

MAY 13 - JUNE 24

BIG CHURCH

Two thousand years ago, a gathering of people began a movement that would circle the globe.



THE CHURCH IS A MOVEMENT, AND IT'S STILL MOVING.

Guide for Sermon Discussion Groups and Personal Devotions

Session One – Day One

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS (You do not need to use them all)

1. Have you ever attended opening day for a sports team? Where was it? When was it? What was it like?
2. Have you ever attended the opening of a new store, new gallery, new park etc.?
3. What do you remember about the opening day of school from when you were a child?

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, as we enter a new season of study and reflection, open our eyes to learn more of you, open our hearts to love you more, open our hands to serve you more. As we learn more about one another and share life together, may we be drawn together through the power and strength of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

When we think of *church*, why is a building the first thing that comes to mind? Is *church* a place full of robes and pews? Bands and banners? Or is *church* meant to refer to something different?

SERMON REVIEW

The Greek term for church, *ekklesia*, is translated as an assembly or gathering. The English term for church, comes from a different Greek term meaning “of the Lord”. The German word, *Kirche* – is translated as the Lord’s House.

What are the differences between calling the church *ekklesia* or *kirche*?

The movement from church as an assembly to church as a building has caused problems. Do you agree? Why or why not?

William Tyndale, the “Father of the English Bible” translated the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew into English. This put the Bible directly into the hands of the people. Why was this controversial?

Tyndale translated the word *ekklesia* as a “congregation” rather than “church” moving the focus from a building to the people. Why did some church leaders think this was wrong? What do you think?

Scripture: Matthew 16:16–18; Acts 1:6–8; Acts 2:22–24, 32–33, 36–39, 41

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS¹

1. What are some of the disadvantages of people viewing the church as a building or institution instead of a movement?

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2. Were your first experiences attending church positive or negative for your faith journey? Explain.
3. What do you think is the mission of the church?
4. After reading the first two chapters in Acts, what about the church that first day stands out to you?
5. If the church began as a movement, what are some ways you see the church moving today?
6. What is one thing – large or small – you can do to be a part of continuing the movement Jesus started? What can this group do to support you?

“A common denominator exists among Protestants, Catholics, and Christians from every culture around the world. It’s not the way they worship. It’s not their customs or traditions. The only thing these believers have in common is the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that he rose from the dead; and that his death paid for the sins of the entire world.

That’s the church. It’s not a location. In the earliest days of the church, there was no location. The church wasn’t for church people. In the earliest days of the church, there were no church people. It wasn’t about tradition or style. In the earliest days of the church, there were no traditions or styles. There was energy. There was a dynamic. There was momentum and movement. The world would never be the same.

Throughout history, there has always been a remnant, a group of people that understand that the church is a movement that must move. We can be that group of people.”²

SHARING OF PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH

1. What is your prayer for The Well?
2. How is The Well called to be a movement?

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving Lord, our shared hope is the truth that Jesus lived, died and rose again. Too often the Church gets bogged down in tradition and styles. Help us to be a movement for Christ, willing to go wherever we are sent. Wherever we go, to our jobs, our homes, our neighborhoods and our family, we are the church and we bring the church with us. Help us to bring a faithful witness. In the name of Christ Jesus, Amen.

² Stanley, Andy. Big Church Participant Guide. P. 19. ©2011 North Point Ministries

Session Two – Big Prayers

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS (You do not need to use them all)

4. What was the first prayer you remember learning?
5. Growing up, did you have a prayer that was said at mealtime or bedtime?
6. Is there a certain time of the day, or a certain place, where you pray?

OPENING PRAYER

Listening God, we are pretty chatty with you. We tell you what we want. We complain about what's going wrong in our lives. We pray for people we love who are ill or hurting. What could happen in our prayer life if we were quiet, and listened more? What if we began to pray big prayers for ourselves and for our church? What if we believed what we were praying? In this time together Lord, open us up, to you and one another. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Chances are, if God answered all the prayers you have prayed this past year, the only difference it would have made is in your life and your family. And while that may be great for you and your family, could your prayers be bigger? Bolder? What do you think?

SERMON REVIEW

Small prayers are for small churches. How we pray is an indication of if we've strayed.

Do the majority of my prayers/your prayers/our church's prayers focus on ourselves?

"There was a time when local churches simply wanted what God wanted for them. The last thing they worried about was themselves. They were too concerned with the welfare of the people around them. There was a time when local churches were saturated by a kind of love that people outside the church found awe-inspiring.

