

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

SONGS: 15, 330

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Acts 1: 7-9

GOODWILL:

The book of Acts is the story of the beginning and development of the early Church. It is absolutely a spellbinder. Inside this book one can find, adventure, drama and faith.

One of the realities of the Christian church today is that there are large numbers of believers who are confused regarding the purpose of the church and their own identity in it. I say this because if we should ask some why the church exists, without a doubt the answers would be varied and different. So, why does the church exist? The answer may be found in a conversation Jesus had with his disciples.

Acts 1:7-9. Many of us easily remember the answer Christ gave to His disciples in **verse 8**, but completely ignore or forget the question. The question which was of great concern to the disciples, appears in verse 6. *“Wilt thou restore the Kingdom at this time?”* The context of His answer therefore is *“the restoration of the Kingdom”* and the part all disciples would play in its arrival. When you read the four Gospels, you discover that these Apostles had a strongly political view of the kingdom and were especially concerned about their own positions and privileges. Being loyal Jews, they longed for the defeat of their enemies and the final establishment of the glorious kingdom under the rule of King

Messiah. They did not realize that there must first be a spiritual preparation involving a change in the hearts of the people (see Luke 1:67–79). Jesus did not rebuke them when they “kept asking” about the *future Jewish kingdom* (Acts 1:7). After all, He it was who had opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:44), so they knew what they were asking. But God has not revealed His timetable to us and it is futile for us to speculate. The important thing is not to be curious about the future but to be busy in the present, sharing the message of God’s spiritual kingdom. Therefore Jesus promised to supply the power, but implied in the command, we would have to supply the brain and muscle to do the work; when He declared in the mandate *“You shall be my Witnesses!”*

It may not be coincidental that the current and dominant theme of our church since Atlanta 2010 has been Revival and Reformation. If the church is to have a spiritual impact today, she must experience a spiritual rebirth! Witnessing in the early church was much different than it is today. There was not an institutional church, evangelism was centered in the urban areas; conversions many times were very dramatic; evangelism was mouth to mouth and miracles did occur! Today, while human needs remain the same, the environment is entirely different!

THE ENVIRONMENT TODAY

The environment that characterizes our reality is one in which Christianity is on the decline in both numbers and

influence. The world is becoming increasingly secular; it's a world in turmoil as we continue to move from crisis to crisis; crime and violence, natural and manmade disasters are regular features. Despite this, our modern age has seen many new developments specifically in the technology and communication arenas. That which previously was just a dream, have become today's reality. This is the context in which we, disciples in a postmodern age are called upon to witness. We are called to educate the peoples of the world concerning the importance and necessity of getting ready for the Kingdom. We are called to be **"Kingdom Builders."**

The past few days have been instructive in giving us tools and ideas; we've developed strategies to best use the tools of technology to fast track the gospel to the world's burgeoning population. How can we best utilize technology to hasten the loud cry of the three angel's message to an increasingly secular world skeptical of everything called religion? We certainly cannot continue with a 1950 model approach to missions. We have to develop content relevant to our time, utilize tools and channels to carry the message into ***the homes, hearts, heads and hands of the people.***

In order for us to spread this Gospel to a world with its myriads of customs, cultures, languages and religious orientations much different from our own, we must carefully deliver content that appeals to human needs in a language they can understand. If we are irrelevant to their needs, this generation will tune us out in short order. *There is a*

*revolution in human communication that is already having implications in our political system – President Barack Obama proves the point. If as a church, we are not plugged in and turned on, we will soon be tuned out or turned off. We must appreciate that in terms of evangelization, these new digital media have their own logic. . .values, and. . .psychology. They have changed, and are still changing the dynamics of our interrelationships. Our teens know how to text, but are not learning how to talk. And, worse, some are utterly unable to devote time for the development of self, because they are always plugged in to one other, they **think in acronyms**. You will get a text saying: “All I can say to **this is OMGHM:**” O my God, have mercy.*

The evangelization of modern culture will depend to a great extent on the influence of the media. More and more people are turning to the internet for answers to the questions of daily life. Wikipedia, though not 100% reliable, is filling the void even in matters of faith. Google is the first place many persons check to verify your credentials/credibility. And that’s precisely where our challenge lies. This is precisely why GiEN exists, as a forum for creative thinking and action by mission minded members and ministers who understand and can/will utilize technology to help us share the gospel in non-traditional ways.

The manner in which Jesus carried out His ministry in Galilee in building the Kingdom, indicates to me that He was a minister who was socially aware, and fully cognizant of

what social networking in an environment hostile to His ministry could do in turning the tide for Him. Jesus was not only aware, but He purposefully and intentionally engaged the community in a way that today, 2000+ years later, we are still modeling His method to achieve success in reaching out to those outside our community of faith. Let me cite a few biblical examples of what I am talking about!

