

## CHAPTER 13

# HOW DO I LAUNCH A GOSPEL INITIATIVE?

*“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

Acts 1:8



we are to march off the map to the ends of the earth with the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ spent forty days with His disciples to firmly establish the fact of His resurrection, to give instruction concerning the kingdom, to prepare His disciples for the work He had given them to do, and no doubt to provide them with true, missionary zeal.

The Bible tells us in the key verse of the book of Acts, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

In the thirteenth chapter of the same book of the Bible, beginning in verse forty-four, the Bible says,

*And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when*

*the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.*

Our Lord desires “salvation unto the ends of the earth.” I seriously doubt if there is one Christian in a million who believes what this verse states. I doubt if there is one Christian in a million who actually believes that we can take the gospel to the ends of the earth, that this could actually be done. It would be shocking for me to list the names of ministers who have told me that they do not believe world evangelism can be done.

Acts 1:8 is a key verse of Scripture. It unlocks the book of Acts for us. “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*” Then God’s Word tells us in the thirteenth chapter of Acts that this message of salvation is to be preached “*unto the ends of the earth.*”

This is a call for New Testament Church pioneers. We need to recapture what could be termed the “pioneering spirit” that springs forth from the faith life.

There have been pioneers who had that “pioneering spirit.” They were committed to follow Christ, just as surely as Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God. The pioneers did not know the end of their earthly endeavor. They had enough

light only to take the next step of faith. As they trusted God to meet their needs, their needs seemed insurmountable, but God came through; for without God, it would have been impossible.

They could do more than talk about their impossibility; they felt the impossibility. They faced the impossibility. They dealt with the impossibility and cast themselves entirely on the mercy of God. Not only did the Lord provide, He became real to them as they trusted Him to meet their need.



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In so many places today, there are people who use the same names, who serve in the same locations others have served, but they only inhabit the land and the buildings that were conquered and built by those with a “pioneering spirit” for God. Today’s inhabitants can tell stories of how things were built and victories were won, but they repeat these stories as someone repeating a historical account.

In some places there are large facilities and large numbers of people to lead, but the pioneers who once used those facilities knew firsthand that God provided them. The pioneers who led those large numbers of people before led a people who knew that their leader had personally trusted God for wisdom and direction because there was no other way to get wisdom and direction.

College students sit in buildings and use facilities that were provided by the faith and sacrifices of others. They will never have an appreciation for those facilities like the people who had to trust God to provide them. For those who had the pioneering spirit and trusted God for the facilities, the facilities were never the goal, only a means to the goal. Their goal was God. They followed God and needed physical facilities to conduct the

ministries that God had given them. But the generation following faces the temptation of making the care and maintenance of the buildings the goal, because somehow they cannot understand the faith that was exercised in trusting God for the provision. Growing, pioneering ministries so often degenerate into ministries of maintaining.

Young students sit in the classrooms of Christian schools at desks they had no part in purchasing, in buildings they had no part in building, using facilities they had no part in providing. How can we expect them to have appreciation for what was not firsthand to them?



*Converts to Christ in every people group can be trained to take the message of salvation to others in their people group.*

The pioneer never feels toward the physical facilities the way those who come after the pioneers feel toward the physical facilities. It is the spirit of adventure, following God, the faith life that is most meaningful to the pioneer. We must lift up our eyes and look on the fields. They are white unto harvest.

Unless we recapture this pioneering spirit and move from the death of a maintenance ministry, someone will say of us, *“There arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done”* (Judges 2:10).

The work of world evangelism is what the Lord has given to the local church. It is the responsibility of local churches to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. When we meet a missionary, we should ask him, “What church is sending you into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature?” This is the responsibility God gave to the local New Testament church.

In many cases and in many places we have abdicated this responsibility assigning it to someone else. Some folks have assigned this responsibility to mission boards, mission organizations, and mission agencies. Some people have assigned this responsibility, to Bible colleges across the country and around the world. All of us appreciate every effort to win the lost to Christ, but the local church must never disobey His command.

When I say I believe what the Bible teaches about the church, I am speaking about a local New Testament church. Of course we rejoice over genuine conversions no matter what instrument is used to get the gospel to that person, but our Lord has commanded His body on earth, the local church, to go. It is alarming to consider how much confusion there is among good people concerning what God has given us to do.

I believe with all of my heart that this task of world evangelism can be done. This does not mean we are going to see everyone converted. That is not what the Bible has told us; but it does mean that we are to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Converts to Christ in every people group can be trained to take the message of salvation to others in their people group.

There are millions of people in our own country and billions of people throughout the world. How shall we get the job done? We must try no way other than the way God commands us in His Word.

## **WE MUST HAVE a BIBLICAL BEGINNING**

First we must have a biblical beginning. This is the matter of prayer. Prayer is the declaration of our dependency upon God. Prayer is a declaration that we cannot get this done apart from

our God. World evangelism began in the heart of God. It is not some “good idea” that originated with a group of Christians.