We've lost that. Part of the reason is because we're enormously blessed. We shouldn't feel guilty about that, but we should feel responsible. That sense of responsibility demands that we amp up our boldness."³

1. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?
2. Andy Stanley writes, "The gravitational pull for the local church is always toward the reached rather than the unreached. Insiders vs. outsiders." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

SCRIPTURE: Read Acts 4

1. Where do you see courage and boldness in this passage?
2. What made them bold?
3. Do you see things in this passage that could cause fear? What things?

³ Stanley, Andy. Big Church Participants Guide. Page 31. ©2011 North Point Ministries. All Rights Reserved.

4. V. 29 What does it mean to pray for boldness in our preaching? Our prayers? Our actions? How are you doing at this as an individual? How are we doing as a church? How can we become more bold?
5. V. 32 talks about the believers being one in heart and mind. How does unity lead to boldness?
6. V. 32 also talks about no one claiming any possessions but sharing everything they had. Is this possible? What would it mean for us to share? How far would you be willing to go – are there some things you would be happy to share, but others you would not want to share?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS⁴

1. Why do you think churches tend to focus on reaching believers instead of non-believers?
2. What do you think are the common reasons people leave a church? Are they theological differences? Values differences? Because of how they were treated?
3. What are some practical things a church can do to avoid becoming insider-only-focused?
4. Is there a healthy balance between both caring for the needs of those inside the church and those outside? What would that balance be or should there be an inherent imbalance? If there should be an imbalance, which way should it lean?
5. What is the boldest prayer you have ever prayed? What happened because of that prayer?
6. What are some practical things this group can do together to demonstrate love for those outside of the faith?
7. Is there something going on in your life about which you need to pray bold prayers? If so, how can you pray boldly this week? How can this group support you?

SHARING OF PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH

3. What is your prayer for The Well around boldness? What is your prayer for The Well around sharing?
4. Do you have a big prayer for The Well?

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CLOSING PRAYER

God, you are BIG and you are HOLY and you are STRONG. Too often we have prayed small prayers about small things, and to be honest most of our prayers have been about ourselves. This week we are going to lean into your power, your holiness and your strength in our prayers. Give us boldness to pray big prayers for our world, for our church and for ourselves. In the name of Christ Jesus, Amen.

⁴ Discussion questions are by North Point Ministries © 2011 and are used with permission

Session Three – Big & Bold

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS (You do not need to use them all)

7. What's the best thing about the age you are now?
8. Email, phone call or text? Why?
9. What is the most dangerous thing you have ever done? Was that thing brave? Foolish? Why or why not?

OPENING PRAYER

God, you are like a Mother Hen who tenderly gathers her chicks under her wing. Here we are again, gathered together, under your wing. During this time please teach us, shape us, and mold us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

SERMON REVIEW

Andy Stanley writes, "Isn't it strange that we live in one of the safest, freest countries in the world. Most of us live in the safest parts of the safest, freest country in the world, and still our prayers center around safety for us, for our kids, our jobs. We live in a culture where boldness about our faith will cost us almost nothing, and we lack boldness."

1. Do you agree that most of our prayer centers around safety? Why or why not?
2. In the United States we enjoy religious freedom. We gather for worship on Sunday mornings without fear of persecution. Does this freedom make us complacent? What does religious liberty mean to you?
3. Make a list of countries where faith (Christian, Muslim, Jewish, etc.) cannot be openly practiced. Use your phones to do a Google search. Do you know much about the countries where faith cannot be openly practiced? Are there countries where one faith may be practiced but others are prohibited?

SCRIPTURE: Read Acts 5:1-11 Ananias and Sapphira

Last week we read Acts 4:32 that talked about the believers having one heart and mind, claiming no possessions as his/her own, but sharing everything they had. In the very next verse, we read about Ananias and Sapphira.

1. Why did they share some of the proceeds from the sale of their property, but not all?
2. What do their actions say about human behavior? Do you ever see this in yourself?
3. Why do you think they lied?
4. What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?

Read Acts 5:17-42

1. If you were a follower of Jesus, how might you feel seeing what was happening in these verses?
2. Has anyone ever "given you strict orders not to teach in this name" verse 28? Why did the apostles choose to deny this order? What did they risk?
3. If we were to be judged on the same things for which the apostles were on trial, would we be found guilty? Why or why not?
4. What did Peter say that made the Pharisees so angry?
5. How would you feel if you were sent to jail for what you believe?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS⁵

1. Most of us don't face physical persecution, but what are some things in our culture that prevent Christians from being bold in their faith?
2. What are some practical ways you can tell the difference between being "bold" in a healthy and helpful way versus being abrasive and over the top in the way you interact with others?
3. Read Acts 5:22-41. What would it take for you to "rejoice" as a result of suffering disgrace because of your faith? *"The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." Acts 5:41*
4. What do you fear losing or suffering from if you were bold in your faith?
5. In what situations could you be bolder in saying something, taking advantage of existing opportunities, or creating new opportunities when it would be easier to say nothing at all?
6. In what area of your life do you need to take a bold stand for your faith? What is one thing you can do this week to begin to take that stand? How can this group support you?

