

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*Press On to Maturity*  
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:11—6:12

**Copy pages 2 and 3 for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.**

### **Leaders' Responsibilities:**

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #11). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

- 1. The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
- 2. The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
- 3. The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## **Prior to this Coming Session:**

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

### **Bible Study Leader:**

Have on hand paper and pencils for each person. Ask ahead of time those whom you want to read aloud. Have a white board or large piece of paper available.

### **Worship Time Leader:**

## **Music Sources:**

**Find Us Faithful**, *The Worship Hymnal* #598; CCLI #18259

**I'll Tell the World That I'm a Christian**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 368; CCLI # 19045

**I Have Decided to Follow Jesus**, *The Worship Hymnal* #434; CCLI #5077724 or 2151540

# 1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

## ***Press On to Maturity***

### **Focal Text**

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:11—6:12

### **Background**

Hebrews 4:14—6:20

### **Main Idea**

We must press on toward maturity in Christ rather than being halfhearted in our Christian commitment.

### **Question to Explore**

Where are you on the way to Christian maturity?

### **Teaching Aim**

To help participants evaluate how seriously they are taking God's call to press on toward maturity as Christians.

### **Gathering together:**

Sing:

**Find Us Faithful**, *The Worship Hymnal* #598; CCLI #18259

### **First thoughts:**

## **A Worthy Challenge Philippians 3:14**

***I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.***

The Apostle Paul always had his eyes on heaven. Whatever it would take to get there was what Paul was willing to do. "I press" means he was straining every nerve and sinew to get to the end of the race, "the goal". The prize would be worth it all.

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***Press On to Maturity*** – 11-31-03-en

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Paul was cognizant of the fact that he had not chosen the goal or the prize. It had to be a call from God to pursue it. That wonderful beautiful city of God, heaven, was his ultimate goal.

He was quick to point out that he had not arrived yet. ***Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me*** (Philippians 3:12).

There is a song with the lyrics “Jesus got a hold of my life and He won’t let me go”. There is more than us having hold of Christ, He has hold of us. The goal for you and me is arrived at only with effort. It is not salvation by works but works as a result of salvation.

The title for all of today’s studies is “Press on to Maturity”. The ultimate goal of maturity is to arrive in heaven where you will spend an eternity with God.

The King James Version of 3:12 reads ***this one thing I do***. Paul was focused on his Christian walk and calling that came from Christ Himself.

What are your goals. Is there any that are more important than your relationship with Christ?

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Pray that each one present will vow to stay the course. Pray for courage. Pray for discernment.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won’t need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

# 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *Press On to Maturity*

#### **Focal Text**

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:11—6:12

#### **Background**

Hebrews 4:14—6:20

#### **Main Idea**

We must press on toward maturity in Christ rather than being halfhearted in our Christian commitment.

#### **Question to Explore**

Where are you on the way to Christian maturity?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help participants evaluate how seriously they are taking God's call to press on toward maturity as Christians.

### **Introduction to your personal study:**

The ministry of the High Priest is to make atonement for the his own sins and the sins of the people. He represented the people before God. But, he sinned and the people sinned. Therefore, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, he would take blood from an animal sacrifice and place it on the mercy seat within the Holy of Holies making atonement for sin.

“According to Old Testament law, the high priest served as that special mediator between the people and their God. He was responsible for offering all sacrifices for sin on the Day of Atonement. He offered sacrifices for his own sins, first. Second, he offered sacrifices for the king's sins. Third, he offered sacrifice for the sins of the entire nation of Israel. The inadequacy of the old covenant system was reinforced annually by

the annual repetition of this process” (Stewart, D.H. **Bible Book Study Commentary: Hebrews and James**. Nashville: The Sunday School Board, 1990, page 40.

When Jesus died on the cross, God accepted Him as total atonement for all sin. Jesus became Israel’s High Priest. His blood made atonement for all. The veil in front of the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom (Mark 15:38) symbolically giving all men access, through Christ, to the mercy seat. The sacrifice of Christ who knew no sin took upon Himself man’s sin and man’s sin problem was atoned for forever.

## **Background:**

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #11) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

## **Focusing on the Meaning:**

### ***Press On to Maturity***

#### **I. Jesus a Great High Priest. Hebrews 4:14-16.**

The doctrine of Jesus as the Great High Priest is important for believers to understand. It is woven into the fabric of the letter to the Hebrews. A holy God, who once seemed so distant, came down and took on the form of man in order to be a proper sacrifice atoning for the sins of man. This doctrine or teaching encourages believers to persevere. Each believer has obtained access to God in heaven through the shedding of Christ’s blood on the cross.

