

# 1 - MISSION

## Acts 1:1-11

(Play Video)

A long time ago in a land, far, far away...

This really happened.

The Roman Empire was shaken. The authorities thought by putting Jesus to death, they would end this “rebellion.” Yet, amazingly enough, word about Jesus continued to spread. More and more people became followers of THE WAY. There was no denying the impact because lives were being changed all over the world.

I’m excited to be part of the church today because God has called us to be a community filled with changed lives.

For the next few weeks we are going to study the New Testament book of Acts to learn how the early church created a community that turned the world upside down.

At Restoration, we want to be a church God uses to make a difference. This is why we constantly look to the bible and see how the New Testament church functioned so we can have guidance into what we are called to do by God.

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “**16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**”

The Bible contains God's message for mankind to come to know Him. It is relevant to our lives today. Everything you need to know concerning God and His plan for salvation and life is contained in the Scripture.

Paul wrote the church in Romans 12... “**Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**”

This is why we focus so much on the Bible here at Restoration. The Word is what renews our minds and transforms us. It’s as we renew our mind we then can understand God’s will for our life and have wisdom to make the best decisions.

I also believe this is true for our church family. As we renew our minds, we will have a clearer picture of where God is leading us as a church.

My prayer and hope for Restoration is that we would be a church like the church described for us in the book of Acts.

So as we jump into the book of Acts, we see the early church began creating community through communication. Communication was the catalyst to begin a new community.

How good are you at communication?

What methods do you use to communicate something that is important?

Several years ago the country group Lonestar had a hit song called "No News." A young man's girl leaves him. Yet he stays home being patient for her to return. But a long time passes and he never hears from her. The chorus lists ways in which she could communicate with him. *"She could telephone, tell a friend, tell a lie about where she's been. Send a pigeon, send a fax; Write it on a post-it pad. Send a signal up in smoke, tap it out in Morse Code. I'd prefer a bad excuse to no news."*

What is your preferred method of communication?

Did you know that advertisers say they know you understand their message when you see their commercial 17 times? 17 times is a lot! Now I'm not suggesting that the teenagers here should bother their parents 17 times asking for what they want. But I would mention that to the wives who might want to nag their husbands about something. It's not that guys aren't listening; it just takes several messages to communicate!

We know in order for relationships to be successful, there has to be good communication.

Did you hear about the case of a woman who asked the judge for a divorce? The judge asked: "Do you have any grounds for divorce?" The woman replied, "Grounds? We just have 2 acres." The judge says, "Lady, that's not what I'm talking about. What I mean is do you have a grudge?" The woman thinks for a minute and then replies, "Garage? No, we park our car in front of the house." By now, the judge is getting a little frustrated! He sort of snaps at her, "Ma'am, does your husband beat you up?" She replies, "No. I wake up way before he does ever morning." The Judge practically yells at her, "Lady, why do you want a divorce?" The woman looks at the Judge and replies, "Judge, me and my husband just don't seem to be able to communicate!"

How are your communication skills?

Psychologist Dr. Albert Morabian claims that in our communication only 7% is based upon the actual words we say. 38% of our communication is based upon who we are, what the person knows about us, our personal reputation. 55% is based upon our body language. That means that the look on our face or posture while we are saying something is more important in communication than the actual words we are saying.

That really bothers me when I spend so much time focusing on the right words to say as I study and develop a message each week. That is only 7% of what I'm doing! Maybe I should spend several hours practicing facial expressions in the mirror.

Communication is so important that I am determined to become the best communicator I can possibly be. But please understand, all of us our communicators. And I hope and pray that you will consider the way your life is communicating to others. In order to create a life-changing community that God desires, we must become excellent communicators.

As I've read and studied Acts chapter 1 I have observed that there are several communications taking place in these verses. The first communication is between...

## LUKE & THEOPHILUS

Acts 1:1 - 2 says, "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen."

Former book? What does he mean by that?  
Well, if you read Luke 1:1 - 4 you will find this:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Luke carefully researched and investigated the life of Christ and wrote an account for a person named Theophilus so that he could be reassured of his faith. We do not know for certain who Theophilus was. All we can guess is that he was a gentile believer.

But consider this communication that is taking place between Luke and Theophilus. Luke recognized that others had recorded accounts of Jesus' life, but he also felt led to write an orderly, well researched account for the purpose of encouraging this believer. And because of his diligence, we also enjoy the benefit of that work.

