

An abstract graphic featuring a blue silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, facing right. The silhouette is set against a background of orange and white wavy lines. Overlaid on the silhouette is the text "TELL THE STORY" in large, bold, orange capital letters.

TELL THE STORY

SHAPED
BY SCRIPTURE

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Dr. Scott K. Thomas II



LONEOAK
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

October

Shaped by Scripture

Introduction to *Shaped by Scripture*

Shaped by Scripture exists to help you plant God’s Word deep in your heart so it can transform your life. This resource is designed to guide you toward Scripture memorization and to equip you with the Word of God. Life in general—and the Christian life in particular—is spiritual warfare. Every believer faces continual pressures from the world, the culture, and the enemy of our souls. Yet God does not leave us defenseless. He gives us His Word to shape us, strengthen us, and sharpen us for victory.

The Bible says in Proverbs 7:2-3, “Keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.” Notice how this verse begins with both a command and a promise: *Keep the Lord’s commandments—and live*. When God’s Word is hidden in your heart, it becomes your shield, your guide, and your joy.

Why We Created *Shaped by Scripture*

In an effort to promote Scripture memorization and spiritual growth, *Shaped by Scripture* was developed to guide participants in learning, understanding, and applying God’s Word. Over the course of a year, you will explore 12 unique themes covering 50 selected verses (with mid-year and end-of-year breaks for reflection). Each monthly booklet introduces a new theme, providing both an “entry point” for new participants and a “re-engagement point” for returning participants.

How to Use This Resource

Each week follows a simple rhythm designed to help you memorize Scripture and grasp its meaning:

- **Day 1 – Memorization & Meditation:** Learn the verse, reflect on the weekly theme, and receive prompts to begin memorization.

- **Day 2 – Contextual Understanding:** Discover the historical and biblical context so you can see how the verse fits into the larger story of Scripture.
- **Day 3 – Theological Insight:** Based on context, explore what the passage teaches about God, His character, and His purposes.
- **Day 4 – Personal Application:** Using the Inductive Bible Study method (Observe, Interpret, Apply), discover how the verse directly speaks into your life.
- **Day 5 – Recap & Reinforcement:** Review, rehearse, and reinforce what you’ve learned to lock the verse and its truths into your heart.

A Word of Encouragement

For some, memorizing Scripture comes naturally. For the rest of us, it feels daunting. Be encouraged—*Shaped by Scripture* is designed to support learners at every level. By investing a few focused minutes each day, you will develop the skill of Scripture memorization and a deeper appreciation of God’s Word. Over time, you’ll look back and realize you’ve retained far more than you expected, and more importantly, you’ll be shaped by the living Word of God.

Dr. Scott K. Thomas II
Senior Pastor

Tell the Story: Introduction

A Life of Evangelism and Outreach

October 5 – 30, 2026

In 1880, Arabella Kathrine Hankey penned the now-familiar words, “I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.” Originally composed as a lengthy poem during a season of physical rehabilitation, her verses were later adapted into the hymn cherished by generations of believers. Its melody is gentle, but its message is bold: the story of Jesus is worth telling—and it must be told.

For generations, the refrain “*I love to tell the story*” has stirred the church toward evangelistic faithfulness. Yet in contemporary Christian life, that aspiration is often met with hesitation. Many believers affirm the importance of gospel proclamation while struggling to embody it in daily life. Fear of rejection, uncertainty about what to say, and the quiet resistance of spiritual warfare can create a widening gap between conviction and action.

Still, the gospel that saves us also sends us. It not only announces what Christ has done through His death and resurrection; it also declares who we are because of Him: witnesses of His grace, ambassadors for His kingdom, and heralds of reconciliation. Evangelism is not reserved for the unusually gifted, the professionally trained, or the naturally bold. It is the joyful responsibility and spirit-empowered calling entrusted to every believer.

This month, you are invited to recover that calling. Through Scripture, prayer, and practical reflection, we will consider what it means to tell the story with clarity, confidence, and compassion. The task is urgent, but the burden is not ours to carry alone. God supplies His Word, His Spirit, and His presence to those He sends.

