneath burnt offerings. Mixing religions is called *syncretism*. As the Stones work with other IMB missionaries among the Tajumulco Mam of Guatemala, they must understand the culture of the people or risk misunderstandings of eternal consequences.

What are some *syncretistic* practices in our society? Check those you have heard:

- A married couple says that God is calling them to divorce.
- A man says, “Knock on wood,” hoping something bad does not happen to him.
- A woman reads her horoscope or visits a psychic for a reading.

The Acts 1:8 challenge is for people of every culture that exists in our world. Crossing cultural barriers requires that Christians care enough to understand the customs, history, meanings of words, proverbs, art, and even food of other cultures.

For two years, Paul lived and taught in Ephesus. During that time, the gospel spread throughout the entire province of Asia (present-day Turkey). It is easy to forget that these victories came in the midst of rejection by the Jews, witchcraft, illnesses, and demon possession.

Take a few moments and list what holds you back from bridging racial, ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic barriers to being an Acts 1:8 Christian:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prejudice | <input type="checkbox"/> health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> greed or status | <input type="checkbox"/> family issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> need for recognition | <input type="checkbox"/> debt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> distance from home | <input type="checkbox"/> ignorance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> insincerity or apathy | <input type="checkbox"/> doubt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fear or anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> loneliness | |

Lord, here is my list of lame excuses. Help me trust your Holy Spirit to empower me to cross cultural barriers to be an Acts 1:8 Christian so that the Gospel can spread widely and in great power.

Day 15

Acts 1:8 Christians Engage in Church Planting

Read Hebrews 10:19-25

“[Do] not stay away from our meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near” - Hebrews 10:25

When Tiffany Woods traveled to Mumbai, India, to prayerwalk with a team, she had no idea of the depth of lostness. The city’s 18.4 million people are predominantly Hindu. They attempt to honor 330 *million* gods to gain favor and avoid jinxes. Yet Tiffany and the team felt that they were contributing to the efforts of two International Mission Board strategy leaders who are responsible for church planting in Mumbai. This couple, reaching out to a people living in great spiritual darkness, need prayer.

The writer of Hebrews reminded followers of Jesus that the churches in our world are only an imitation of the eternal tabernacle in Heaven. Yet, he reminded believers that churches are important for spurring one another in love and good deeds. He also commanded that Christians not give up meeting together because the day of Jesus’ Second Coming was drawing near. By meeting together, we can encourage each other.

Good deeds often come at a sacrifice. Arrange the following items from the least expensive to the most costly. Remember that “costs” do not always involve money.

- Airfare to a foreign country to prayerwalk a spiritually dark city
- Walk across the street to witness to my neighbor
- Study about people groups that have never heard the gospel
- Become a missionary as a full-time job
- Drive a less expensive car to free up funds for a new church start
- Increase my tithe 1 percent each year for five years
- Leave parents or grown children behind to live as a missionary among Native Americans
- Give sacrificially to state, North American, and international missions offerings
- Help start a new church across town from where I live
- Host a Bible study in my home

As an Acts 1:8 Christian, have you done everything possible to sacrifice for the sake of new believers and new churches? When the Good News is successfully planted, new churches grow and multiply.

Lord, strengthen me to sacrifice for the sake of new believers and new churches.

Day 16

Acts 1:8 Christians Cooperate

Read Joshua 1:10-18

“Until the LORD gives our brothers rest, as [He has given] you, and they too possess the land the LORD your God is giving them. You may then return to the land of your inheritance and take possession of what Moses the LORD's servant gave you on the east side of the Jordan” - Joshua 1:15

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief is a model of cooperation. This group is made up of more than 50,000 volunteers trained, mobilized and coordinated by 42 state Baptist conventions from local churches who are assigned to more than 800 response units of various types belonging to churches, associations, and state conventions. In addition, Southern Baptist disaster relief partners with organization like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Salvation Army, Mercy Medical Airlift, and The American Red Cross, just to name a few. Southern Baptist Disaster Relief leader Mickey Caison of the North American Mission Board says, “Nothing happens by chance in God’s world. It is all training and preparation for us to serve Him and our fellow man in the future.” The growth of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief and it’s desire to cooperate is driven not by power or prestige, rather it is driven by unprecedented need and a passion to minister and share Christ with those who are hurting.

As Joshua led the 12 tribes of Israel to take the Promised Land, every hand was needed to do the work. The descendents of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh promised to join their kinsmen “until the LORD gives them rest...until they too have taken possession of the land” (Joshua 1:15 NIV). What should be the Acts 1:8 Christian’s response to the unfinished task of reaching our city, state, continent, and the world with the Good News of salvation? (Select only one.)

- God will save whomever He wants, He doesn’t need me.*
- I must not rest until the mission of God is accomplished.*

Mission-minded churches mobilize to meet human needs in the name of Christ. It might be through Baptist Builders, World Changers work projects for students, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief teams, or some other Acts 1:8 partner. On-going ministry and cooperation are costly. It is up to Acts 1:8 Christians to adopt a life commitment to work together and “Pray God’s power into God’s mission.”

Lord, we give thanks for the many resources with which You have blessed us. May Your power flow through us and our church as we do not rest, but combine our efforts with the larger Body of Christ for cooperation that brings glory to Your Name.

Day 17

Acts 1:8 Christians Face Challenges

Read Matthew 25:31-46

“And the King will answer them, ‘I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me’” - Matthew 25:40

Meet a young lady named Perette. She was a drug addict who admitted to lying, cheating, and manipulating everyone she knew. “My life was a never-ending cycle because I would get out of prison and then six months later be incarcerated again,” said Perette. “Although I responded to an invitation to trust Christ while in jail in 1997, upon my release, I didn't continue to seek God and I tried to do it on my own again. I failed and this time I ended up in the Henrico County jail. I cried out to the Lord again. My problem was not with hearing the Word of God, but with obeying it. The Good News chaplain helped me realize that you can't have one without the other.” Praise God that Christians face the challenges of prison ministry!

Draw a line from the good deed to the person for whom that deed was done.

Gave something to eat	Sick person
Gave something to drink	Criminal
Extended an invitation	Stranger
Gave clothing	Person who needed something to wear
Watched over	Hungry person
Visited in prison	Thirsty person
	King who represents Jesus

How did you do? Draw a circle around the *one* Person to whom *all* of those acts need to be done.

Reflect for a moment: *Do we make value judgments before meeting need?*

The majority of Christians in our world face persecution on a number of levels. However, Acts 1:8 Christians are found faithful despite challenging people and circumstances.

Lord, may we never hesitate to obey you in meeting physical, emotional, and spiritual need. May we be found faithful for treating “the least of these” as if they were You in all Your radiant majesty.

Day 18

Co-workers for the Harvest

Read Revelation 7:9-17

“After this I looked, and there was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were robed in white with palm branches in their hands” - Revelation 7:9

Southern Baptists are responding to the Acts 1:8 Challenge (www.ActsOne8.com). They work under the power and leadership of the Holy Spirit and in cooperation with other churches and Acts 1:8 partners. Spend a few minutes listing and praying over your Acts 1:8 priority partners.

Ends of the Earth:

International Mission Board, SBC
International Mission Board volunteers and missionaries

Samaria:

North American Mission Board, SBC
North American Mission Board volunteers and missionaries

Judea:

My Southern Baptist State Convention
Ministries, staff, and volunteers within my state convention

Jerusalem:

My local Southern Baptist Association
Ministries, staff, and volunteers within my local association