Memorize Joshua 1:9 "...be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

SHARING OF PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH

5. Make a list of big, bold things God calls the Church to do and to be, i.e Feed the hungry, visit the widow, work for peace, etc.
Use this list into your closing prayer for the day.

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, you are powerful enough to handle any situation we face in our lives. Help us to put our whole trust in you and your grace. Help us to be courageous and to act boldly in our lives, because you are with us. In the name of Emmanuel, God with us, we pray. Amen.

⁵ Discussion questions are by North Point Ministries © 2011 and are used with permission

Session Four – Big Audience

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS (You do not need to use them all)

10. Were you ever picked on as a child? Did you pick on someone else?
11. Which is the best movie villain ever created?
12. Which was your favorite super hero?

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Rock, Stronghold and powerful God,

Thank you for being with us as we meet together today. As we dive into Scripture and learn about the heroes of the early church and all the challenges they faced, help us see how we too are called to be leaders in your church. Bless our time together. Amen.

SERMON REVIEW

“Christ died for our sins, he was buried, he was raised from the dead; and he was seen. That’s the gospel. That’s the starting point for the Christian faith.

If you’re wrestling with whether Christianity is true, don’t wrestle with the fact that Christians have disappointed you, or that you’ve been to a church that put you to sleep, or that you don’t know what to make of passages in the Bible about God creating the universe in six days. Those things are distractions. If you’re going to wrestle with Christianity, wrestle with these questions:

Did Christ die for my sins? Was he buried? Was he raised from the dead? Was he seen?”⁶

Does the fact that there were witnesses to Christ after his resurrection matter to you? Why or why not?

The sermon talked about the persecution the early church experienced. There are still places in the world today where that persecution is alive.

Why is it that some people around the world risk their lives to gather with other Christians to worship and we who have the freedom to worship, can often seem apathetic or too busy?

Did you learn something new in the sermon? Were you challenged by something?

SCRIPTURE – Acts 9:1-42

Assign a few people to look at each of the following people in the book of Acts. For each person listed below, make some notes to share about who the person was, highlights of their story and how they fit into the spreading of the movement of the church.

Philip – Acts 8:1-13, 8:26-39

Paul – Acts 9:1-31

Tabitha (also known as Dorcas) Acts 9:32-43

Peter & Cornelius – Acts 10:1-47

⁶ Stanley, Andy. Big Church Participant Guide. P. 44. ©2011 North Point Resources

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS⁷

8. As seen in Acts 9:3-9, Saul experienced a dramatic conversion. Did your relationship with God begin dramatically or was it in a more gradual process?
9. Have you ever tried to share your faith with someone who had never heard the message of Christianity? How did you explain who Jesus was? Did you find that you did not have common language to describe God, the Bible, faith etc.? How did you find common ground/culture/language? How did your experience give you a sense of the experience of a missionary?
10. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-10. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul clarifies the gospel message very succinctly. Why do Christians often add additional “requirements” to that gospel message?
*³I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. ⁴He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.
⁶After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.*
11. What are some reasons it’s difficult to trust God when we’re in the middle of challenging circumstances? What are the costs of not trusting God?
12. Is there something going on in your life right now that you need to entrust to God? If so, what is one thing you can do this week to remind yourself that God is God? How can this group help you?

SHARING OF PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH

6. How can The Well convey to a new generation in a new age, where many have never been part of a church, the message that “Christ died, Christ rose, and was seen by hundreds”?

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank you for the brave and courageous witnesses in the early church. Help us to be faithful witnesses for you in the words we say, in our actions, in our generosity, in our service and in the way we share grace with others. In the name of the Risen Christ. Amen.

⁷ Discussion questions are by North Point Ministries © 2011 and are used with permission

Session Five– Big Drift

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS (You do not need to use them all)

13. As a child were you a rule follower? Were you a rule enforcer when other kids didn't follow the rules?
14. What's your favorite way to waste time?
15. What is the best invention of any kind?

OPENING PRAYER

Abba, you are the source of all life. You are our heavenly parent. You love us with love that both forgives and challenges us to mature. You love us freely even when we mess up. You know our hearts and accept us. Today Lord, please open our hearts to your story, your correction, your grace and your love. Help us to be a community where people are loved, accepted and encouraged to grow more and more into Christ's likeness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

SERMON REVIEW

The church was less than twenty years old. A controversy emerged that is around a question that is often asked back then and today, "How **good** does a person have to be in order to be a part of the church? **Who** is the church for?"