Week 1	<i>The Power of the Gospel</i>	Romans 1:16
Week 2	<i>Prepared to Share</i>	1 Peter 3:15
Week 3	<i>Just be a Witness</i>	Acts 1:8
Week 4	<i>Ambassadors of Reconciliation</i>	2 Corinthians 5:20

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16

My friend Gale often recounts the night he met Jesus, and even after many years, the details of that evening remain vivid in his memory. Gale grew up hearing the gospel because his father was a faithful preacher and his family rarely missed a church service. He knew the story of Jesus: His virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary death on the cross, and His victorious resurrection from the grave. He had heard the message repeatedly and understood its central claims, yet he had never personally responded to the gospel through repentance and faith.

One evening, after an ordinary Sunday night church service, Gale and his parents began their drive home in the family car. It was an aging vehicle with a wide bench seat across the front, and because this was long before seatbelts became standard, young Gale sat between his mother and father as they traveled along the rural road. The steady hum of the engine filled the car while the darkness of the countryside surrounded them.

As they traveled, something ahead caught Gale's attention. In the distance, he saw what appeared to be a fire, which began as a faint glow but became increasingly distinct as the car moved closer. Soon Gale could see flames stretching across the road ahead of them, seemingly consuming everything in their path. His concern intensified because his parents appeared completely undisturbed. They continued their conversation, maintained their speed, and drove toward the flames as though nothing unusual stood before them.

Before Gale could raise his voice in alarm, he became aware of a message impressed unmistakably upon his heart. He remembers the words clearly: "Without Jesus, this is your future."

In that moment, the gospel Gale had heard throughout his childhood became intensely personal. He understood the reality of his sin, recognized his need for salvation, and placed his faith in Jesus Christ. Sitting between his parents on the bench seat of an aging family car, Gale called upon the Lord and was saved. The Holy Spirit brought the truth of

the gospel to bear upon his heart, and the message he had heard many times became the message through which he came to faith.

Gale's story reminds us of a truth Christians must never forget: God has chosen to use the gospel as His powerful means of bringing sinners to salvation. Our confidence in evangelism rests upon the power of the Gospel.

Many Christians understand their responsibility to share the gospel, yet hesitation often appears when an opportunity actually arises. We wonder how another person will respond, whether the conversation will become uncomfortable, or whether our convictions will be interpreted as intolerant or offensive. As cultural resistance toward Christian truth increases, silence can begin to feel safer than proclamation, especially when speaking about sin, judgment, the cross, repentance, and the exclusive saving authority of Jesus Christ.

Paul understood the social cost associated with proclaiming Christ, which makes his declaration in Romans 1:16 especially significant: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

Paul wrote these words within a Roman world that valued honor, status, power, philosophy, and impressive rhetoric, while the Christian message centered upon a Jewish Messiah who had been publicly crucified by Roman authority. Elsewhere, Paul acknowledged that the proclamation of "Christ crucified" was "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1:23). He knew that preaching Christ could invite ridicule, opposition, suffering, and rejection because he had personally experienced all of them.

Still, Paul refused to be ashamed because he understood what the gospel actually is and what God accomplishes through it.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel..." Paul's declaration reveals a settled conviction. His confidence did not depend upon favorable cultural conditions, receptive audiences, or personal popularity because he understood the divine character of the message entrusted to him. The gospel announces what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ for sinners who cannot rescue themselves. Christ died for sins, was buried,

and was raised from the dead, and through Him God offers forgiveness, reconciliation, righteousness, and eternal life to those who believe.

“...for it is the power of God for salvation...” Paul explains why he remains unashamed: the gospel is the power of God for salvation. The Greek word translated “power” describes ability, strength, or effective power, and Paul uses it here to emphasize God’s saving activity through the gospel. The message Christians proclaim concerns a real work God has accomplished in history through the death and resurrection of His Son, and God continues to use that proclaimed message to call sinners to faith.

“...to everyone who believes...” The scope of this promise is extraordinary. The gospel is God’s power for salvation “to everyone who believes.” No ethnic identity, social status, educational achievement, family history, or record of moral accomplishment can provide salvation, because sinners receive God’s saving grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The word “everyone” should also enlarge our vision for evangelism. Every person we encounter stands within the reach of the gospel invitation. The neighbor whose life appears completely opposed to Christianity, the family member who has rejected repeated invitations, the coworker who seems uninterested in spiritual matters, and the person whose past appears irreparably broken all need the same gospel. We cannot see the work God may already be accomplishing within another person’s heart, so we faithfully tell the story of Jesus and call people to believe.

