



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
LEWISVILLE

Session 8

A New Way of Living

Summary and Goal

Jesus' first appearance to His disciples after His resurrection included words of comfort as well as words of commissioning. The church of Jesus Christ is to live sent, using the resources God has given us to accomplish His mission through us. The example of the earliest believers shows us that our expectation of what God will do leads to our preparation for that calling.

Main Passages

John 20:19-23; Acts 1:4-11

Session Outline

1. Peace, Now Go (John 20:19-23)
2. Witnesses to the World (Acts 1:4-11)

Theological Theme

Jesus gives believers His peace and His mission—its not hidden away, but we are called to advance, pioneer, and expand it. We will face opposition and tribulation, but in all of it, we can have peace.

Christ Connection

Jesus' entire earthly life was about advancing God's mission in the world. (See Luke 2:49.)

Missional Application

We continually come into contact with those who need to hear what God has done in our lives. Many may come to believe because of our words. (See John 4:39.)

Historical Context of John

Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24–25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1–4).

Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 20:28).

Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

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Condensed Leader Guide

A New Way of Living

Introduction

- When have you prepared significantly for something?
- How did your preparation help you complete the task?

Preparation is key to accomplishing tasks. If you are preparing to run a marathon, then you might start preparing several months before, increasing your run time little by little until you reach the full length. If you were preparing to take a bar exam or another work-related certification, you would probably take a significant amount of time to prepare. In the Christian life, we can expect God to do great things. To prepare for God to work, we rely on His power and spend intentional time in prayer and discipleship so that we are prepared for what God will do.

1. Peace, Now Go (John 20:19-23)

Both the appearance and the words of the risen Lord changed the disciples' fear to the joy and peace of personal assurance. In verse 21, John recorded that the risen Lord commissioned His disciples to continue the mission for which He had been sent: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you." People who follow a resurrected Jesus live on mission for Jesus. We live sent.

- Why were the disciples afraid of the Jews?
- Do you think their fear displayed a lack of faith? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Jesus said "peace be with you" three times (vv. 19,21,26)? How does this relate to the disciples' fears? To the mission He gave them?
- Why do you think Jesus showed the disciples His hands and side? How might this physical proof of His resurrection help them fulfill the mission He gave them?

2. Witnesses to the World (Acts 1:4-11)

Having encountered Jesus' power, the disciples asked a question they must have wondered about throughout Jesus' ministry: Will the nation of Israel be restored to its glorious place as the chosen people of God? This question was rooted in the Old Testament concept of the Day of the Lord. When the Day of the Lord would come, Israel's adversaries would be overthrown, and God's kingdom would be established through His people. The disciples were considering the prevalent belief that the promised Messiah would be the One to establish this kingdom.

- ❓ What was the new purpose Jesus gave His disciples? How does this compare with First Baptist Lewisville's mission today?
- ❓ What is the Holy Spirit's role in our mission as God's people?
- ❓ What are some ways we unintentionally make the gospel solely about us?
- ❓ What happens when we focus on the benefits of our salvation and not our calling from King Jesus to live sent?
- ❓ In what ways are we tempted to trade our mission to live sent for a life of conformity to the world around us?
- ❓ What was the significance of Jesus' ascension? What does this passage teach about Christ's future coming? What else does this passage teach us?
- ❓ What are some ways believers today stand and look into heaven rather than live sent?
- ❓ How does the Holy Spirit in believers create a greater sense of urgency for being on mission with God? How can we create a greater awareness of this sense of urgency in our group? In the church at large?

Conclusion

- ❓ What would change if we saw ourselves (first and foremost) as those sent by God on His mission?
- ❓ How does your expectation of what God will do in and through you fuel your preparation? How does your expectation of what He will do in and through First Baptist Lewisville fuel your preparation?
- ❓ What do you expect God to do based on the promises of His Word? What difference does this make in the way you live your life?

❓ For Further Discussion

When you think of the mission of God, do you think in terms of God's global work—the ends of the earth—or His local work—your Judea and Samaria? Why?

❓ For Further Discussion

Read 1 John 5:14-15. What does it mean to ask according to God's will? How can we be sure we are asking for God's will?



Expanded Leader Guide

A New Way of Living

Introduction

- ❓ When have you prepared significantly for something?
- ❓ How did your preparation help you complete the task?

Preparation is key to accomplishing tasks. If you are preparing to run a marathon, then you might start preparing several months before, increasing your run time little by little until you reach the full length. If you were preparing to take a bar exam or another work-related certification, you would probably take a significant amount of time to prepare. In the Christian life, we can expect God to do great things. To prepare for God to work, we rely on His power and spend intentional time in prayer and discipleship so that we are prepared for what God will do.