#### **A. Because Jesus is the Great High Priest, hold firmly to your faith.**

***14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.***

The reference to Jesus as High Priest is the conclusion of this argument. The ministry of Jesus in heaven as a faithful high priest in the service of God assures the believer of the promise of eternal rest with Him.

“The writer challenged the readers to ‘hold fast’ their profession, since the sacrifice was adequate and eternal. At this point in the writing, the author had in mind the Hebrew Christians in the congregation. His words constituted a challenge to growth in faithfulness, not to the initial experience of salvation” (Stewart, page 4).

Therefore, the reason given here as to why we should hold firmly to our faith is because we now have Jesus as our High Priest. He is what one has. He provides direct access to God.

Jesus is not just a man. He is the Son of God. A Christian's faith does not rest upon any man. It rests upon the Son of God. It was His atoning sacrifice on the cross that took care of man's sin. Therefore, stay the course. Remain faithful to the faith professed. Hold tightly to your faith. Be mature in your witness and walk.

***15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin.***

No passage in the Bible so succinctly presents what Jesus came to do for mankind. He not only *sympathizes* with our weaknesses He *empathizes* with our weaknesses. Jesus walked in the shoes of mankind. He knows our frailties. He was tempted in every way a man is tempted. Yet sin was not found in Him. The writer's point was that Jesus understands us and He overcame His temptations.

Without empathy, the ability to walk in another person's shoes or feel as another person feels, Jesus would not be able to function as the high priest God intended Him to be. He had to be in close touch with men and with God. He would bring the voice of God - the teachings of God directly to man and He would represent man in the presence of God.

A Jew might have some difficulty understanding this verse. To a Jew God was holy which means He was different. Therefore, He did not share the experiences of man. The Old Testament did not picture Him walking among men as does the New Testament. The Messiah they believed in would come and set them free from secular bondage, but would still be distant.

The writer contrasts this idea with the qualities Jesus has as a result of becoming a man. He feels man's weaknesses even though He did not succumb to them. The temptations were not tests to see if He would sin. They were demonstrations to reveal He was sinless.

“Jesus was thoroughly and completely tempted, yet He did not sin. To be tempted is not sinful. To yield to temptation is sinful. Jesus was completely human. To say Jesus was tempted in every way we are means that He was thoroughly tested at all points wherein He as an individual could be tested. Humans have different temptations according to their own personalities. We need not assert that Jesus had every wicked and distorted thought and desire known to humanity in order to affirm the thoroughness of His temptation or the reality of His sinlessness. His sinlessness was a marvelous quality He brought to His saviorhood. We are not yet sinless, but we do have the resources of a sinless Savior. God through Christ has offered to help us in our temptations” (**Disciple's Study Bible**, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, page 1576).



Imagine a large boulder on the seacoast. Since it does not move, it experiences the full force of every wave that beats against it. Smaller pebbles that the waves move around do not because they yield to the force of the waves. Similarly Jesus' temptations were greater than ours because He never yielded to them.

**B. Because Jesus is the Great High Priest, go confidently to Him in prayer.**

***16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.***

Because of Jesus' ministry as High Priest, a believer can pray boldly. This is the proper way a believer is to pray. The King James Version translates "confidence" as "boldness". In the *Star Trek* science fiction series the introduction states that "they boldly go where no man has gone before". A believer can be bold in approaching the "throne of grace" because Jesus has gone where no man has gone before. A believer need not hold back. Confident prayer will bear results. The petitioner will find mercy and grace to help in time of need. Pray through our great high priest who resides in heaven. We pray "Our Father" in "Jesus' Name". To abandon Him for a mere man who would be a priest in Judaism would be ludicrous.

Because we have such a High Priest to intercede for us with God, we can approach God confidently in prayer. Unlike the high priests of Judaism who would only approach God at His earthly throne, in the holy of holies in the tabernacle or temple, once a year, the Christian believer has access to God at any time of the day or night and in any circumstance.

**II. Warning Against Falling Away. Hebrews 5:11-6:12.**

**A. Spiritual Infants Need to be Taught the Basics. Hebrews 5:11-14.**

***11. We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.***

We find here the dilemma of many teachers who wish their pupils would understand more. The writer wanted to take them deeper into spiritual truths but they were not ready. He had "much to say". Some had not even learned the basics. Therefore, they could not understand deeper doctrine. The King James Version translates "***you have become dull of hearing***".