The Bible tells us in Acts chapter one, Acts chapter four, and Acts chapter twelve that they prayed. As a matter of fact, the

Bible says in the fourteenth verse of chapter one, *“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”*



*Prayer is the declaration of our dependency upon God.*

In my mind’s eye, I can see the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ tarrying in Jerusalem for those ten days and praying, seeking the face of God. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus told them to do. We would rather work than pray because prayer is harder work than our labor. Prayer requires dying to self and trusting the Lord.

The Lord gives us so many precious truths in His Word about prayer. The Bible says in Matthew 18:18-19,

*Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

Note the little word *agree*. Where do you find a church that has power with God and power with men? When you find one, you will find that it is a praying church. Specific seasons of prayer must be given to the Lord of the harvest for the salvation of the lost.

The little word *agree* in Matthew chapter eighteen is a powerful word. It means two of us are together in prayer, agreeing God’s will be done. It could well mean that while I am speaking to God, others hear me speaking to God and say, “Amen,” to what I am saying. It could mean that as others speak to God in prayer, I hear what they say and I say, “Amen,” because I agree. It is agreeing on that request. When we come before the throne of God, seeking His face for the things we know God has told us to ask Him for, when that prayer is concluded it would be very good to express our agreement by saying, “Amen.”

If we are truly going to evangelize the world, it is not going to be done by Bible colleges, and it is not going to be done by mission agencies; it is going to be done by the means God has said it shall be done. It must have a biblical beginning. The biblical beginning is fervent, specific prayer.

Concerning the subject of prayer, notice what the Bible says in the tenth chapter of the book of Luke. There are three times—once in Luke chapter ten, once in Matthew chapter nine, and once in John chapter four—where the Lord uses the word “*harvest*.” Interestingly enough, He was in a different location speaking to a different group of people each time He used the word “*harvest*.”

In Luke 10:1-2, He says,

*After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The*



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*harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few:  
pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he  
would send forth labourers into his harvest.*

The problem worldwide is that we have more laborers when it comes to the things of this world than we have work for those laborers to do. This is why there is unemployment. In the world, there are more people who need to work than we have work for the people.

In God's work, we have more work that needs to be done than we have laborers to do it. The Word of God says that we do not begin with laborers. The biblical beginning is always the same. It is prayer. We pray to the Lord of the harvest for laborers. Begin now to pray specifically for laborers for a very specific part of the world.

D. L. Moody was well-known for saying many things, but one of the most remembered things he said often is this, "If we do not begin in prayer, we will surely end in failure."

I believe we can trace our failure in the work of evangelism to our refusal to begin in prayer. Days should be spent in prayer. Much time during each day should be spent in prayer. If we really take to heart the task of world evangelism, we must have a biblical beginning in prayer.

## WE MUST HAVE *a* BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

We also need a biblical authority. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is speaking here. We have God's Word on it.

Where do we get our authority? The Lord Jesus said in John 20:21, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." He says in this account in Acts 1:8, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." He is the One speaking. Often we need to rehearse in our minds that it is God Himself who gives us the authority to do this. It is His command. It is the Lord God Himself who has commanded us to go. I gain strength from knowing this. It is God who has given me this task.

Often those of us in the work of the Lord grow weary in it, but we must never grow weary of it. The reason we do not grow weary of it is that we know it is what He has given us to do. There must be biblical authority.



*Where do you  
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with God and  
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## WE MUST HAVE BIBLICAL POWER

He declares, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." When we study the book of Acts, we find it is the book of the continuing Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus told His disciples an amazing thing in Matthew chapter twenty-eight. He said in verses nineteen and twenty, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The Lord Jesus Christ is with us. Can you imagine the transformation that would take place in our evangelistic zeal if we were sincerely abiding in the presence of Jesus Christ and were absolutely convinced that God Himself was with us?



*We can have His  
power to do  
His work.*

He indwells us. We are not going to get more of God. He gets more of us. We can have His power to

do His work. We shall never get the job of world evangelism accomplished with schemes and plans and ideas that are man-made. We need a divine thrust to launch us out, and this biblical power comes from the Holy Spirit of God.

## WE MUST HAVE *a* BIBLICAL MOTIVE

*“Ye shall be witnesses unto me...”* The motive is that we are doing this for Christ. Anyone who goes to heathen lands for heathen people is going for the wrong reason. The Moravian missionaries had it right when they made their battle cry, “May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering.”

When Paul said, *“I have fought a good fight,”* he was not talking about how well he fought; he was talking about the fight he was in, and that it was a good fight, a most worthy fight. I am in a great work because it is God’s work, and God’s work is a great work; but when I grow weary, there is only one thing that keeps me going. That is that I am doing this for Christ, and it is the love of Christ that constrains me.

This needs to be repeated over and over. We need a biblical motive. Where we have missed it so badly in the work we call the work of God today is in lesser motives. Can you imagine doing what you do for Jesus Christ alone?

