



# **CHAPTER 1**

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## **PREPARE**

*Empowering a designated leader of missions and developing mission teams, strategies, and plans to take the gospel to our community, state, continent, and world.*

As your church embraces the Acts 1:8 Challenge, it is crucial that a gifted and effective leadership team be established to guide your implementation efforts. Your church may have had a mission team or mission committee in place for years. It may be that you are currently building such a team of key mission leaders. Either way, this would be an excellent opportunity to reorganize, reenergize, and refocus toward embracing the Acts 1:8 Challenge. Churches have used several designations for such leadership teams:

- On Mission Team
- Global Priority Team
- Acts 1:8 Challenge Lead Team
- Mission Council
- Mission Committee
- Acts 1:8 Challenge Team
- Global Impact Team

Regardless of your team's name, the work is the same. These catalytic mission leaders will set the pace and lead the entire church toward greater worldwide impact.

Look first at the make-up of your church's mission leadership team. Again, the name of this catalytic group of mission-minded leaders may be different from church to church, but their work and responsibilities will be very similar.

The role of the senior pastor in working with this team is vitally important. It is worth stating again that he must be at the forefront of embracing the Acts 1:8 Challenge. In a very real sense, the pastor is the primary leader, cheerleader, initiator, and instigator in the missionary focus of the church. While there may be occasional exceptions to this, the most effective churches in establishing a comprehensive, worldwide mission impact are those where the pastor champions the cause.

Many churches have a designated mission leader (pastor, other staff member, or layperson) who can serve as the coordinator for the mission leadership team. In developing your church's team, consider those key leaders who are already involved in missions. This may include the people in charge of Women on Mission®, Baptist Men on Mission, women's or men's ministry, and mission education for youth and children. These mission-minded advocates can provide valuable insight as part of your church's mission leadership team.

The Acts 1:8 Challenge leadership team must embrace the responsibility of mobilizing church members for specific kingdom-growing responses to the Great Commission (prepare, learn, pray, give, go, tell, send, multiply). The team should seek to ensure that the mission strategy is both churchwide and year-round. This is accomplished through adopting a customized comprehensive approach of personalized mission involvement in each of the four fields (ends of the earth, Samaria, Judea, and Jerusalem). The following steps are suggestions for mission leadership teams beginning this exciting process. They may also be used as a helpful guide for churches that already have such leadership teams in place:

### **1. Pray for a fresh, clear vision of God's heart for the world.**

A fervent, focused season of prayer for God's vision and leadership is essential for all those involved in embracing the Acts 1:8 Challenge. It is essential that mission leaders be active seekers of the Holy Spirit's

guidance as they discern how to lead their church to be fully involved in God's history-long, worldwide mission.

## **2. Establish a Mission Leadership Team.**

If you do not already have a mission leadership team, this is the time to form one. If you have an existing team, consider whether it needs to be renamed, with a refocused identity toward embracing the Acts 1:8 Challenge. As you identify people to serve on this team, be sure to include the appropriate leaders of existing mission organizations. More than likely, these people are already sold on the concept of Acts 1:8. There may also be leaders from within the congregation who have expressed affinities toward a certain area of missions. Good organizational and communication skills are helpful.

Realizing that churches vary in size and structure, it is difficult to make one model fit all in regard to a mission leadership team. Larger churches may actually have more than four teams relating to each of the four mission fields. Smaller churches may have some overlapping of people relating to the four fields. Again, size of the team is not the critical issue. A focused, committed group of leaders will provide a very manageable model.

The mission leadership team must learn the art of delegation regardless of the church's size. This team is not responsible for doing all the work of missions but serves to mobilize the church members in each of the kingdom-growing responses in each of the four fields. The effective mission leadership team recognizes the task is beyond its own ability to achieve without the help of many participants and partners.

The need for spiritual sensitivity by this team cannot be overstated. God's Spirit will guide each church into the areas of mission involvement as He opens doors of opportunity. Recognizing those opportunities and encouraging members to respond in obedience of service is the primary goal of the "prepare" response.