This is an important point to emphasize:

## Life-changing community is built on communicated truth.

The message is important, but if it isn't truth, it won't change anyone's life. Luke took time to communicate truth to Theophilus and not only was Theophilus' life changed, but our lives have the potential of being changed today! Life-changing community is built on communicated truth.

As we continue through Acts chapter 1 we see communication between...

## JESUS & APOSTLES

Acts 1:3 reads, "3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."

Jesus communicates to His apostles that He really is alive. If there is no resurrection, there is no Christianity. If there is no resurrection, there is no hope. If there is no resurrection, there is no victory over death. If there is no resurrection, there is no point in creating community.

## Life-changing community only happens because of Jesus' resurrection.

Notice that Jesus, who is the greatest communicator ever, used different methods to communicate with His apostles.

We see that He spoke the Word of God to them. But Jesus did more than just speak to the disciples. Look with me in verse 4...

4 On one occasion, **while he was eating with them**, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

One way that Jesus communicated to the apostles that He really was alive was by sitting down and eating with them! A dead man doesn't eat. A ghost doesn't eat. Only someone who is alive eats a meal! Jesus not only used the spoken word to communicate, He also used visual illustrations.

Some preachers try to use visual illustrations with their sermons to drive home a point. One minister decided to use this visual illustration to make a point one Sunday morning. He thought this would add some emphasis. Four worms were placed into four separate jars. The first worm was put into a container of alcohol. The second worm was put into a container of cigarette smoke. The third worm was put into a container of chocolate syrup. The fourth worm was put into a container of good clean soil.

At the conclusion of his lesson, the minister reported the following results: The first worm in alcohol was dead. The second worm in cigarette smoke was dead. The third worm in chocolate syrup was dead. But the fourth worm in good clean soil was alive.

So the minister asked the congregation, "What can you learn from this demonstration?" A little old lady in the back quickly raised her hand and said, "As long as you drink, smoke, and eat chocolate, you won't have worms!"

Communication is difficult! But just to make sure His apostles knew He was alive, Jesus ate with them.

I am thankful that Jesus is alive and that He communicated convincing proofs to His apostles of that fact.

Jesus also communicated some instructions to His Apostles. Jesus said, "4 On one occasion, **while he was eating with them**, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Jesus let's His apostles know that there is more to come. It's an exciting time guys, but you have to wait in Jerusalem until everything is ready.

That would have been tough communication for me. I cannot stand having to wait.

We just made it through Christmas and I can remember as a kid how long it seemed to take for Christmas to arrive. Now that I'm an adult, I'm like, "It's already over?" I guess that's a good thing because I hate to wait.

Have you ever been forced to sit and wait on something? It's tough! And I think it was tough as well for the apostles because they take this opportunity to communicate with Jesus.

## APOSTLES & JESUS

The apostles ask Jesus a question. Listen to verse 6.

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Asking questions is another method of communication... But I really wish we could see the look on Jesus' face when they ask this question. I wish I could see His face because I wonder if Jesus rolled His eyes. I wonder if He thought, "I've spent over 3 years with these guys and they still don't get it!"

In order to be fair we must put ourselves in the shoes of the apostles. They were good Jewish boys who believed that the Messiah of God was going to reestablish Israel as the dominant kingdom of the world. They knew that since Jesus had resurrected, they would be invincible! Even if they were killed fighting the Romans, Jesus could bring them back!

So Jesus has to communicate with the Apostles again.

## JESUS & APOSTLES

I want to point out there are some commentators who say Jesus sidesteps the disciples question in these verses with His response. However, it is my opinion that Jesus answers their questions dead on.

Listen to Jesus' answer:

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Now at first glance I would agree that it appears Jesus sidesteps their question. But do you remember what the apostles always argued about. Even during His last night before the cross, the apostles argued about who was the greatest. And just to teach them, Jesus got up, wrapped a towel around His waist and washed their feet.

The apostles were concerned about authority. Who is going to be in charge. Who is going to have the power. And Jesus answers their question. Jesus looks at His apostles and

communicates, “Guys, don’t get caught up in earthly kingdoms, who is going to be #1. But you will have power when you become my witnesses.”

Jesus is not concerned with earthly kingdoms. Jesus is interested in a spiritual kingdom. Jesus is interested in creating a community that changes lives. And He looks at His apostles and communicates to us through them that we will have power that is out of this world when we tell others about the life-changing grace of God.