“...to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Paul concludes by locating the gospel within God’s unfolding plan of redemption. Israel possessed a covenantal priority in salvation history because God gave His promises through Israel, revealed His Word to Israel, and brought the Messiah into the world through Israel. Jesus was Israel’s promised Messiah, and the gospel was proclaimed first among the Jewish people before advancing throughout the Gentile world.

Memorization & Meditation

1. **Memorization** – Begin memorizing Romans 1:16 today. Read the verse aloud several times, and then divide it into its major phrases and practice reciting each phrase without looking.
2. **Meditation** – Slowly read Romans 1:16 and consider what Paul's confidence reveals about the nature and power of the gospel, and identify the fears or concerns that sometimes make you hesitant to speak about Christ.
3. **Pray the Verse**

Father, deepen my confidence in the gospel, and remove the fear that causes me to remain silent. Help me remember that You possess the power to save, and give me courage to speak clearly and faithfully about Jesus. Place people before me who need to hear the gospel, and make me willing to tell them the story. In Jesus' name, amen.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Romans 1:16

Paul’s declaration, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16), becomes even more significant when we understand the circumstances surrounding his letter and the argument that leads to this statement. Paul writes as an apostle who has spent years proclaiming Christ throughout the eastern regions of the Roman Empire, yet he is addressing a congregation in a city he has never visited. Rome stood at the political and cultural center of the empire, and Paul desired to strengthen the believers there while preparing for the continued expansion of his missionary work.

Paul likely wrote Romans from Corinth during the latter portion of his third missionary journey, around AD 56–57. By this point, he had established churches and proclaimed the gospel throughout significant portions of the eastern Mediterranean world. His attention was increasingly turning westward, and Romans 15:22–24 reveals his desire to visit Rome on his way to Spain. The Roman believers would therefore become important partners in the continued advance of the gospel.

The church at Rome also reflected the diverse world into which the gospel was spreading. Jewish and Gentile believers worshiped together, bringing different histories, traditions, and assumptions into the same Christian community. Earlier, Emperor Claudius had expelled many Jews from Rome, an event mentioned in Acts 18:2, but after Claudius died in AD 54, Jewish believers were able to return. Their return likely required Jewish and Gentile Christians to navigate significant questions concerning Israel, the law, righteousness, and their shared identity in Christ. These concerns appear repeatedly throughout Romans and help explain Paul’s careful presentation of a gospel that brings salvation “to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

The immediate context further clarifies Paul’s declaration. In Romans 1:1–7, Paul introduces himself as one “set apart for the gospel of God,” immediately establishing the gospel as central to both his identity

and apostolic calling. He explains that this gospel was promised beforehand through the prophets and concerns Jesus Christ, the Son of God and risen Lord. Paul therefore begins Romans by grounding the Christian message in God's redemptive plan and identifying Jesus as its center.

Paul then expresses his desire to visit the Roman Christians in verses 8–15. He longs to strengthen them, enjoy mutual encouragement with them, and obtain a spiritual harvest among the people of Rome. His missionary calling extends across ethnic and cultural boundaries, which is why he declares himself “under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish” (Romans 1:14). That sense of gospel obligation leads directly to his eagerness “to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome” (v. 15).

Romans 1:16 follows naturally from that eagerness. Paul is ready to proclaim Christ in the imperial capital because he possesses complete confidence in the message entrusted to him. Rome could boast of political authority, military strength, cultural influence, and human achievement, while Paul arrived proclaiming salvation through a crucified and risen Jewish Messiah. He remained unashamed because he knew the true source of saving power: “the gospel...the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”

Take Action: Open your Bible and read Romans 1:1–17, paying attention to every reference Paul makes to the gospel. As you read, trace the progression from Paul being *set apart for the gospel* (v. 1), to his *eagerness to preach the gospel* (v. 15), and finally to his declaration that he is *not ashamed of the gospel* (v. 16).