In the church, grace and truth often collide. But in Jesus, grace and truth were embodied. *"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." John 1:14*

1. What do you think "grace and truth" means?
2. What does it mean to say that Jesus was full of both?
3. As Christians most of will tend to fall on either the side of grace or the side of truth.
4. How do we become more balanced?
5. Do you think there is a tendency in us, in Christians and in churches, to drift toward the law and away from grace? Why or why not?
6. At The Well, our core values are: Living Like Jesus, Intentionally Nonpartisan, Inclusive of All and Caring for Kids. Two of these values, inclusive of all and intentionally nonpartisan are our way of trying to go beyond an either/or divide. Do you think the early church, The Well, or churches in general can avoid becoming legalistic? Can a church teach/preach/practice grace, while also expecting that people will grow and mature?

SCRIPTURE

Read Acts 15:1-31 - The Council at Jerusalem

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS⁸

13. Why do you think it's so easy for people to assume they need to clean up their behavior before they will be welcome at church?
14. Acts 15 explains that the controversy for the church at that time was about circumcision and dietary laws. What are some contemporary church standards that can keep outsiders from entering or remaining involved in the church?
15. "God knows our hearts and can purify our hearts before we purify our lives." How does that statement challenge your view of faith? How is it comforting?
16. Read the options below. Which of these do you think is the most common, if any, in the twenty-first century church?
 - A. **The drift toward insiders and away from outsiders.** It's easy for a church to focus on the people who are there instead of the people who need to be there.
 - B. **The drift toward law and away from grace.** It's a safer, simpler environment when you keep messy people away, holding them to a set of standards they can't achieve.
 - C. **The drift toward preserving rather than advancing:** it's easier and more comfortable to play defense. It's more comfortable to isolate ourselves from those who are different from us.
17. What are some practical things you can do to guard against your propensity to drift toward law and away from grace?

SHARING OF PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH

7. How can The Well be involved with messy people (people like us) while also ensuring safety, especially for those who are vulnerable (like children or vulnerable adults)?
8. God has not called us to preserve any THING. God has called us to impact a generation of people. How do we ensure we are not clinging too tightly to things?
9. How can The Well best be a church where grace and truth are not in conflict, but coexist?

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CLOSING PRAYER

God of grace and truth, thank you for this time together to share, to think, to ponder and to pray. May we be like James, who said we should not make it difficult for those who are turning to God. Help us as individuals to make it easy for others to feel welcome, loved and accepted as they begin their own faith journey. In Jesus' name. Amen.

⁸ Discussion questions are by North Point Ministries © 2011 and are used with permission

Session Six – Big Answers

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS (You do not need to use them all)

1. As a teen, did you ask a lot of questions? Do you remember any of them?
2. Do you accept a new idea easily, or are you more likely to ask for proof?
3. What's the best movie of all time?

OPENING PRAYER

"We are molded, each one of us, in the image of God, and within our souls there is a fingerprint none can erase. We pray for those who have no regard for anyone but self, who put no value on human life. For nations and individuals who abuse and kill. We are not called to be judge or jury, but we are called to be agents of change, and if the butterfly that flaps its wings should be our attitude to others then so be it, Lord, and may the hurricane this generates somewhere within the world reach into the hearts and souls of those for whom we pray, and reveal to them how precious are those for whom they have no love, and how precious are they who now bring tears to the eyes of God."

By John Birch

SERMON REVIEW

Immorality is human nature. Human nature is prone to lying, cheating, stealing, selfishness, hoarding, adultery, etc. There are laws in place to prevent such things.

1. Do you think human nature is essentially immoral? Why or why not?

Idolatry – placing more value on something than someone. In the Bible idolatry is placing anything or anyone before God.

2. Where do you see idolatry in the world? In our nation? In yourself? What is the antidote?

SCRIPTURE

Read Galatians 5:16-21, 5:22-23

Living by the Spirit's Power

¹⁶So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

¹⁹When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:22-23

²²But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS⁹

18. What are some ways the church has influenced our culture for the better?
19. Andy Stanley said, "We're not just stewards of the message of eternal life. We are stewards of a message of a better life." Do you agree? Why or why not?
20. Read again Galatians 5:19-21. Do you think it is possible to avoid the "acts of the flesh" through willpower? Why or why not?
21. Read again Galatians 5:22-23. Which of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit come most naturally to you? Which is the most challenging to you? Why?
22. What can you do to be a steward of not only the message of eternal life but also of the message of a better life?
23. What is one thing you can do this week to walk in the Spirit? How can this group encourage you?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Intercessory Prayer