## **3. Communicate the vision.**

The burden of communicating the vision is primarily a job for the pastor. Other key members need to endorse this renewed mission emphasis passionately and publicly. When the mission leadership team accepts the Acts 1:8 Challenge personally, they become advocates for others to get involved. The contagious spirit of Great Commission fire begins to spread rapidly among the congregation. As the Lord gives clarity and direction to the mission leadership team, a specific strategy for embracing the four fields will begin to take shape. Keeping the church informed along the way is vital to the overall success of the team's work. This communication may be most helpful in the early stages of development of a churchwide, year-round strategy.

Consider these ideas to help you communicate the vision of the Acts 1:8 Challenge.

- Plan a worship service around the Acts 1:8 Challenge theme. During the service, commission the church's mission leadership team to their role. Invite one or more of the team members to share their passion and perspective of missions.
- Offer regular updates of the mission team's work through newsletters, announcements in worship services, or brief reports on the strategies being implemented.
- Identify mission efforts under the Acts 1:8 Challenge name. Title a column in your church newsletter or create a focal point in the church (such as a display or bulletin board) identifying Acts 1:8 Challenge events and efforts.

- Read and give copies of the following resources to your mission leadership team.

***The Acts 1:8 Challenge: Empowering the Church to Be On Mission***, by Nate Adams, available October 2004. This study, the 2005 doctrine study from LifeWay, serves as a strong reinforcement to the overall Acts 1:8 Challenge. Church members will develop a sound, biblical overview of God's historical pattern and plan for His church to embrace His kingdom purpose.

***Empowering Kingdom Growth: The Heartbeat of God***, by Ken Hemphill. This Broadman & Holman book walks you through the history of God's kingdom, tracing its roots and tracking its resiliency through the pages of the Old Testament and the teachings of Christ. Christians will be encouraged to embrace a life focused on God's kingdom.

***Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Mission***, by John Piper. Read of God's desire for all nations to worship Him and how missions fuels worship in the church.

#### **4. Coordinate budget and calendar.**

It takes major coordination of budget and calendar planning to achieve a comprehensive approach to missions. A churchwide, year-round strategy takes time as well. Annual planning by the mission leadership team should look at least 12 to 24 months ahead for the most effective coordination to occur. Events such as mission fairs, promotional campaigns for mission offerings, and training for mission trips (local and otherwise) take planning, creativity, and involvement. Many churches include the minister of missions (or mission leadership team representative) in strategic planning with the staff and/or church council. This allows for effective coordination for seasonal events and assures that missions has a priority in the overall planning of the church. Coordination with other ministry leaders of the church is vital. Proper coordination of a churchwide mission strategy encourages the church to embrace the Acts 1:8 Challenge as part of its DNA. It becomes who we are as a church and not just something we do.

#### **5. Evaluate the process.**

Every church has room for improvement when it comes to reaching the world for Christ. The mission leadership team should take time for an annual evaluation of the church's progress and effectiveness in developing the most comprehensive mission strategy possible. It is always wise to include feedback from those who participated in the various mission projects as part of the evaluation process. Be sure to evaluate the involvement and focus in each of the Acts 1:8 Challenge mission fields. Brainstorm together to develop fresh, new, and creative ways to mobilize your members in the Great Commission. Discuss ways to broaden the church's mission vision, praying, giving, and going as part of the evaluation process. Think through each of the eight kingdom-growing responses and consider innovative ways to expand your church's reach. Look at the strengths and weaknesses in each area and build upon the strengths. Keep the partnership connections current and updated in each of the fields. Make calls to each of the primary partners to inquire about new ideas and emphases being considered.

Use the worksheet provided at the end of this chapter as a tool to assist you in the "prepare" response for the Acts 1:8 Challenge.

# PREPARE WORKSHEET

1. List prayer concerns/plans for Acts 1:8 Challenge efforts in our church.

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2. Write the names of potential/current mission leadership members, including those who are effective leaders in administration, mission education, prayer, stewardship, mission projects, and evangelism. Consider people who will represent the four fields and the eight kingdom-growing responses of the Acts 1:8 Challenge.

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3. Check those communication tools/activities we will use to share the vision of the Acts 1:8 Challenge with our church.

- Worship services
- Sermon
- Newsletter
- Church Bulletin
- Web site
- Doctrine Study
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Consider the current budget expenditures and calendar plans for the next 12 to 24 months. What budget and calendar items should be examined more closely to implement an Acts 1:8 Challenge strategy in the church?

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5. How will we evaluate the effectiveness of our Acts 1:8 Challenge efforts?

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