Reflection Questions:

1. What circumstances within the Roman church help explain Paul's emphasis that the gospel brings salvation "to the Jew first and also to the Greek"?
2. According to Romans 1:1–15, how did Paul understand his calling and responsibility concerning the gospel?
3. What features of Rome could have made proclaiming a crucified and risen Jewish Messiah appear unimpressive, and why was Paul nevertheless unashamed of his message?

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Romans 1:16

Romans 1:16 stands among Scripture’s clearest theological declarations concerning the gospel because, within a single sentence, Paul brings together several doctrines that will shape the remainder of his letter. The verse identifies the gospel as the power of God, describes its purpose as salvation, establishes faith as the means through which salvation is received, and announces the worldwide scope of God’s redemptive purpose. Paul’s confidence in proclaiming Christ therefore rests upon a deeply theological understanding of what God accomplishes through the gospel.

First, Paul declares that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation.” The Greek expression *dynamis theou* emphasizes divine power and ability, directing our attention toward God as the source of salvation. Humanity’s fundamental problem is sin, which leaves every person guilty before God, spiritually dead, and incapable of establishing righteousness through personal effort. Salvation therefore requires divine intervention, and the gospel announces what God has accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Paul writes elsewhere, “the word of the cross” is “the power of God” to those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18). Through the proclamation of this gospel, the Holy Spirit convicts sinners, brings spiritual life, and applies the saving work of Christ.

Second, the purpose of this divine power is salvation. The Greek word *sōtēria* communicates rescue or deliverance, and within Romans, Paul develops salvation as a comprehensive work of God. Those who trust Christ are justified and receive peace with God (Romans 5:1), increasingly experience freedom from sin’s dominion as they pursue holiness (Romans 6:22), and ultimately anticipate glorification in the presence of God (Romans 8:30). Salvation addresses the full devastation caused by sin: God rescues sinners from condemnation, reconciles them to Himself,

transforms them through sanctification, and promises their final restoration in glory.

Third, Paul states that this salvation comes “to everyone who believes.” Faith is the means through which sinners receive saving benefits accomplished by Christ. No amount of moral achievement, religious activity, heritage, or personal merit can secure a right standing before God, for justification is received through faith apart from works of the law (Romans 3:28). Biblical faith involves trusting Jesus Christ and resting upon His finished work as the sufficient basis for salvation. The gospel therefore confronts human pride because every sinner approaches God with the same need and receives salvation on the same basis: grace through faith.

Paul then describes the scope of God’s saving purpose with the phrase “to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” God entrusted His covenant promises to Israel, and the Messiah entered human history through the Jewish people (Romans 9:4-5). This historical priority reveals God’s faithfulness to His promises, while the inclusion of the Gentiles demonstrates the worldwide reach of His redemptive plan. God has promised Abraham that through him “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3), and the gospel announces the fulfillment of that promise through Christ. Every ethnic, cultural, and social boundary stands beneath the universal invitation to believe.

Romans 1:16 therefore gives the church a theological foundation for gospel confidence. God is the source of salvation, Christ is the substance of the gospel, faith is the means of receiving salvation, and the nations are the field to which this message must be proclaimed. Because the gospel announces God’s powerful work to save sinners through Jesus Christ, the church can proclaim it confidently, faithfully, and without shame.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does Paul mean when he describes the gospel as “the power of God for salvation,” and how does this identify God as the source of salvation?
2. How does Romans 1:16 establish faith as the means through which sinners receive the saving benefits accomplished by Christ?
3. What does the phrase “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” teach us about God’s faithfulness to His redemptive promises and the worldwide scope of the gospel?

Memorization Reminder: Continue memorizing Romans 1:16. By now, work toward reciting the entire verse without looking at the text, paying attention to the progression of Paul’s declaration: unashamed of the gospel → the power of God → salvation → everyone who believes → Jew and Greek.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16

Inductive Bible study helps us approach Scripture carefully by guiding us through three important movements: *observation, interpretation, and application*. We begin by asking, *What does the text say?* Then we consider, *What does the text mean?* Finally, we ask, *How should this truth shape my life?* Today, we will walk through each step in Romans 1:16 so that we can learn the method while allowing Paul's declaration to examine our own lives.

