



## NG Study Guide: Acts 1:4-11 “Prepared for Witness” (6.19.22)

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### The Study

**Thesis:** The Spirit empowered life exemplified in the book of Acts isn't simply descriptive of what once was, but is prescriptive for how the believer should live on mission now. Just as God used the disciples in the early church in incredible ways, God wants to use us today. Together we'll see how we can step into the Spirit empowered life and live as witnesses for Jesus and His gospel.

**Context:** The book of Acts is centralized around the birth and growth of the early church. Acts 1 gives a glimpse of the events that happened immediately before and after Christ's ascension as the disciples received their final preparation to continue the work Jesus started.

#### 1. Jesus' Final Command [4-5]

*<sup>4</sup>And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; <sup>5</sup>for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

Luke's gospel ends with a condensed version of Jesus' ascension to heaven. Before jumping into the events afterwards, he takes a moment to give more detail into the final interaction between Jesus and the disciples. And it begins with Jesus giving one final command: To wait.

#### [a] The Importance of Waiting

In such a fast-paced society, many struggle with the idea of waiting. When we want to get something or do something, our instinct is to often to find the quickest way possible. We may find this same temptation in our walks with God. But God sees what we cannot see. As we operate within our limited view of time and space, God operates in omniscience. When we're antsy to get going, there's always a good reason He tells us to wait, even when we can't see it.

*Reminders to help us wait:*

- i. God's promises are worth waiting for*
- ii. God wants to give you something you can't get on our own*
- iii. God wants to grow our dependency upon Him*

#### [b] The Need for and Promise of the Holy Spirit

The reason Jesus tells the disciples to wait was so that they could receive the Promise of the Father: The baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was a non-negotiable for the disciples to continue the work of the ministry effectively. Christ wanted the disciples to understand that for them to advance the gospel, there was one thing they needed above all else: The Spirit of God to empower them for the work ahead. As we

endeavor to live as witnesses for Jesus, we must be mindful that it is the Spirit who leads and empowers us. Praise God that we don't have to earn the Spirit, we simply need to ask (c.f. Luke 11:9-12).

### **[c] Have Confidence that God Will Fulfill His Promises**

While we have the advantage of looking back at this new paradigm of empowerment of the indwelling of the Spirit, the fulfillment of this promise extends beyond just the promise of the Holy Spirit coming upon the people of God. Just as the disciples waited for this promise to be fulfilled, we may find ourselves waiting for God to fulfill other promises He has made to us in Scripture. As we look at moments like this of God's faithfulness recorded in His Word, it should give us confidence as we look forward to the continued fulfillment of His promises.

## **2. The Disciples Question [6-8]**

*<sup>6</sup>Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup>And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

### **[a] Ask God Your Questions**

All throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, the disciples asked questions. They weren't rebuked for asking their questions. In fact, it was in the asking of questions that we see some of the most memorable passages in Scripture (e.g. John 14:1-6). As we live as witnesses for Jesus, it's important for us to always be asking questions because it helps us grow. God isn't annoyed by our seeking, He welcomes it.

### **[b] Accept God's Answers to Your Questions**

Just as we should be able to boldly ask God our questions, we should humbly receive the answers that He gives. God knows how to answer our questions in the way we need, which isn't always in the way we want. *How can we learn to accept these answers?* We trust in God's authority. We may not know everything we want. However, in the uncertainty, we can trust in God's authority over all creation. Nothing happens apart from the Father's hand. As we ask questions and receive answers, the important takeaway is to trust the God is always at work to accomplish His great plan in us, through us, and for us.

### **[c] Understand How God Is Using You Now**

Jesus likely knew that this wasn't the answer the disciples hoped for. At this point, Jesus immediately reminded them that He would continue to use them even though they didn't know every detail of God's plan. Oftentimes when we have questions about "what next?", we be tempted to know every detail before we move forward. Every moment of our life is an opportunity to live as witness. As we wait for the answer to, "What happens next?", it should never come at the expense of asking and answering, "What is happening now?"

## **3. Jesus' Ascension into Heaven [9-11]**

*<sup>9</sup>Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup>And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, <sup>11</sup>who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*

### **[a] Assurance through Eyewitness Accounts**

Luke specifically mentions that Jesus ascended "while they watched". The point is that there were eyewitnesses to the living Jesus ascending into heaven. We didn't find an empty tomb and hoped it was because Jesus was alive. His disciples saw Him, touched Him, and talked with Him, and ultimately watched Him ascend to heaven. Because of the disciples' faithful witness, we can have assurance that our God is alive and ruling on His throne.

### **[b] Hope in Christ's Return**

As Jesus ascends into heaven, the disciples stand and stare (likely in amazement). Yet, God doesn't want us to idly stand by waiting for His return. Though we may not know the day or the hour that Jesus comes back, we should be living on mission as witnesses until He does.

### **[c] Focus on the Work at Hand**

As the disciples left this scene, they walked away knowing what Christ had called them to next. While they entered a new season and hoped in Christ's eventual return, the only thing for them to do next was to be obedient to Jesus and continue the work at hand. As believers, we live in the tension between placing our hope in heaven while being mindful of how Christ wants to use us now (c.f. 2 Peter 3:8-9).

### **Study Guide Qs**

**Q1. *What benefits have you experience from waiting on God's timing?***

**Q2. *How has the Holy Spirit moved you to witnesses to others?***

**Q3. *How is Christ calling you to be a witness in this season?***

**Q4. *What advice would you give to another believer to help them focus on the work at hand while still being hopeful for heaven?***

### **"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)**

**1. The Bible Project is a great resource to help dig deeper into the book of Acts:**

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/acts-1-12/>

**2. Be encouraged through this devotional from David Guzik on waiting:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxll8EZYsr4>

### **Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:**

**1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?**

**2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?**

### **Disciples who make disciples:**

**1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?**

**2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:**

**Being a witness doesn't have to be daunting. Consider some ways God is presently at work in your life and share them with those you interact with throughout your week as a means of encouragement for others and testimony of God's goodness in the lives of His people.**

### **Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

### Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
  - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.