Simply put, there were those to whom the author wrote who were not spiritually ready for the doctrine he wished to teach. The years spent as believers had not been well spent.

They should be much farther along in maturity. There should have been among them those who were ready to teach others. However, they could not because they were not living righteously because they did not know how.

But, the writer wanted to move on with those who must have been able - those whom he thought were mature enough for "teaching about righteousness". That was done by giving them "solid food" which was God's Word. It is learning the Word of God that enables a believer to distinguish good from evil. The Psalmist wrote "***I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you***" (119:11). That hiding is to be a "constant" studying. Training one's self to be aware of good and evil is a life-long endeavor.

There must be time to teach those who need the basics of the faith, but for those straining to get going for Christ there should be time to instruct them also. A mark of the mature will be their ability to distinguish between good and evil.

### **B. Mature Christians Move to Deeper Teaching. Hebrews 6:1-3**

"Therefore", let's get moving forward.

***1 Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And God permitting, we will do so.***

People need to know about Christ before they will turn to Him. But, that is rudimentary. A believer must accept Christ and accept what He taught. Two things are clearly necessary, repentance, and faith in God. The other items listed - "cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment" -they would have learned in Judaism.

The writer has dealt with the reasons for spiritual immaturity, now he moves to maturity. In so doing he enumerates the Old Testament practices that are no longer adequate. This part of the letter would be directed toward those who wanted to incorporate Judaism into Christian worship and toward those who desired to go entirely back into Jewish rituals. Christ as High Priest has made all those things unnecessary. They are no longer adequate.

To make the necessary changes and commit the necessary actions takes making up one's mind to do so. Therefore, we read "***God permitting, we will do so.***" With the help of God all things are possible. Mark 9:23b tells one "***Everything is possible for one who believes.***"

The ultimate goal is for disciples to replicate themselves by introducing others to Jesus.

### **C. Falling Away. Hebrews 6:4-8.**

**4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age 6 and have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. 7 Land that drinks in rain falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. 8 But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.**

The ultimate test for a believer is perseverance, sticking with Christ until the end. If it were true that one could reject Christ and at some future time accept Him again that would be the same as crucifying Him over again. That's not possible. Hebrews 10:10b, "**we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**".

"It is impossible" defines the rest of the sentence. The five descriptors of faith give a glimpse of a saved person. It is impossible for a saved person to reject Christ over and over. One whose life continuously shuns Christ is one who was not saved in the first place.

The illustrations in verses 7 & 8 are of the saved and the unsaved. Notice carefully that it is the fruit that differentiates between them. Good land produces grain or vegetables or fruit. Saved people serve others and strive to bring others to Christ. God knows the difference between the saved and the unsaved and it is He who administers blessings and curses.

### **III. God Knows Who Belongs to Him. Hebrews 6:9-12.**

**9 Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case---the things that have to do with salvation. 10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11 We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. 12 We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.**

There is a weaving back and forth between the themes of the letter and the diverse group of people to whom it was written. This passage is one of encouragement to those who were persevering. One should never forget that the eyes of God are always upon him. The encouragement and challenge here is to follow the example of those who are following after God. Persevering unto the end will reveal the true believe who will receive the promises God has for each and every one.

It is always a good practice in your mind not put all believers into one category. Everyone is at a different point on their journey with Christ. A good instructor will lovingly confront

those who need a rebuke, and confirm those who are committed. Leave the rest to God. (See Matthew 13:24-32.)

### **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

The “Teaching Aim” for this session states: “...help participants evaluate how seriously they are taking God's call to press on toward maturity as Christians.” Sometimes we may wonder if we can overcome the difficulties of life and persevere in faithfulness—much less continue to mature in Christ. Your task consists of showing the church that such growth can be possible regardless of circumstances.

### **For Personal Reflection:**

**What have I learned from this study?**

**What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

**What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)**

### ***Press On to Maturity***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:11—6:12

#### **Background**

Hebrews 4:14—6:20

#### **Main Idea**

We must press on toward maturity in Christ rather than being halfhearted in our Christian commitment.

#### **Question to Explore**

Where are you on the way to Christian maturity?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To help participants evaluate how seriously they are taking God's call to press on toward maturity as Christians.

#### **Connect with Life:**

Begin the study by saying: One's understanding of who Jesus is strengthens one's walk with Him. A mature Christian keeps his eyes on Him. Our study today focuses on His role as High Priest and on a believer staying the course.

#### **Guide the Study:**

Ask the group: What is a High Priest? What does a High Priest do?