1. Peace, Now Go (John 20:19-23)

At this stage of the story, the disciples were still hiding and fearful after Mary brought them the joyous news that Jesus was alive (v. 19). They hid because they were afraid of the Jews.

- ❓ Why were the disciples afraid of the Jews?
- ❓ Do you think their fear displayed a lack of faith? Why or why not?

The disciples, partakers in the high-profile ministry and ensuing controversy involving Jesus, had what could be considered a legitimate concern after their Master was violently and publicly executed. But they also had witnessed His power and heard Him foretell His death. Their fear was most likely rooted in their continued confusion concerning Jesus' plans. Though they had faith in His power, they did not yet comprehend His purpose, so they hid and doubted.

- ❓ Why do you think Jesus said “peace be with you” three times (vv. 19,21,26)? How does this relate to the disciples' fears? To the mission He gave them?

- ❓ Why do you think Jesus showed the disciples His hands and side? How might this physical proof of His resurrection help them fulfill the mission He gave them?

Jesus proved to His disciples that He was not a ghost, but was physically present with them. After Jesus showed them both His hands and His side (see v. 20), the disciples were fully convinced He had conquered death. Therefore, they had reason to rejoice when they saw Him. Both the appearance and the words of the risen Lord changed the disciples' fear to the joy and peace of personal assurance. In verse 21, John recorded that the risen Lord commissioned His disciples to continue the mission for which He had been sent: “As the Father has sent me, I also send you.” People who follow a resurrected Jesus live on mission for Jesus. We live sent.

This mission was not immediately understood by the disciples, though. Both Jesus and two angelic visitors explained to them the true nature of their mission and how they would live it out in the world, as seen in Acts 1:4-11.

2. Witnesses to the World (Acts 1:4-11)

- ❓ What was the new purpose Jesus gave His disciples? How does this compare with First Baptist Lewisville's mission today?

- ❓ What is the Holy Spirit's role in our mission as God's people?

Having encountered Jesus' power, the disciples asked a question they must have wondered about throughout Jesus' ministry: Will the nation of Israel be restored to its glorious place as the chosen people of God? This question was rooted in the Old Testament concept of the Day of the Lord. When the Day of the Lord would come, Israel's adversaries would be overthrown, and God's kingdom would be established through His people. The disciples were considering the prevalent belief that the promised Messiah would be the One to establish this kingdom.

Unfortunately, their focus was smaller than the mission God had for them. For the disciples, the nation of Israel had become the focus of the story—just as we so often try to make ourselves the focus of the story. The disciples asked Jesus if Israel would be restored to prominence, but Christ's response focused on the trajectory of God's mission moving forward.

- ❓ What are some ways we unintentionally make the gospel solely about us?
- ❓ What happens when we focus on the benefits of our salvation and not our calling from King Jesus to live sent?

Jesus wasn't saying anything new; rather, He was bringing attention back to the scope of God's mission from eternity past. In effect, He told His disciples, "You (children of Israel) are not the end of what you are experiencing." God's plan had always been to bless the world through Abraham's descendants. Israel had a unique calling to be God's missionaries to the world, but they traded this mission for conformity to their pagan neighbors.

- ❓ In what ways are we tempted to trade our mission to live sent for a life of conformity to the world around us?
- ❓ When you think of the mission of God, do you think in terms of God's global work—the ends of the earth—or His local work—your Judea and Samaria? Why?

In the Great Commission, Jesus gave His disciples clear directives for being His witnesses to the ends of the earth. They were to make disciples, baptize new believers, and teach them to obey Jesus' commands. (See Matt. 28:19-20.) Again, the emphasis was upon all nations. Jesus sent His disciples out as missionaries to the world, not just to their fellow Israelites. Missionaries are those sent by God to carry out His mission. We follow the model of Jesus, who Himself was sent by the Father to the world. (See John 20:21.)

- ❓ What was the significance of Jesus' ascension? What does this passage teach about Christ's future coming? What else does this passage teach us?

The angels confirmed that the same Jesus who was taken from them would come back: visibly, bodily, and with clouds of glory. In the meantime, the disciples were to be busy with His commission. Thus, the fact of the end times, including Christ's return, was affirmed even though the time was still unstated. This was a mandate for all believers, including us today, to stop gazing and get to work on mission with God.

- ❓ What are some ways believers today stand and look into heaven rather than live here?
- ❓ How does the Holy Spirit in believers create a greater sense of urgency for being on mission with God?
- ❓ How can we create a greater awareness of this sense of urgency in our group? In the church at large?

