

LESSON 2 The Christian's Community

A chief is the head of a village. A mayor is the director of a town. A policeman maintains law and order within a certain area. The chief and the mayor have nothing to say about what is done in the next village or town. The policeman cannot enforce law outside his or her own area. All of these have boundaries or limits. They have no authority outside their own boundaries.

It is different for a Christian. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus told His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations.” This command is for us too. We do not have a limited area in which to work. Jesus sends us to the whole world. That includes all people everywhere.

In Lesson 1 we studied the spirit of community. In this lesson we will see how your community is a place where you can show this spirit. But as you study, remember that community is a group of people more than it is a place. No matter where you go, you can be part of a community as you share Christ with others!

The Plan

The Four Communities of Acts 1:8

The Goal

Identify and relate the four communities of Acts 1:8.

THE FOUR COMMUNITIES OF ACTS 1:8

Goal 1. Identify and relate the four communities of Acts 1:8.

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.
(Acts 1:8)

In the Scripture quoted above, Jesus was talking to His followers. He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit. He said that after they received this power they would be witnesses. A witness is a person who has seen an event and tells what he or she has seen. Jesus wanted His followers to tell others about all the wonderful things they had seen Him do—He healed the sick, raised the dead, died for the sins of the world, arose from death, and returned to heaven victoriously. The disciples were to be witnesses to these events—first in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria and beyond, until they had witnessed to the whole world. Jesus set no boundaries for their witnessing.

Application

1 Jesus' instruction in Matthew 28:19–20 is greater than that given to chiefs, mayors, and policemen because it

- a)** has boundaries.
- b)** does not have boundaries.

- 2** The spirit of community studied in Lesson 1 can be found
- a)** anywhere.
 - b)** only in certain places.
- 3** Read Acts 1:8 again, then list the places Jesus told the disciples to be witnesses.

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Jerusalem—Your Personal World

It is important to understand the setting of Acts 1:8. Jesus was in Jerusalem talking to His disciples and about 500 other followers. He told them that something exciting would happen to them on the Day of Pentecost. These followers did not fully understand that their ministry was to continue the ministry Jesus began. It is not even clear they understood their Lord was about to leave them. Then suddenly, after giving this promise that they would be filled with power as the Holy Spirit came upon them, Jesus disappeared into heaven, and they did not see Him anymore.

The account of what happened next, on the Day of Pentecost, is recorded in Acts 2:1–6. Read these verses, and you will see that the believers received the Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised. The people who saw and heard them were amazed.

Later, Peter had an opportunity to explain to the people what was happening (Acts 2:14–32). He reminded them of the resurrection of Jesus and said, ““God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact”” (Acts 2:32). About 3,000 people responded to his message and believed in Christ.

The third chapter of Acts records many miracles. The apostles witnessed that the miracles took place through “faith in the name of Jesus” (Acts 3:16). Chapter 4 tells about Peter and John preaching to the people, and the number who believed increased to about 5,000. The message was always about the death and resurrection of Jesus. In Acts 3:15 and 5:32, Peter

stated again, “We are witnesses of this.” Thus, they became witnesses in Jerusalem just as Jesus said they would.

Every Christian has a responsibility to tell others of the new life in Jesus. The gospel was spread to the ends of the earth by other Christians, and not just by the apostles (Acts 8:1–4). These Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit and had a strong desire to show Christian community to the world. They preached and told the gospel story everywhere.

In our fulfillment of Jesus’ command to make disciples of all nations, where do we begin? We must start where the Christians in Jerusalem started—at home in our community, among our own family and neighbors. Let your personal world, your Jerusalem, your own people, those you live with, see the spirit of Christian community in you.

Application

4 Read Acts 1:8, 8:1–4, 3:12–16, and 5:30–32. What are these verses talking about?

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5 Circle the letter in front of the TRUE statements.

- a)** Only those called to be ministers or preachers have a responsibility to spread the gospel.
- b)** According to this lesson, my first responsibility as a Christian is to witness about Christ to those I am with every day.

6 Your Jerusalem is the place where you live and spend most of your time. Write in a notebook the names of people that you have contact with from day to day. Then write ways you can witness to them and show a spirit of community. Pray that the Lord will help you to be an effective witness in your personal world.



Judea—Your Country

As the followers of Jesus faithfully witnessed in Jerusalem, the religious leaders became jealous and began to persecute (punish or trouble) the Christians. Acts 8:1 tells us that all of the believers in the Jerusalem church suffered persecution. Because of this, all of them except the apostles left Jerusalem and were scattered throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria. Provinces were divisions of the territory included in the Roman Empire. Luke reports that “those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went” (Acts 8:4).

Because the Christians were forced to leave Jerusalem, they fulfilled the second part of Jesus’ command—to go to Judea as witnesses. Judea was the Roman province in which Jerusalem was located. The people who lived there were Jews who needed to hear about Jesus.

Many years earlier, God had called a man named Moses to go to his own people to free them from the slavery of the Egyptians. Moses did not feel capable of doing this. But God promised that He would go with Moses and give him the words to say (Exodus 3–4). Maybe it was good that Moses did not feel he could do it alone. This caused him to trust God completely.

Perhaps you feel the same way Moses did. The same answer that was given to Moses is your answer. God will be with you and will help you. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

After you have been faithful in ministering to your Jerusalem, proceed to your Judea—your own province, state, or country. In the Christian life, if you are faithful in the little things, God will open doors of opportunity. There are many ways to reach out to other people. For example, you can start by teaching a Sunday school class in your church. You can help your pastor visit the sick, or those in prison. You can take food to an elderly person, or to someone else in need. If you are traveling away from home, you can look for ways to show kindness or tell someone about Christ. Trust the Holy Spirit,

and He will help you find ways to show the spirit of community in your Judea.