Observation: Paul begins with a personal declaration: "I am not ashamed of the gospel." He then uses the word "for" to explain why he is unashamed. The gospel "is the power of God," its purpose is "salvation," and its saving promise extends "to everyone who believes." Paul concludes by identifying two groups: "the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Now look at the surrounding verses. In Romans 2:14, Paul says he is "under obligation" to different kinds of people, and in verse 15, he is "eager to preach the gospel" in Rome. The progression is significant: Paul is obligated to proclaim the gospel, eager to proclaim it, and unashamed of the message he proclaims.

Interpretation: These observations reveal the foundation of Paul's confidence. Paul understands that God has called him to proclaim the gospel to people across cultural and ethnic boundaries, and he eagerly accepts that responsibility because he knows the gospel's true nature.

The gospel is "the power of God for salvation," so Paul's confidence rest upon God's ability to save rather than Paul's ability to persuade. Salvation is offered "to everyone who believes," which means the same gospel Paul preaches to Jews must also be carried to Gentiles. This explains why Paul can enter Rome, the powerful capital of the empire, proclaiming a crucified and risen Messiah without shame.

Application: Romans 1:16 now requires us to examine our own response to the gospel. If we believe that God saves through the gospel, fear of an imperfect presentation should never become an excuse for

silence. We are responsible for faithfully telling people what God has done through Jesus Christ and calling them to believe.

Identify one person with whom you have hesitated to discuss Christ. Write down that person's name and specific fear that has kept you silent. Then pray for an opportunity this week to speak about Jesus, remembering where Paul placed his confidence: the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

Reflection Questions:

1. What progression do you observe in Paul's statements in Romans 1:14–16 about his responsibility and attitude toward proclaiming the gospel?
2. Why was Paul able to remain unashamed as he prepared to proclaim the gospel in Rome?
3. Who is one person with whom you need to speak about Christ, and what fear must you overcome in order to do so?

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Romans 1:16

This week, Romans 1:16 reminded us why Christians can confidently tell the story of Jesus. On Day 1, we encountered Paul’s declaration that he was unashamed because the gospel is God’s power for salvation. On Day 2, we examined the Roman context and saw how Paul’s calling, his desire to preach in Rome, and his obligation to Jews and Gentiles frame his declaration. On Day 3, we explored the theology of the verse, considering God as the source of salvation, faith as the means by which salvation is received, and the worldwide scope of the gospel. On Day 4, we used the inductive Bible study method to discover that confidence in the gospel should lead us toward faithful proclamation.

Remember the Word Without looking, recite Romans 1:16 from memory. If you need help, recall the progression of Paul’s thoughts:

*Unashamed → Gospel → Power of God → Salvation →
Everyone who believes → Jew and Greek*

Summarize the Truth Using what you have learned this week, write a two- or three-sentence answer in your own words to answer: “What does Romans 1:16 teach us about the gospel?”

Make It Personal Does your willingness to speak about Jesus demonstrate the same confidence in the gospel? Return to the person you identified during yesterday’s study. Write down that person’s name again, and identify one specific action you can take to move toward a gospel conversation. You might initiate a spiritual conversation, share your testimony, explain the gospel, invite the person to study Scripture with you, or ask how you can pray for them.

Final Prayer *Father, thank You for the gospel of Jesus Christ and for Your power to save everyone who believes. Strengthen my confidence in the message You have entrusted to Your church, and give me courage to speak about Christ without shame. Open doors for gospel conversations, help me communicate Your truth with clarity and compassion, and use my faithful witness to point others toward Jesus. In His name, amen.*

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

D I S C O V E R Y

Not everyone is gifted the same way and that is not a flaw. God gives each of us unique abilities, passions, and strengths; and when we use them they don't just fill a need, they unlock purpose. The goal isn't just to serve, it's to serve where you fit.

SHAPED
BY SCRIPTURE

Wednesdays at 6 PM
Beginning October 14

“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”

1 Peter 3:15

A man in our church—whom I will call Kenneth—once shared a deeply convicting testimony about the cost of delayed obedience. Years ago, Kenneth worked as a delivery driver, servicing grocery stores in small towns throughout our region. One day, while stocking an ice chest inside a store, he noticed a man walk through the door. In that moment, Kenneth sensed a strong prompting from the Holy Spirit: “Share Jesus with him.”

