



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 1 - Number 1
The week of October 4, 2015

God's Global Mission Acts 1:1-14

This Week's Core Statement

MISSION - The mission of our church matters because it defines our essential commitments in the world. The mission of Loudonville Community Church is captured in four essential practices: *Reaching-Teaching-Connecting-Sending*. Now before we explain what these four practices mean, we first need to ask, "For whom are we engaging in these four practices?" Our mission begins with the conviction that we exist for God. We want our presence in the Capital District to ultimately be about one thing - to bring glory to our Father. God's own mission is to make His glory known to the entire universe through the church. This same mission is the heartbeat of every church. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." This governing conviction is more than mere semantics for us. We want this conviction to shape *who* we are, to be the motivation behind *why* we do what we do and, to re-direct us if we lose our way.

Reaching: We are committed to reaching the Capital District with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not here to merely persuade people to step inside the walls of our church building (though we are happy and welcoming when they do!) but to advance the kingdom of God. We believe God has called us to build bridges of spiritual influence in order to share the gospel with the more than 850,000 people who call the Capital District home.

Teaching: We are committed to renewing the mind of every member and regular attender of LCC through the faithful proclamation and teaching of the Word of God and then allowing the Spirit of God to transform lives. We believe preaching and teaching the Bible is God's primary and permanent method for proclaiming the gospel and building disciples who continue to grow in grace.

Connecting: We are committed to connecting people for pursuing Jesus together in a spiritually focused and genuinely caring community. Our primary vehicle for building community is through our Growth Groups. Our Growth Groups are small communities that typically gather in homes throughout our region, they are facilitated by a leader, and encourage deeper study and interaction around the Sunday morning message.

Sending: We are committed to sending every member of our church beyond our building in order to serve their families, our city and every nation around the world. Our aim is to be the whole church for the whole world. We believe that a genuine passion for God's glory inevitably leads to a firm commitment to go into the whole world for the sake of the gospel. Let's unpack this commitment a bit more.

The whole church for the whole city: Our church property is located less than four miles away from the capitol building. We believe if we reach our capital with the gospel we can influence the entire state. Therefore, we want the cityscape of our capital to provide the backdrop for everything we do. Our mission is to shine the message of grace, truth, and love into every corner of our city. If you were to exit our campus and travel down Route 9 towards Albany you would move along "mansion mile," a stretch of homes originally intended as a summer resort for some of Albany's wealthiest 19th century residents. While that stretch of road still remains, we are also located within two miles of Arbor Hill and

West Hill, two of Albany's most needy neighborhoods. Therefore, we believe the gospel compels us to wrap our message in skin large enough to embrace such neighborhoods at their point of need. In addition, we believe that God does not bless the local church in isolation. An essential part of our vision is to cooperate with other churches that love the gospel, not only as a display of gospel unity, but also doing kingdom advancing ministry together.

The whole church for the whole world: On the day of Pentecost the gospel gave birth to a global church. Christ was crucified at a crossroad in the midst of a festival attended by people from a multiplicity of nations. Soon after His resurrection, the gift of the promised Holy Spirit resulted in people speaking out about His resurrection in every language known to man. The mandate Jesus delivered before He left earth was to take His message to every person on the planet (cf. Matthew 28:19-20). Loudonville Community Church exists to look out toward the unengaged and unreached people of the world and to send out disciple-makers who are willing to go to the most remote parts of the earth. To be on mission with Jesus means to go where He sends us. When we lose touch with Him, we choose to settle and stay. For the sake of the world, our hearts must always be tilted towards the nations and our hands open to serve all people in His name.

This Week's Complementary Passage

PSALM 67

Make Your Face Shine upon Us

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*

² that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.

³ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!

⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*

⁵ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!

⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.

⁷ God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!

appointed

baptized

Caesar

enemy/demons/Satan

eternal life

fathers & children [in one color different from Moses]

Gentiles

gospel

grace

Holy Spirit

in the name of Jesus Christ

Jesus

Jews

Law (of Moses)

men of the council

Moses [in different color from fathers & children]

prayer

repent (repentance)

resurrection (raised up)

salvation

suffering

the Way

the promise of the Father

witnesses

word of God

This Week's Text for Study – Acts 1:1-14

STEP ONE . . .

READING what the passage says
(Read it at least three times)

¹ In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

STEP TWO . . .

OBSERVING how the passage moves

Return to the passage and **mark key words using the marking guide along with the following phrases and movements:**

- Circle “first book” in v. 1. and in the margin write, “The Gospel of Luke.”
- Underline in v. 1 “all that Jesus began to do and teach.”
- Underline what the Holy Spirit does in v. 1 and v. 8. Write “Holy Spirit” in the margin of v. 1 and v. 8.
- In v. 4 underline twice the word “ordered.”
- In verse 4 underline the phrase “but wait for the promise of the Father,” and “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”
- Bracket the word “power” in v. 8.
- Bracket the phrase “you will be my witnesses” in v. 8.
- Write “Outline of Acts” in the margin of v. 8.
- Underline the phrases in v. 14, “with one accord” and “were devoting themselves to prayer.”