Application

7 Circle the letter in front of the TRUE statements.

- a)** The best way you can show community to your country is to make big plans and preach to large crowds.
- b)** Your Judea is your province, state, or country.
- c)** You must be faithful in small things before God will use you for greater things.

8 Pray for the people in your country. Pray that God will use you to minister to others. Write down ways you can show the spirit of community outside of your personal world. (Use your notebook.)

9 What does the example of Moses teach us about trusting God?

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Samaria—Your Surrounding Countries

One thing is for certain—Samaria seemed a long way off for people living in Jerusalem. In fact, the Jews considered the Samaritans to be foreign people. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritan people even though they were related. But in Acts 8, after Philip was filled with the Holy Spirit, he went to Samaria to preach the good news about Christ. Furthermore, Acts 10 indicates that God told Peter to go to a city in Samaria and witness to a man about Jesus. Peter did not want to go, but God showed him that he was to reach the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

A similar example is in the Old Testament book of Jonah. The prophet Jonah was a very proud and self-centered man. He received a message from the Lord to go and preach to the city

of Nineveh, which was located in the country of Assyria. Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh because the people there were aliens to him.

Because Jonah was not concerned about these people, he went in the opposite direction on a ship. The Lord sent a great storm, and the ship was about to sink. Jonah told the men on the ship that the storm had come because he had disobeyed God. He said, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea... and it will become calm” (Jonah 1:12). This was done, and right away the sea was quiet.

Then the Lord sent a large fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah prayed from inside the fish and repented of his disobedience. After the fish spat him out, Jonah went to the wicked Nineveh and preached the Word of the Lord. Many people repented of their sin and were saved. The Lord spared the city and taught Jonah a lesson in obedience.

God loves everyone. The Lord was merciful to the people of Nineveh, and is merciful to all people. If we obey Him, He will help us reach those who live in countries near us. God does not favor one person over another; He will forgive all who call upon Him.

How can you share Christian community with people who live in nearby countries? First you can pray for them. You can give of your money or goods to help reach them with the gospel story. Some of you will even be able to go to them. Do not limit God. Allow Him to work out His plan in your life. You do not need a lot of money to win those in other places to Christ. If all Christians would obey the command of Jesus, the need would be met and the gospel would be taken to the ends of the earth!

Application

10 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.

- a) I can share Christian community with people in other countries by praying for them and giving money to spread the gospel.
- b) God did not care about Nineveh because the people there did not serve Him.
- c) God does not expect me to care about people unless I can speak their language.
- d) Jonah learned a lesson in obedience.

11 Is there a group of people that you consider foreigners or strangers? Who are they, and how can you help them?

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Pray that these people will come to know God. Ask God how you can help to reach them for Him.



Ends of the Earth—Your World

The apostle Paul was the greatest missionary the world has ever known. He moved out of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and went to the ends of the earth. On each missionary trip he reached further into the known world. His first journey took him into Asia Minor, near his home in Palestine. His second and third journeys took him as far as Greece. On his last journey he went all the way to distant Rome, and possibly to Spain. Truly Paul had a concern that reached to the ends of the earth—to tell everyone, everywhere, about Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). The boundaries of community are unlimited. They reach from your personal world to the ends of the earth. They touch all people everywhere. Let

us reach out with arms of love and show our spirit of Christian community to the whole world.

Consider a woman from England who had an ends-of-the-earth idea of community. Her name was Gladys Aylward. In 1920, she was a servant to a rich family in London. However, she had a great desire to tell Chinese people about Jesus. But she did not know where the country of China was located.

Finally she learned that she could make the long journey to China by train. She bought a ticket and crossed Europe, then took another train through Siberia. She finally arrived in China after many days and nights of travel.

Gladys Aylward worked in China for more than 40 years telling the people about Christ. Once she stopped a prison riot. She helped many people find Jesus Christ as their Savior and took care of many hundreds of orphans. During the Second World War she led 100 of these children to safety by taking them on foot over the mountains away from the fighting area. This little woman had a spirit of community that reached far beyond her own city or country. Her beginning was humble, but her love was God-like. It reached from England to far off China.

Application

12 For Gladys Aylward the ends-of-the-earth was to go to

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13 I can have an ends-of-the-earth spirit of community by

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14 In the space before each area of community listed on the left, write the number from the right that represents the group of people who live in that area.

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| ... a Samaria | 1) My compatriots |
| ... b Judea | 2) People in nearby countries |
| ... c Ends of the Earth | 3) My family and neighbors |
| ... d Jerusalem | 4) People in distant lands |

15 Now go back to the illustration at the beginning of this lesson. On the line under each area, write down what group of people it represents.



Check Your Answers

- 8** Your answer. As you pray, God will show you ways to reach out in ministry to more people.
- 1 b)** does not have boundaries.
- 9** That whenever God asks us to do something, we can trust Him to help us do it.
- 2 a)** anywhere.
- 10** Statements **a)** and **d)** are true.
- 3** Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.
- 11** Your answer. You can pray for them, and ask God to show you ways to help them receive the gospel.
- 4** How the believers witnessed about Christ.
- 12** China.
- 5** Statement **b)** is true.
- 13** showing love and concern for all people everywhere.
- 6** Your answer. I hope you are becoming more aware of the need to show a spirit of community and Christian love in all of your activities with other people.
- 14 a)** 2) People in nearby countries
b) 1) My compatriots
c) 4) People in distant lands
d) 3) My family and neighbors
- 7** Statements **b)** and **c)** are true.