Explain as needed from this quote: “According to Old Testament law, the high priest served as that special mediator between the people and their God. He was responsible for offering all sacrifices for sin on the Day of Atonement. He offered sacrifices for his own sins, first. Second, he offered sacrifices for the king’s sins. Third, he offered sacrifice for the sins of the entire nation of Israel. The inadequacy of the old covenant system was reinforced annually by the annual repetition of this process” (Stewart,D.H. **Bible Book Study Commentary: Hebrews and James**. Nashville: The Sunday School Board, 1990, page 40.

Have the group read carefully Hebrews 4:14-15. Tell them to look carefully at the phrases “we have” and “we do not have”.

Ask: What do those phrases introduce about the characteristics of Jesus?

List the differences between an earthly high priest and Jesus on a white board or sheet of paper.

Prompt them to respond to What do you think is the most important attribute of Jesus as our High Priest? Explain.

Question: Why is it important to hold firm to one’s faith? The answers may vary.

Be sure the group understands the differences between an earthly High Priest and Jesus as High Priest. Let the group brainstorm this and write the answers on a white board or sheet of paper.

Ask someone to read Hebrews 4:16.

Ask: Why may believers approach God’s throne of grace with confidence?

Remind the group: Prayer is important and must be done with confidence in God’s giving an answer.

Have a group member read Hebrews 5:11-14 -6:1-3.

Ask: What is the dilemma facing the writer? (There are different spiritual age groups he wishes to address.)

Question: How do you deal with baby Christians? (You teach them the basics of Jesus’s teachings.)

Ask: What do you think might constitute the basics? (They need to understand and affirm their initial asking for forgiveness of sin and turning their life over to Jesus. They need to think about this commitment and what it requires. They need to see how important their role as part of the body of Christ, the Church, is.)

As a contrast: What do mature believers need to be taught? (They need solid food, being constantly fed to be able to differentiate between good and evil. They need to review the teachings of the newer Christians, but view them with depth and experience.)

Prompt their thinking: Where do believers go to get biblical teaching? (Give time for responses.)

Ask: Is it important to meet together and study together?

Have someone reread Hebrews 6:1-3 to the group.

Tell the group that the idea here is for Christians to be moving forward.

Remind them that the “elementary teachings” were those found in Judaism. Once again the believers are reminded to move forward in their thinking and in their actions.

Have another person read Hebrews 6:4-10.

Ask: How many times was Christ crucified?

Then: Why does the writer say it is impossible for Christ to be crucified again and again?

Ask: What then is the end result of a person who falls away and never returns? (Judgment.)

Tell the group: It is impossible for a person to accept Christ, then reject Him, and expect to return to Him at a future time. A person with that attitude could not have accept Christ in the first place. For him to be able to do so would mean Christ would have to be crucified again and that will not happen. The illustration of blessings and curses indicates one is either for or against Christ. God is one who blesses and curses.

Ask a group member to read aloud Hebrews 6:11-12.

Take time here to let the group identify what they believe would be their spiritual timeline. There will be valleys and there will be mountains. Instruct them to take a sheet of paper and draw a line showing the ups and downs in their spiritual life. Identify what are ups and downs. Tell them to be ready to share their timeline.

Ask: What encouragement is the writer expressing here?

Remind the group: Do not lump the faithful with the unfaithful. Be kind and loving as each one lends a helping hand to another. It takes time to become a mature believer.

## **Encourage Application:**

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Ask the group: Would anyone like to share when you were tempted as these believers to drop out of your Christian walk? Have any of you faced persecution that could have prompted you to fall away?

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.



# YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### *Press On to Maturity* Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:11—6:12

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

#### **Younger/Older-----Immature/Mature????**

Today we will contrast immature with mature. Who is the youngest here today? Who is the oldest one here today? Is that youth the most mature of the group?

Why is he/she the most mature? What are some characteristics of his/her maturity?

Then ask yourselves: What do you feed an infant? Why feed an infant in that way?

Tell the members of the group there are many stages between an infant and a mature adult. It is a natural process. One does not expect the same from an infant as one would expect from a mature adult person.

Discuss among yourselves the differences between an immature and a mature person.

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Press On to Maturity***  
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:11—6:12**Beginning the Service:**

Sing:

**I'll Tell the World That I'm a Christian**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 368; CCLI # 19045  
**I Have Decided to Follow Jesus**, *The Worship Hymnal* #434; CCLI #5077724 or 2151540

**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

The Ebola Outbreak in 2014-15 caused many deaths in three West African countries – Sierra Leon, Liberia and Guinea. In addition to the deaths there was a great disruption in the economy of these countries as wage earners, farmers, distributors of goods and many others were unable to work. Pray that as these countries recover, they may have learned better ways of controlling disease. Pray that economic conditions improve consistently over time. Pray that those who heard and responded to the message of salvation in the midst of their great need will be able to mature in their faith and remain faithful.