Jesus communicates that His followers have a mission. Listen again to verse 8, “[But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.](#)”

We are here to be witnesses for Christ. That word witness comes from the Greek word “μαρτυρῶ” from which we get our English word “martyr.” Martyr means one who bears witness by his death.

Romans 6:3 - 4 teaches us, “[3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.](#)”

Each day we bear witness to Christ by taking up our cross and following Him. Christ desires that we communicate to the world His life-changing message.

There is one last communication I see in these verses.

## **ANGELS & APOSTLES**

Verses 9 - 11...

[9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”](#)

I always enjoyed being able to witness the Southeast Christian Church Easter Pageant. The church no longer puts on this production, but even though I had seen it several times, the end always gave me chills. The pageant ends with Jesus ascending five stories into the top balcony.

Now can you imagine being an apostle and witnessing the ascension without any wires? I would have been the same as they were!

But the angels remind them, “Stop looking up. You can’t stay on the mountain forever. There is work to be done in the valley.”

We love to stay on the mountain top. We love to be with our family and friends where it is safe and comfortable. But Jesus communicated that we have a mission to complete until He returns.

I feel like it's too easy for us to stand here looking up into the sky, rather than focusing on the mission God has given to us.

2016 is going to be a transitional year for Restoration. God has been positioning us for impact in this Valley, and I believe 2016 is going to be a game changer for our church and community.

But this will only happen if we stop standing looking up into the sky, and embrace the mission Jesus calls us to.

What do you need to do to begin accomplishing Jesus' mission in 2016?

Maybe you need to commit to reading the Bible this year and renewing your mind so you can understand God's will for your life more clearly. Beginning tomorrow I will be posting a reading plan for 2016 which will take us through the New Testament and a large portion of the Old Testament. It's a 5 day a week reading plan, which leaves Saturday and Sunday open for catch up reading or other reading you'd like to do.

Maybe you need to get involved in serving at Restoration to help make our Sunday services possible. Are most important people are the greeters and children's workers who give their time each Sunday. Maybe God is calling you to step up and serve.

Maybe you need to trust God with your finances in 2016. I know the church in general can have a bad reputation for talking about money, but I am more and more convinced that how we handle our finances is a huge indicator of how we are growing in Christ. Do we trust God to provide for our needs? We want to be a generous church. We are blessed to be a blessing.

Maybe you need to volunteer at Goody B's Teen Center during the week. There are volunteers who mentor teens from 3-6pm Monday - Friday. These kids, while they can be challenging, desperately need someone to love them and care for them.

Maybe you can help with our clothing ministry at Goody B's.  
Maybe you can help with the Adopt a Classroom program.  
Maybe you can help with Blackhawk Blessings.

You see... it's not that God hasn't been using people in the Valley to serve, it's that God is calling all of us to get on board with His mission!

On your notes there is a space that says...

**THIS IS WHAT I NEED TO DO TO BEGIN MY MISSION FOR JESUS:**

Would you write down an area you need to begin getting active in so you can help accomplish the mission of Jesus in 2016.

I know it's tempting to think, "I'll just leave it to the talented ones or the professionals..." But if you are a follower of Jesus, you are talented. You are a minister.

Our mission at Restoration is to make disciples of Jesus Christ who go and make disciples.

There was once a young girl who came to her minister and confessed, "I just cannot stick it out any longer. I am the only Christian in the factory where I work. I get nothing but taunts and sneers. It is more than I can stand. I am going to resign."

The preacher gently asked this young believer, "Will you tell me something? Tell me, in your factory, where do they put the lights?" The young believer was really confused and she snapped back at her minister and said, "What has that to do with it?" The preacher, as gently as he could say it, said, "You did not answer my question, where are lights placed?" She then answered her minister by saying, "...in dark places."

"Yes, you are absolutely right, and I believe that is why you have been placed in that factory where there is such spiritual darkness and where there is no other Christian to shine for the Lord."

It was only at that moment that this young Christian woman began to realize...for the first time that the opportunity to communicate the Gospel with her lips...that was hers. She felt she could not fail God by allowing her light to go out. So, she went back to the factory with renewed determination to communicate God's message the best she could. She went back into the darkness to let her light shine in that dark corner!

Jesus calls us to be the light of the world. Jesus asks us to communicate His message to the world. Will we do it?

Will we be a life-changing church that turns this community upside down for God?

## **COMMUNION**

(Video after prayer)