After Jesus ascended, His followers returned to Jerusalem. The distance was less than a mile. The passage says that when they arrived, they went to the room upstairs, or the upper room. Here Luke listed a number of men and women who gathered together. The most important observation for us is that they were continually united in prayer. While they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit, they prayed. They prepared to fulfill their mission as witnesses for Christ and to launch the church.

Conclusion

- ① What would change if we saw ourselves (first and foremost) as those sent by God on His mission?

- ② How does your expectation of what God will do in and through you fuel your preparation? How does your expectation of what He will do in and through First Baptist Lewisville fuel your preparation?

- ③ What do you expect God to do based on the promises of His Word? What difference does this make in the way you live your life?

- ④ Read 1 John 5:14-15. What does it mean to ask according to God's will? How can we be sure we are asking for God's will?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for the promises of His Word and their relevance to our lives. Confess your belief that God is powerful and able to save. Pray for each other, asking God to help all in your group to link their burdens for people, their love for people, their passions, their spiritual giftedness, and their natural talents into a group that lives sent.

Family Discussion

Family Discussion Questions for Children

- *Who is someone you can ask God to save this week?*
- *Where has God placed you to be a witness?*

Family Discussion Questions for Teens

- *The disciples were afraid after Jesus' resurrection and content after His ascension. Where are you in your spiritual walk right now? Afraid? Content? Why?*
- *Do you consider yourself someone who is called by God to carry out His mission of making disciples? Why or why not?*

For Next Week

Session Title

- Sent in the Power of the Spirit

Main Scripture

- Acts 2

Session Outline

1. Filled With the Spirit (Acts 2:1-11)
2. Last Days Calling (Acts 2:12-36)
3. The Answer to Every Person's Question (Acts 2:37-41)

Memorize

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

—Acts 1:8

Extended Commentary

John 20:19-23

20:19–20. The scene now moves from predawn hours to the evening of the same day. The disciples were locked in and riddled with fear in spite of what Peter and John had seen and what Mary had reported. Miraculously, instantly, the Lord appeared to offer them a warm “Shalom.” Before they could respond, he showed them the nail prints in his hands and the spear scar in his side. Why such a display? These fearful believers had to grasp that the same Jesus who died now lived again and stood before them.

In the disciples’ minds the locked doors protected them to some extent against Jewish authorities who might want to do to them what they had done to their Lord. But in John’s view, the locked doors served as a symbolic reminder that nothing can stop or hinder the resurrection body of Jesus.

There is some discussion regarding the number in the group to which Jesus appeared in this chapter. John had used the term the disciples throughout his book to identify the Twelve when it appears with the definite article. In this situation there would have been ten. Judas was dead and Thomas was absent.

But many reliable interpreters take a wider view of inclusion, largely by linking the text in John 20 with Luke 24:33. Carson says, “How large a group is referred to by the disciples is not certain, but in the light of the circle at the last supper (made up of Jesus plus the Twelve, and then, after Judas Iscariot left, the Eleven), and in the light of the fact that Thomas is singled out as not having been present (v. 24)—though doubtless there were countless other ‘disciples’ less tightly connected with the Lord who were also not present—we should probably think of the Ten (i.e., the Twelve, less Judas and Thomas)” (Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991., p. 646).

20:21–23. Again the Father became the center of Jesus’ words. He had been a servant on a mission, and now he sent his people out to witness. Most evangelical scholars believe this reception of the Holy Spirit was temporary—an illumination of their hearts for the next fifty days before Pentecost.

Of greater difficulty in this context is verse 23. On what basis could human beings forgive the sins of others? Obviously, much has been made of this in some segments of the Christian faith. Perhaps the best interpretation emphasizes the difference between absolution and proclamation. The duty of the disciples was to proclaim the forgiveness of sins; the actual forgiving would take place in heaven by the Lord who paid for those sins. Nevertheless, the claims of the gospel are clear—forgiveness only on the basis of Jesus’ death on the cross.

Acts 1:4-11

1:4–5. What would these disciples do after the Lord left them? The first command was to wait. They were not to engage in ministry until they had been empowered by the gift my Father promised. As we read words like this in the Bible, we're reminded of the great history of the church that has preceded us and the resources he has provided to continue that heritage.

