

SPREAD OUT THINK BIG

Week Four | March 11, 2018 | *The Church is God's Instrument to Reach a Lost World*

PREPARATION

GETTING READY:

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through Acts 1:1-8; Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

The church is God's instrument to reach a lost world. The harvest is plentiful, and the workers are few.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

Oakwood has done much to reach the lost world, but there are still many who have not heard the gospel or experienced the love of Jesus.

MEDITATE

"The point of the Kingdom is transformation. God is radically transforming disciples who can manifest the effect of His reign through their lives (Romans 12:2). Missional churches expect to transform the world through involvement and ministry. Beginning with their own city, they extend their focus to their state, their nation, and the ends of the earth. They believe the Gospel is still the power of God to transform all who believe."¹

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Q: *If you were never going to see your family again, what would you say to them with your final words? Why?*

If we were able to know that we had one last conversation with our family, we would want to communicate something of utmost importance. It would not be a time for casual conversation and small talk. We would spend a great deal of time thinking about what we want them to know and remember.

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

In today's lesson, we will read Jesus' final words to His disciples before His ascension as recorded in Matthew and Acts. We must take into account the fact that Jesus was fully aware that these were His last words and instructions to them. We see that:

- 1. JESUS HAS GIVEN US A MISSION**
- 2. JESUS HAS EQUIPPED THE CHURCH TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION**
- 3. AS OAKWOOD GROWS, WE ARE TO EXPAND OUR MINISTRY TO FULFILL THE MISSION**

GOING DEEPER

+This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.

JESUS HAS GIVEN US A MISSION

■ ACTS 1:4-8; MATTHEW 24:14; 28:18-20

Q: *What did the disciples mean when they asked Jesus if He was now going to restore the kingdom to Israel?*

In Acts chapter 1, we find Jesus appearing to His disciples following His resurrection and giving them instructions regarding what they are to do. Luke tells us that Jesus appeared to the disciples for a period of forty days before He ascended into heaven. During these forty days, Jesus gave the apostles commands through the Holy Spirit, showed them many proofs that He was alive, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God (vs 2-3).

Verses 4-8 give us an account of Jesus' final appearance to His apostles before He ascended into heaven. In these five verses, we find Jesus doing all three things that Luke tells us that Jesus did during the forty-day period: showing them proof He was alive, speaking to them about the kingdom of God, and commanding them. It begins with Jesus eating with them. In eating with them, Jesus was showing them that He was alive (dead men do not eat!). Then, He tells them to stay in Jerusalem until they receive the Holy Spirit (the gift His Father promised), and in verses 7-8 He talks about the kingdom of God.

When Jesus tells the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they receive the Holy Spirit, their response is to ask Jesus if He is now going to restore the kingdom of Israel. The disciples are still looking for and expecting Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom. Jesus responds by directing them away from being concerned about times, dates, and political power. In verse 8, Jesus says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." In this, He is telling them that they will receive power, but for a different purpose than what they are expecting. They will receive power so that they can be witnesses for Jesus in "Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Jesus is letting them know that the restoration of the kingdom involves a worldwide mission. The Lord's return and the restoration of the kingdom does not revolve around speculation but around God's purpose—the salvation of the world. The gospel must spread to all parts of the earth before Jesus returns and the restoration is complete. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a sign that the restoration has begun, but there is still much work to be done. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

In the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus tells them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." The central mission and command in these verses is to "make disciples" and the object of this command is "of all nations." Jesus' ministry in Israel was the beginning point of a worldwide mission to make disciples. "The story of Jesus led to Jerusalem; the story of the church led from Jerusalem."²

At the conclusion of the books of Acts and Matthew, it is apparent that this mission is not complete and is to continue. The church must embrace the mission that Jesus has given us to be His witness to the ends of the earth and to make disciples of all nations. Everywhere you go, you are to bear witness to Jesus and make disciples.

JESUS HAS EQUIPPED THE CHURCH TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION

■ ACTS 1:8 AND MATTHEW 28:18-20

Q: *What does Jesus promise His disciples to accomplish this daunting task?*

Jesus promises three things to His followers in these verses to equip them to accomplish the mission of spreading the gospel to the entire world: His power, His authority, and His presence.