In 2017 further distress came to Sierra Leon's capital city, Freeport, when massive mud slides caused destruction. The Christian community was especially hard hit with many churches suffering the death of members and the loss of property.

## Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

## What If?

### Introduction

Jesus was asked "What is the greatest commandment?" He replied: **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."** (Matthew 22:37). Jesus taught that love and obedience are closely tied. ***If you love me, keep my commands***" (John 14:15). Later in John's Gospel He defines His followers as people of love. ***"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"*** (John 13:35).

Keep in mind the relationship love and obedience have one to another. Think, what could have happened had Jesus' commands not been taken seriously. Let us look at "What if?"

Life is full of "what ifs". If any of us were truthful we would look back and see places where we would make different decisions. If we had done so then the outcomes would have been different.

### Acts 1:1-5.

***1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach. 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."***

We see here that Jesus gave another commandment. Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait. They were going to get the Holy Spirit, which would be the power needed for them to be world changers.

## I. What If They Had Disobeyed?

Let me put this question before you. What if He had not been obeyed? There have been over the centuries those who did not obey. Such decisions have had a world impact. There have been lives lost to the kingdom of God because of disobedience to the command of Christ to go into the world and spread the Gospel message.

The future of the Kingdom's work here on earth is dependent in a great part upon the obedience of Christ's followers. As one becomes more obedient, one's maturity and patience grows, and with that comes tribulation. The world under the rule of Satan pushes back. It takes a mature, patient believer to carry out the commands of Christ trusting fully in His Word.

In Acts 1:13, we are told that there were about a hundred and twenty assembled together. They returned to Jerusalem in obedience to Jesus' words and began to pray and wait.

The group was waiting for a promise spoken by Christ to be fulfilled. Jesus had told them that they would receive the Holy Spirit and be witnesses unto Him throughout the world, beginning at Jerusalem. The fulfillment of that promise came and was manifest by wind, fire, and many different languages. As a result of this and Peter's preaching 3000 came to Christ on one day

From that humble beginning of 120 the church has reached out to millions and millions over the centuries. But, **What if no one did?**

What if no one was obedient?

What if they had not returned to Jerusalem?

What if they had not prayed?

What if they returned and prayed and the Holy Spirit descended and they decided just to keep it all to themselves?

What if Peter had not decided to preach?

Can you imagine a scenario where the story might have different if the disciples had not been obedient? The church would have been stillborn. The greatest movement in history would have died in that room.

In each of our communities people have deep problems.

Some of your neighbors struggle with depression, even contemplating suicide.

Some are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

There is domestic abuse in some homes.

There are those who feel crippled or trapped by fear and anxiety.

A number are grieving the death of a loved one, and

In many communities there are those who are struggling with the loss of jobs.

Think about your own community. What answer do we have for the kind of people described? We have Jesus. It would be criminal to have the answer that would take away sin and bring salvation and not share it.

Now consider this. What if you and I are not obedient? What will be the future of the church if we do not consider the call that Christ has made on our lives? Who will not be saved because you and I did not do our duty? It is sobering to think that the hope of the church hangs on the frail lives of men and women who are not totally committed to the cause of Christ

## **II. What If Everyone Was Obedient?**

Then there is this question. What if everyone was obedient? Would Pentecost be repeated? The church has been looking for a great worldwide revival for centuries. Could the answer be as simple as loving obedience?

What if we would become as Spirit-filled as those early disciples? What if we could get all excited and tell everybody that Jesus is our Savior? We would transform our community. The truth is this: we are filled with the same Spirit as those believers in Acts 1. Jesus came to live within each of us the moment we trust Him.

### **Call to Commitment:**

1. There is not a one of us who does not know someone who needs to hear that Jesus saves.
2. If you are saved you are an authority on what Jesus can do in your life.
3. What he has done in you he will do in others if they are given a chance to obey.

A study was done several years ago to determine why more people do not volunteer. The findings were clear. They were not asked to do so.

Is it possible that the reason more people have not responded to Christ is because no one has asked them to do so?

What does it take for people to hear the Gospel? It takes obedience.

## **Concluding the Service:**

Choose and read to the congregation a scripture verse from the New Testament that expresses God's love for us.

Perhaps read **Romans 5:8?**