Calling the twelve:

Matt.4;18,19. One day Jesus went by the riverside in Galilee, and saw two brothers at their daily routine of fishing for fish! He spoke their language and refocus their sights on a different horizon, ***“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men!”***

“The disciples were unlearned in the traditions of the rabbis, but with Christ as their example and teacher, they were gaining an education of the highest order; for they had before them a divine Example. Christ was presenting to them truths of the highest character.” {This Day with God p 41.4}

All kingdom bound witnesses such as we are, must intentionally “present truths of the highest order” to the world utilizing every avenue available to us. That’s what the message of the three angels of **Revelation 14:6-7**. *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship*

him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

We must always remember that as indispensable as the use of technology is in our mission initiatives; it is only a tool. The human factor is still a major essential factor in reaching hearts.

Story: Call from Cayman re Loxley, bible study interest in New York. Two met only online. When Loxley was ready to be baptized, I received a call, find Pastor in NY.

Jesus Touched the lives of Children: *But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. **Matthew 10:14***

Jesus socialized with youth and children as part of His ministry. One of the important lessons to emerge from those words is the importance of reaching children with the Word of God when their minds are most receptive. Children who wish to confess their faith in the Lord Jesus should be encouraged, rather than discouraged, ignored or held back. No one knows the age of the youngest person who will be in hell. Jesus used the children to reach the adults in society. It is therefore no wonder why the crowds always followed Jesus. Children do not have to become adults to be saved, but adults must become like children.

Jesus Healed their Sick and raised their dead: Luke 8:40-56. Jesus could be found where people are sick,

hurting and discouraged. When Jesus returned to Capernaum, the people welcomed Him gladly. There was a man and a woman who each had heavy burdens to share with Jesus. The contrast here is interesting, for it shows the variety of people who came to Jesus for help. The man's name is given (Jairus) but the woman is anonymous. Jairus was a wealthy leading citizen, but the woman was a lowly person who had spent all her money trying to get well. Here was a man interceding for his child and a woman hoping to get help for herself, and both came to the feet of Jesus. Jairus had been blessed with twelve years of joy with his daughter, and now the prospect of losing her was frightening, while the woman had experienced twelve years of misery because of her affliction, and now she was hoping to get well. This woman had a hidden need, a burden she had lived with for twelve long years. It affected her physically and psychologically which made life difficult. But it also affected her spiritually, because the hemorrhage made her ceremonially defiled and unable to participate in the religious life of the nation (Lev. 15:19–22). She was defiled, destitute, discouraged, and desperate; but she came to Jesus and Jesus met her need. Why the woman chose to touch this part of His garment, we do not know, but Jesus knew somebody with faith had touched Him and had been healed by His power. ***The healing was immediate and complete.***

The internet and respective social network sites, give us a unique opportunity to witness like Jesus did. We can touch more people at the same time, in more places than was dreamed possible by the disciples. People are searching for answers to their daily challenges and we must be there online with solutions to life's stresses and strains. To be relevant we must change/broaden the content of our websites from stories that pat us on the back and tell the world how good we are, to content that answers the need of:-

1. Those who contemplate giving up on life & are suicidal
2. Those with dysfunctional marriages and are clueless how to fix it
3. Those whose children have become rebellious, drug pushers, purveyors of crime & violence
4. Those who are not feeling loved by anyone, the sad, discouraged, seeking for help in the middle of night!
5. Those who just learnt they are terminally ill
6. Those concerned about their self image, low self esteem, slow/lack of progress

Jesus said you shall be **MY** witnesses. We must build relationships, impact the communities where we are, give the people hope, tell them of the peace, and freedom to be

found in Jesus, so they too can be ready for the coming Kingdom.

We must be witnesses in our homes, on the street, in our communities, at the workplace, on the internet, wherever people gather, and the good news while there is a text, there is no witnessing template, prototype or mould; just tell the story as you understand it, tell how this Galilean named Jesus changed your life and destiny.

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." {GW 363.2}

Such was the character of Jesus' ministry, social to save and ours should be no different. Jesus created a social network calling disciples, touching lives of children, healing the sick, preaching about peace and hope. In social networking today we need to do what Jesus did to attract people around the theme of preparing for the Kingdom of God. We are called to be "Kingdom Builders."

I challenge you today to do and dare in attempting great things for the master, go where no one has gone before; do what no one has done before; and God will bless your efforts in remarkable ways. This is the hour—

The hour we've longed, lived and prayed for.

This is the hour—

We've been called, prepared, and made for.

This is the hour—

God's hour of triumph—glorious, sure, and certain

Earth's tragic drama now is ending, a moment's pause—
then the curtain.

We are the men— (**generation**)

God's men, brave men of prayer, of faith, of hope!

We are the men

The men whom God has called to lead, to plan, to dare!

We are the men

We dare not fail nor falter now—in life, in plan, in deed, in
speech.

We must respond—

God summons us to purer lives, to grander deeds, to greater
power.

We dare not fail our God, our church, our cause,

In this last hope filled, splendid hour! **YOU are my
witnesses!!**