I do not believe it is my responsibility to go to India and evangelize India. I do not believe it is my responsibility to go to Africa and evangelize Africa. I do not believe it is my responsibility to go to South America and evangelize the countries of South America. I believe it is my responsibility to go and try to win nationals to the Saviour, and teach them how to do the work, and let them evangelize their own countries.

God has given us what we need to do His work. He has given us Himself!

## WE MUST HAVE BIBLICAL WITNESSES

*“Ye shall be witnesses unto me...”*

A biblical witness is someone who knows God has transformed his life. Every Christian has a story to tell. It is not that we do not have a story, it is that we are not telling it.

Remember, the noun must come before the verb. We are witnesses. We know Him. We are able to witness because we are witnesses. It is our God-given responsibility to be New Testament church pioneers and to get the work of God accomplished. We must have human instrumentality—witnesses. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit.



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## WE MUST HAVE a BIBLICAL STRATEGY

We never begin with a strategy. We begin with God. It is God then who gives us the strategy. If we begin with strategy, we will attempt the task without God. God gives us the strategy here in the book of Acts when He says, “*Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*”

If you read Acts 1:13 all the way through chapter seven, you will find the work in Jerusalem. Think of the things that went on in Jerusalem—prayer, Pentecost, persecution, etc.

Then He says Judea and Samaria. Think about the great revivals we read of in the Word of God as we read the eighth and ninth chapters of Acts—the revival in Samaria, the salvation of the apostle Paul.

Then He talks about the uttermost part of the earth. As we move to the revival in Caesarea where God spoke to Peter and he went down to the house of Cornelius, God worked in a mighty way.

When we come to the thirteenth chapter, the watershed chapter of Acts, we find a church in Antioch. The Bible says in verses one through four,

*Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy*

*Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*

Did the church send them? The Bible says the Holy Ghost sent them. The truth of the matter is that they were sent in cooperation with God by the church. What did they do? This is where “*unto the uttermost part of the earth*” is obeyed. These men from this mostly Gentile church actually did what God told them to do.

Let me ask you a question. Do you think they had it all figured out before they left? No, but they left. Before they ever went, they did not know everything that would happen, but they went. The people who go are the people who believe that God is able to accomplish what He has declared to be done. The pioneers are in the first wave. The “detail” people may come later.

Where are you on this? Personally, where you do live? Do you think it is your responsibility just to get saved and get to heaven, or do you believe that God has saved you to evangelize the world? What do you really believe about it? Are we just kidding ourselves, having meetings, trying to get everyone pumped up, then finally calming back down?

Or can we actually develop a biblical strategy to take the nearly three thousand two hundred counties in America, the fifty states, the people groups of the world, and go, win people to the Lord,



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start churches in the primitive form, and launch out empowered by the Holy Spirit of God to get God's work done?

Often I go into areas of our country to speak, and do you know what I find when I get there? I find a handful of pastors who think they must fortify what they are doing. They are trying to hold the Devil off and hang on until Jesus comes.



*Remember,  
the noun must  
come before  
the verb. We  
are witnesses.  
We know Him.  
We are able  
to witness  
because we are  
witnesses.*

Does this sound like what the Lord said? Before we condemn them, let us think about ourselves. Does that sound like what the Lord said in Matthew chapter sixteen? The Bible says in verse eighteen, *“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

Are we really going to evangelize the world, or are we going to spend the rest of our lives talking about it from time to time, but deep down believing that it cannot be done?

The day I believe that it cannot be done, if it ever comes to me, will be the day I die inside. I will die inside, and I will pretend to live until I take my last breath and go to heaven; because when there is no frontier left, when my dreams die, when my vision is gone, all I am doing is trying to tread water and hold on, until I meet God.

I refuse to live that way. God has more for us than that. Let us go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Walk off the map with *“salvation unto the ends of the earth.”*

Dear friend, the door is open. God will give us favor as we give the gospel message. In addition to our Bible teaching Sunday School, more than one hundred and sixty Bible studies are conducted each week through the ministry of our local church. Bible clubs meet in every middle school and high school in our county (nearly forty of them). This is our moment. God is with us. Move forward with the gospel. The Lord has moved your heart and motivated you to serve Him.

Launch a Gospel Initiative. Get at it. Stay with it. Take the message of Jesus Christ to those who are lost in sin without Him. Be specific. Be clear. Act with urgency. The time is now. There is not a moment to waste. You can enlist others to serve the Lord with you. Follow these specific guidelines but don't be bound to the point that you cannot act. Be unleashed. Allow the Spirit of God to guide you. Be bold. You have a message. The message is His message. You are a witness of what Jesus Christ has done in your life. Tell people about Him.

Begin conversations about Christ. Stay everlastingly at it. Turn those conversations to the way of salvation. Let people know He is the only way. Use every available means. Get the gospel to people. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Keep your faith in God. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ. Soon we will see Him. Be found faithfully serving Him when He comes for us.