Jesus taught the disciples, the disciples taught people of their generation, who taught others, until today you and I have both the opportunity and responsibility to enjoy the gift and to tell others about it. In this case the gift is not just the gospel in general, but the specific coming of the Holy Spirit. This was not a new theme. Jesus had talked about it in John 14:16–21; 15:26–27; 16:7–15. Believers are somewhat divided on the terminology “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” To argue that issue in detail here is beyond the scope of this work. Certainly Luke had in view that as the New Testament church got under way, Spirit baptism placed believers into that group of believers the New Testament calls the body of Christ.

Throughout the Book of Acts we will see different reactions when people receive the Holy Spirit so we should not conclude that any one particular pattern is the only way God deals with us. The coming of the Holy Spirit took place ten days after Jesus' ascension at which time the believers experienced the same power in which Jesus carried out his ministry.

What a lesson for us . . . wait. Don't rush off into ministry unprepared. Don't carry on the Lord's work in the strength of the flesh. The only way we can fulfill Christ's command to witness is to be under control of the Holy Spirit who energizes us for service.

1:6–7. The disciples' question revived their political goals, an ideal they could never quite stifle. Throughout the Gospels they wanted Jesus to throw off the iron hand of Rome, tell the nation he was their Messiah, and set up the kingdom. Surely now that he had risen from the dead and instructed his troops, it was time for the rebellion to begin. The Lord's answer offers a warning Christians have not heeded very well for almost two thousand years: It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority (v. 7).

How many Christian leaders have embarrassed themselves by announcing to the world when the Lord would return! The fact of that return is absolute as we shall see in a moment. The time was not revealed to Jesus' own disciples at the time of the ascension, and it will never be known by any human until the Lord comes again, regardless of what someone may claim.

We can't criticize the disciples too much, however, because the Old Testament links Spirit baptism with the coming kingdom (Isa. 32:15–20; Ezek. 39:28–29; Joel 2:28–3:1). The Lord did not deny the kingdom is coming but only warned the disciples that God's schedule is none of their business.

1:8. Some have suggested that this key verse of our book may contain a three fold table of contents: Jerusalem, Acts 2:42–8:3; Judea and Samaria, Acts 8:4–12:24; ends of the earth, Acts 12:25–28:31. We cannot know if Luke had that kind of division in mind, but the book unfolds in a fascinating manner somewhat along that pattern.

Notice that the call to witness is not limited to any select group of people since it spreads from the apostles to the 120 believers and on throughout the pages of Acts. Nor can we restrict it only to service in our own churches or to some kind of “professional ministry.” Every believer should be a “world Christian,” able to function for the Savior from the other side of the street to the other side of the world.

1:9–10. We hear a great deal around Easter about the “seven last words of Christ.” This phrase commonly refers to sayings on the cross such as “I thirst” and “Father forgive them.” Here in the niv translation of Acts 1 we find the seven last words of Christ on earth: and to the ends of the earth. Immediately after uttering those words he ascended and was hidden by a cloud, even as they watched. The concept of a cloud linked with God is a common Old Testament theme (Exod. 13:21; Ps. 68:4; Isa. 19:1; Dan. 7:13). We refer to it as the Shekinah glory explained in Ezekiel 11:14–25.

This account elaborates on Luke’s earlier report to Theophilus. No serious Bible scholar doubts that the two men were angels who announced this great event in history. Angels taking the form of men was hardly unknown, even in New Testament times (Matt. 28:2–3; John 20:12; Luke 24:4). Picture the disciples standing in fear and awe looking intently, a phrase which appears fourteen times in the New Testament, twelve of them in Luke-Acts. We know this was the eleventh appearance of the Lord after his resurrection and that the ascension took place on the Mount of Olives in the vicinity of Bethany (Luke 24:45–53).

1:11. These disciples were literally men of Galilee, citizens of the northern portion of Israel. The angelic question took on special poignancy in the light of the Lord’s command; but rather than scolding, the angel assured the disciples that Jesus would return. Let’s not miss the emphasis of Luke’s specific words: This same Jesus . . . will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven. Not some different Jesus but a literal, physical, resurrected Savior. The Jesus they knew and loved would come again to earth just as he ascended from earth. Other New Testament passages such as 1 Thessalonians 4–5 explain the details more fully.

Why would the Lord return to heaven? Why did he continuously say to the disciples that his exit was essential to the Holy Spirit’s entrance? Certainly it fits God’s plan and purpose, and that reason alone would be enough. We can also see some practical things. The second coming has no appeal for unbelievers, only for us as believers. With Jesus in heaven we must live our lives by faith and turn our hearts and vision upward and forward. During the time he is there and we are here, he serves as our heavenly intercessor and advocate. That ought to encourage us in our efforts to live and witness for him.