Kenneth knew what he should do, yet almost immediately his mind filled with practical reasons to wait. His delivery schedule was demanding, he was already running behind, and more work remained before the day was finished. He reasoned that another opportunity would eventually come, so he completed his work, returned to his truck, and prepared to leave.

Conviction followed him.

Kenneth knew he had allowed the urgency of his schedule to overrule an opportunity for obedience, so he prayed, “Lord, if he’s still in the store, I’ll go back and do what You asked.” He walked back inside, pretending to check his work, and within moments, the man unexpectedly returned. He had forgotten to get change for a drink machine.

The opportunity had returned, yet Kenneth’s hesitation returned with it. Once again, he rationalized his silence, and the man walked away.

The following day, Kenneth’s delivery route took him toward Cairo, Illinois. As he approached the bridge into town, he came upon a catastrophic accident that had occurred moments earlier. Two vehicles had collided, tires were still spinning, and a child lay motionless in the roadway. Nearby, a severely injured woman remained conscious. Kenneth rushed to her side, knelt beside her, and asked, “Do you know Jesus?”

She answered yes, and Kenneth prayed with her as they waited for emergency personnel to arrive.

Then he learned the extent of the tragedy. Two teenage boys had died in the other vehicle, and when first responders began working around the wreckage, they discovered another body. Kenneth stepped closer and immediately recognized the man.

It was the man from the store. The man Kenneth felt compelled to speak with. The man who had returned and given him another opportunity.

Through tears, Kenneth later told me, “I don’t know if anyone else was sent to share with him. But I know God sent me. God knew what was coming—and I didn’t obey.”

Kenneth could never know everything God was doing in that man’s life, nor should we assume responsibility for another person’s destiny. God alone saves, and every person is accountable before Him. Kenneth’s experience does, however, confront us with a serious question: when an opportunity to speak about Christ comes, are we prepared to respond?

Many Christians genuinely desire to share their faith, yet hesitation often appears when an opportunity arrives. We fear rejection, awkwardness, difficult questions, or the possibility that we will explain something poorly. Some believers feel inadequately equipped, while others live and work in environments where openly identifying with Christ may bring social or professional consequences.

Peter wrote to Christians who understood such pressure. In 1 Peter 3:14, immediately before this week’s verse, he tells them, “Have no fear of them, nor be troubled.” Then comes his instruction: “But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

Peter gives believers a pattern for faithful witness under pressure: honor Christ, remain prepared, explain your hope, and speak with gentleness and respect.

“In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy...” Peter begins with the heart because faithful witness grows from allegiance to Christ. To honor Christ as holy means recognizing His unique authority and giving Him the reverence that belongs to the Lord. Peter’s readers faced the temptation to fear people who could oppose or mistreat them, so he

directs their attention toward the One who possesses ultimate authority over their lives.

This changes the question we ask when opportunities arise. Instead of allowing fear to determine whether we speak, we begin by asking what faithfulness to Christ requires. When Christ occupies His rightful place in our hearts, obedience to Him becomes more important than protecting ourselves from discomfort.

“...always being prepared to make a defense...” Peter then moves from devotion to preparation. The word translated “defense” refers to an answer or reasoned explanation. Peter expects Christians to understand their hope well enough that they can explain why they possess it.

Notice the word “prepared.” Readiness requires intentionality. We should know what we believe about Jesus, understand the essential message of the gospel, and be capable of explaining how Christ has changed our lives. We cannot anticipate every question someone might ask, and Peter does not require believers to possess an answer to every possible objection. He calls us to readiness concerning the hope that defines us.

The surrounding context also suggests that this hope should be visible. Peter is addressing believers whose faithful response to suffering could cause others to wonder why they continue trusting Christ. Their conduct creates an opportunity, and their preparation enables them to explain the hope behind it.

“...with gentleness and respect.” Preparation also includes the manner in which we speak. Peter joins a clear explanation of Christian hope with “gentleness and respect.” Christian witness should reflect the character of the Christ we proclaim.