"A Christian community either lives by the intercessory prayers of its members for one another, or the community will be destroyed. I can no longer condemn or hate other Christians for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble they cause me. In intercessory prayer the face that may have been strange and intolerable to me is transformed into the face of one for whom Christ died, the face of a pardoned sinner. That is a blessed discovery for the Christian who is beginning to offer intercessory prayer for others. As far as we are concerned, there is no dislike, no personal tension, no disunity or strife that cannot be overcome by intercessory prayer. Intercessory prayer is the purifying bath into which the individual and the community must enter every day."

SHARING OF PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH

1. What would it mean to pray for an outbreak of the fruit of the Spirit at The Well? How would we know it was happening? What would we see?

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CLOSING PRAYER

O gracious God, we pray for your holy Church universal, that you would be pleased to fill it with all truth, in all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it; where it is right, establish it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of him who died and rose again, and ever lives to make intercession for us, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

(The Book of Common Prayer)

⁹ Discussion questions are by North Point Ministries © 2011 and are used with permission

Session Seven – Big Opportunity

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS (You do not need to use them all)

4. What meal do you prepare best?
5. If you had more time to spend on a hobby which would you choose?
6. What is your best character trait?

OPENING PRAYER

Yahweh God, the Great I Am,

We have spent the last six weeks together as a small Christian community, much like the early church. We have shared life and learning together. We have challenged one another to grow in grace. As we gather together this one last time, please pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, and upon our time. We're here to lean on you and to learn. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

SERMON REVIEW

- The church began as a movement. 2000 years ago the streets of Jerusalem were filled with people who were proclaiming the good news that Jesus was the Christ and God had raised him from the dead.
- The church faced opposition, persecution and confusion from within.
- Throughout time there has been a remnant of people who embraced the message spread it.
- In the name of Jesus: hospitals and schools have been built, billions of people have been fed, clothed and housed. Slavery was abolished. Missionaries have been sent throughout the world, risking their lives, to bring this message of hope.
- This church, The Well, has been called to connect people to Jesus and transform our community.
- This is a WE thing, all of us in it together.

Here's our part:

1. **Be bold with your invitations.**
2. **Be bold with your volunteering.**
3. **Be bold with your giving.**
4. **Be bold with your prayers.**

SERMON DISCUSSION

1. Which one of those **BOLD** things are you most comfortable with today? In which one(s) would you like to grow?
2. What is The Well doing to connect people to Jesus?
3. What is The Well doing to transform Rosemount, Apple Valley and the surrounding community?
4. What else is God calling us to do?
5. If time permits, pull out your phones and Google some of these organizations. Look for the churches or groups that started them: Hamline University, Fairview Hospital, Methodist Hospital (ok..that one is a gimme), The Sheridan Story, Treehouseyouth.org, Augsburg College, Rust College, Africa University, Lowell and

Ruth Gess UMC Eye Hospital, Imagine No Malaria, All Fathers Ministry, Inc., The Dignity Center, Emma Norton Services, Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable housing, Mounds Park Community Ministries, OC Ministries, Simpson Housing Services

SCRIPTURE

So I want you to know that this salvation from God has also been offered to the Gentiles, and they will accept it.”³⁰ For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, ³¹ boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him.

Acts 28:28-31

The Ascension of Jesus

⁶So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”⁷He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:6-8

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. To whom was the gospel first presented? Was it accepted or rejected? Why?
2. Why is it significant that at his ascension, Jesus told us to be witnesses?
3. Why does Jesus say Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth?
4. Who are the “Gentiles” of today with whom we are called to share the Good News? Are they in your family? Your neighborhood? Your workplace?
5. What bothers your non-Christian friends about the faith? What questions, concerns or doubts do they (and often us) have?
6. What would it mean for you to live Acts 28:31 in your life? Are you willing to do it? What obstacles do you face?
7. What do you need to build into your life now, so that your faith in Christ will be what people remember about you at death?

SHARING OF PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH

1. Pray that the truth of which Bonhoeffer speaks, “There is no dislike, no personal tension, no disunity or strife that cannot be overcome by intercessory prayer.” What prayers of intercession do you have for The Well?

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CLOSING PRAYER

Spirit of promise, Spirit of unity, we thank you that you are also the Spirit of renewal. Renew in the whole Church that passionate desire for the coming of your kingdom which will unite all Christians in one mission to the world. May we all grow up together into him who is our head the Savior of the world. Amen.

(Olive Wyon, England, 20th Century)