In Acts 1, Luke states that the Father has promised the Holy Spirit (verses 4-5) and then Jesus tells His disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. The Greek word used here for power is *dynamis*. It is the same word used for Jesus' miracles in the Gospels. It is divine power. Jesus promises us divine power so that we can be His witnesses. We are not left to our own strength or abilities. We have access to the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

The second thing that Jesus promises is His authority (Matthew 28:18-19). Jesus says that all authority in heaven and on earth is His. It is in that authority that He sends the Church out to make disciples of all nations. In verse 19, He says that the Church is to baptize in “the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”. It is under the authority of Jesus that we are commissioned to go and make disciples, and it is also under His authority that we are to reach all nations.

The third promise that Jesus gives is His presence. He says, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” He does not abandon us to the mission, but promises that He will be with us. His presence is not an intermittent presence, but it is a continual presence forever.

If left to fulfill the mission on our own, it would be an overwhelming and impossible task. But through God's power, His authority, and His presence, we have everything we need to courageously spread the good news of the gospel to a lost world.

Q: How does knowing the fact that you have the power of God, the authority of Jesus, and the presence of Jesus with you, impact your confidence in being a witness for Jesus to the lost people you know?

AS OAKWOOD GROWS, WE ARE TO EXPAND OUR MINISTRY TO FULFILL THE MISSION.

The church is the Body of Christ, and as such, we must live as He lives, love what He loves, and pursue what He pursues. Oakwood must live like Jesus, love like Jesus, and pursue the world like Jesus. We cannot be satisfied with what we have done and maintain the status quo. We cannot afford to turn our focus inward and just serve ourselves. Milfred Minatrea, in *Shaped By God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches*, writes, "When the activities of a church focus inward, the church has exchanged its mission for maintenance. There is a great difference between focus on mission and focus on maintenance, and there is a great difference in the impact each has in God's Kingdom."³ We must continue to press on toward achieving the mission that Jesus has called us.

God has been faithful to bless Oakwood in the past with growth and health. One of the main reasons for this is that Oakwood has been faithful to focus on God's Kingdom and the mission at hand. We have experienced incredible growth in reaching people and in the work that we have been able to do. As Oakwood continues to grow, so does our ability to expand God's work.

Below are some statistics from the past ten years that illustrate how the growth of the Church has enabled us to expand our participation in the Mission of the Church.

BUDGET GROWTH	2008	2018
TOTAL CHURCH BUDGET	\$3,711,898	\$6,519,820
MISSION BUDGET	\$380,128	\$900,600

- Since 2008 Oakwood's budget has grown by 76%
- Since 2008 Oakwood's mission budget has grown by 137%

- In 2008 the mission budget was 10.2% of the overall budget
- In 2018 the mission budget is 13.8% of the overall budget
- In 2008 Oakwood was directly involved in 2 foreign countries
- In 2018 Oakwood is directly involved in 18 foreign countries
- Since 2008 Oakwood has baptized 1,765 people
- In 2006, Oakwood started Kids' Club serving 37 at-risk elementary students from one NBISD campus. This school year, Kids' Club has served 215 kids from every NBISD elementary campus and 3 Comal ISD campuses.
- In 2008, Oakwood opened Volunteers in Medicine. VIM is a ministry providing free healthcare to low-income, uninsured area residents. Since 2008, the clinic has served patients at more than 47,000 appointments.
- In 2010, Oakwood opened Harvest Food Pantry. The pantry has given away over 34,000 bags of groceries to our neighbors in need.
- Since 2012, Oakwood has helped start 19 new churches throughout the United States and Canada.

God has accomplished so much through Oakwood, but there are many in our community and around the world that do not yet know Him. We must Spread Out and Think Big if we are going to be faithful to the mission for which we are called.

NEXT STEPS

+Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.

Q: *What is your mission?*

Q: *What do you need to do to advance God's Kingdom in New Braunfels, Texas, the United States, and the world?*

PRAY

+Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.

- God, use me, Oakwood, and the Body of Christ to reach a lost world.
- God, help me grasp the importance of the mission and feel the urgency of sharing with a lost world.
- God, reveal to me what You would have me do to accomplish the mission.

END NOTES

¹ Milfred Minatrea, *Shaped By God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004, 89.

² John B. Polhill, *Acts*, vol. 26, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 86.

³ Minatrea, xvi.