STEP THREE . . .

Ask the five “W” questions and the one “H” question:

1. **WHO** is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? And, to **whom** is it speaking?
2. **WHAT** is the subject of the passage? What does the passage say about the subject?
3. **WHEN** do or will the events occur? When did something happen to a particular person, people, or nation?
4. **WHERE** did or will this happen?
5. **WHY** is something said or mentioned? Why would or will this happen? Why at this time? Why this person?
6. **HOW** will it happen? How is it to be done? How is it illustrated?

STEP FOUR . . .

UNDERSTANDING what the passage means

This commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

v. 1 – **first**. The idea is “former.” The word can refer to the first in a set or series. The “first book” is a reference to the Gospel of Luke implying that Acts is to be seen as the second installment of a two-volume work on the life and ministry of Jesus. Each book Luke wrote would have filled a single papyrus scroll.

v. 1 – **book**. Or, treatise. The word is *logos*, a common word that occurs 330 times in the NT. It can be variously translated as speech, statement, account, or message.

v. 1 – **Theophilus**. The name means “lover of God” or “loved by God.” Some believe this refers to an actual person or friend of Luke; others think it is symbolic of all such people. See Luke 1:3.

v. 1 – **began**. What Jesus began to do in His earthly ministry (the scope of the Gospel of Luke), He now continues to do through His Apostles (the book of Acts).

v. 2 – **taken up**. Occurs 13 times in the NT. This word is related to the word ascension in Luke 9:51 (see also v. 11, 22; 1 Timothy 3:16). Acts picks up the story of Jesus in the days just prior to His ascension through the birth and spread of the church.

v. 3 – **alive**. Or, living. The word is a participle. See also Revelation 20:5.

v. 3 – **proofs**. Positive or convincing proofs, sure signs. Used only here in the NT, it is a technical term for “necessary proof.” Luke believes the resurrection appearances of Jesus are irrefutable proofs that Jesus is alive.

v. 3 – **appearing**. Or, being seen. The word is related to the word vision used in 2 Corinthians 12:1.

v. 3 – **during**. The idea is that Jesus made periodic appearances but not continuous ones over forty days. This phrase is a summary of Luke 24:13-25. Jesus was not continually visible to the Apostles during these forty days but He appeared to them on various occasions over the course of forty days.

v. 4 – **while staying with them**. The meaning of this word is uncertain. It may mean “coming together,” or “while He was sharing a meal with them,” or, “to stay with, spend the night with.”

v. 4 – **promise**. The promise of the Father refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Helper (see John 14:16, 26).

v. 5 – **baptized with**. Or, baptized in. The idea is to be drenched or immersed.

v. 5 – **not many days from now**. Jesus ascended to heaven forty days after Passover. The Apostles would wait an additional ten days before Pentecost.

v. 6 – **restore the kingdom to Israel**. See Matthew 17:11.

v. 7 – **times or seasons**. Seasons are divisions of time (see 1 Thessalonians 5:1).

v. 7 – **fixed**. Or, established; set.

v. 7 – **authority**. This refers to the necessary power to fulfill our mission. It is the same word for *miracles* used in 1 Corinthians 12:10.

v. 8 – **witnesses**. The word is used 35 times in the NT. It is related to the word testimony. See Acts 4:33. A witness is one who sheds light on what he or she has seen.

v. 8 – **in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth**. From the nearest city and country to the farthest (cf. Acts 13:47). Witnesses are sent out from Jerusalem in various directions. This world-wide mission and expansion of the gospel must be completed before the end will come (see Matthew 24:14).

v. 9 – **lifted up**. Luke uses four different words to describe Jesus’ ascension (see Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2,11; 1:9 and here). After His resurrection, Jesus’ life on earth had a definite point of closure at His ascension.

v. 10 – **gazing**. This comment by the angels is meant as a gentle rebuke.

v. 11 – **will come in the same way**. The angels reassure the disciples that Jesus will return in the same way He left.

v. 12 – **a Sabbath’s day journey away**. The Rabbis determined the distance allowable for travel on the Sabbath was a little over ½ mile.

v. 14 – **one accord**. Literally, the same mind or spirit. This is Luke’s favorite term to describe the spiritual unity of believers (see Acts 2:46, 4:24, 5:12, 7:57, 8:6, 12:20, 15:25, 18:12, 19:29). This is a brief snapshot of the early Christian community.

v. 14 – **were devoting themselves to prayer**. They were waiting with faithful, united prayer. This is a picture of the “church expectant,” right before Pentecost.

v. 14 – **and his brothers**. They did not acknowledge Jesus as Messiah before His death, but after His resurrection are found among His followers. On the brothers of Jesus, see Matthew 13:55-56.

STEP FIVE . . .

SUMMARIZING the message

The two books penned by the beloved physician, Luke, capture the two phases of Jesus' ministry. The first phase of Jesus' ministry, documented in the Gospel of Luke, details all that Jesus *began* to do and teach. The second phase of Jesus' ministry, recorded in the book of Acts, describes what Jesus *continues* to do following His ascension. It is worth noting that Luke's two-volume work constitutes twenty-five percent of the entire New Testament. As we study many of the defining moments in Luke's historical masterpiece, we will marvel at the simplicity and clarity of what Christ is still doing in and through His church today.

The powerful reminder is that the days of Jesus' ministry are not over! As we read Acts 1:1-14, we are called to participate in Jesus' primary mission in the world today. His mission is our priority. Even though we read about His ascension in verses 9-11, His departure was neither an accident nor the end of His ministry. Jesus returned to heaven on purpose where He is actively advancing His kingdom on earth through us.

It is interesting that before Jesus' departure the disciples asked Him, "Before you go, would you please sort out our country's political future?" (v. 6, my paraphrase). In the same way, it is so easy for us to become distracted by the many sad and tragic events we see and hear all around us. As someone recently said, "The whole world is on fire right now." Many Christians are wondering, "Are we living in the final days of human history?" As important as that question is, it is even more important that we align our hearts and expend all our energy engaged in Jesus' primary mission. *In that case, how do we start?*

First of all, we are to wait on the Spirit expectantly and prayerfully. Before the disciples could effectively and fruitfully join Jesus in His global mission they were first told to wait. They were told to wait in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. The word *clothed* literally means to have a garment put on you. The disciples would be clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit like a garment. God still clothes His people with His Spirit today. Nothing has changed. He has given every believer His power for the same reason – to be His witnesses. We cannot be what Jesus has called us to be apart from the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, we are to strategize about our mission globally and start locally. No possible reading of the book of Acts could be twisted into thinking that Jesus is committed to the wealth and prosperity of His disciples. On the contrary, we read about how they endured suffering and the loss of so much the world considers essential. Yet, they changed their own world in the span of just 30 years. One observer in the book of Acts would say this about the disciples, "[These people] are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus" (Acts 17:7). In fact, just a few moments earlier they were charged with turning the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

In the same way, our mission today is clear. In Acts 1:8 Jesus says, in effect, "If I give you the power of My Spirit, it will not be to advance your own interests and agenda." "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." How do we participate in this world-wide mission without becoming overwhelmed? We should start right where we are. Our Jerusalem is where God has placed us right now. But while we start where we are, we must never lose sight of the world.

Thirdly, we are to witness about Jesus regularly and consistently. What are we here for? Why are you a part of our church at this time? We know that Jesus loves the world and every person in it. His purpose is not to remove us from the world but to fully enlist us on mission in it. We are here to be Spirit-empowered witnesses for Christ to the world, and He intended us to be His witnesses in ever-widening circles. Whatever else we may do, we are primarily on mission to spread the good news of God's love to those who are starving for it and are perishing without it.

STEP SIX . . .

GROWTH GROUP CONVERSATION: EXPLORING the passage through discussion

1. Read Acts 1:1-3. What is the basic difference between the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts?

2. What was the reason behind the command Jesus gave to His disciples in verse 4? Why couldn't they begin spreading the word about the kingdom of God immediately? What impact does waiting have on promises? What is the benefit of waiting with others?

3. Read Acts 1:4. Are there similar concerns we struggle with that can distract us from our primary responsibilities as Jesus' witnesses? How should we keep these things in proper perspective? How is witnessing related to discipleship?

4. The word for "witness" is the same as "martyr" (cf. Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 19:15; Revelation 3:14). What does this tell you about the Apostles? What does it also say about our willingness to openly talk about Jesus?

5. What did Jesus mean by "the promise of the Father"? (See John 14:16–17, 25–26 for more background.) There are differences among Christians regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Humbly recognizing those differences, what do you think it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? How is the baptism of the Holy Spirit related to the power we are meant to experience for witnessing.

6. Read Acts 1:9-11. Where is Jesus right now? What is He doing? How would this information have helped the disciples just then? How does the expectation of His return affect our lives?

7. How should the last words of Jesus inform the world perspective of all Christians and shape the nature of missions around the world today?

8. What is the impact of the geographical order (v. 8) of the spread of the gospel on how we should do evangelism today? If this had taken place in our city, what places could be substituted for those in verse 8?

9. Read 1:13-14. Luke lists all those who were present in the Upper Room. What is the value of praying together as a group?

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

The Godhead *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

The Resurrection and Return of Christ *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

Unity in Christ *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternity *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

Undiluted Worship *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

Constant Abiding *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

Desperate Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Total Forgiveness *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

Tangible Compassion *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

Generous Giving *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

God Space *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

Love - a sincere affection for others *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Peace - an abiding sense of harmony *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

Patience - a willingness to stick with things *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty *Psalms 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control.

Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely

Titus 2:11-13

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

Hope - a certainty of what is to come *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Each week this Bible Study will feature either a core belief, practice or virtue vital for growing disciples.

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