Gentleness does not weaken conviction; it governs how conviction is communicated. Respect reminds us that the person before us is someone made in the image of God who needs the grace of Christ. We therefore resist arrogance, hostility, and the desire to prove ourselves superior. We listen carefully, answer thoughtfully, speak truthfully, and communicate the gospel with genuine concern for the person hearing it.

Kenneth’s experience reminds us that opportunities to speak about Jesus can arrive unexpectedly, which means preparation cannot wait until the conversation begins. Peter calls us to live ready.

Memorization & Meditation

1. **Memorization** Begin memorizing 1 Peter 3:15 today. Read the verse aloud or write it out several times. Then divide it into three movements to help you remember its progression:

**Honor Christ → Be Prepared → Respond with
Gentleness and Respect**

2. **Meditation:** Consider Peter's command to be "always...prepared." Think about the opportunities you have had to speak about Christ and the reasons you may have hesitated. Ask yourself: If someone asked me today why I have hope in Jesus Christ, would I be prepared to give a clear answer?

3. **Prayer:**

Father, I honor Jesus Christ as Lord and ask You to prepare me to speak faithfully about the hope I have in Him. Help me understand the gospel clearly, recognize the opportunities You place before me, and respond with courage, gentleness, and respect. Make me attentive and obedient so that I am prepared to share when the opportunity comes. In Jesus' name, amen.

“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”

1 Peter 3:15

The weight of Peter’s command to be “always...prepared” becomes clearer when we understand the circumstances of the Christians who first received his letter. The apostle Peter addresses his readers as “elect exiles of the Dispersion” scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, regions located throughout Asia Minor in the area of modern-day Turkey (1 Peter 1:1). The churches likely included both Jewish and Gentile believers who now shared a new identity as God’s people. Peter probably wrote during the early 60s AD, when Christians increasingly experienced suspicion, hostility, and social pressure within the Roman world.

Suffering runs throughout the letter because Peter’s readers were learning what faithfulness to Christ could cost them. They experienced slander for refusing to participate in the sinful practices of their surrounding culture (4:3-4), faced insults because they bore the name of Christ (4:14), and encountered various forms of unjust treatment. Peter repeatedly instructs them to respond through holiness, honorable conduct, persistent hope, and continued faithfulness to Jesus.

The background brings us to the immediate context of 1 Peter 3:13–17. Peter asks, “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” He then acknowledges that believers may still “suffer for righteousness’ sake” (v. 13-14). When that happens, Peter commands them, “Have no fear of them, nor be troubled.” Verse 15 explains how Christians can respond to such fear: “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.”

Peter’s language carries particular significance because it echoes Isaiah 8:12-13, where God’s people are commanded to fear the Lord rather than those who threaten them. Peter applies that language to Christ. When opposition comes, believers remember who possesses ultimate authority and give Christ the place of highest allegiance in their hearts.

Their response to suffering could then create opportunities for witness. Peter tells them to be prepared to give a “reason for the hope” within them, suggesting that observers might see something remarkable in Christians who continue to possess hope while suffering unjustly. Their lives could provoke questions, and they needed to be prepared with an answer.

Even then, the surrounding culture did not determine the manner of their response. Peter requires, “gentleness and respect” and, in verse 16, a “good conscience,” so that their conduct supports the testimony they give.

In its original setting, then, 1 Peter 3:15 describes Christian witness under pressure. When the world challenges their faith, believers are to remain loyal to Christ. Live with visible hope, and be prepared to explain that hope with gentleness and respect.

Take Action: Open your Bible and read 1 Peter 3:13–17, paying careful attention to the words *suffer, fear, hope, prepared, gentleness, and good conscience*. Then reread verse 15 within that paragraph. Notice how Peter connects suffering for righteousness, freedom from fear, allegiance to Christ, visible hope, verbal witness, and godly conduct.

Reflection Questions:

1. What kind of suffering and social pressure were Peter's original readers experiencing because of their allegiance to Christ?
2. How do 1 Peter 3:13-14 prepare us to understand Peter's command in verse 15 to honor Christ and be prepared to give an answer?
3. Why would the hopeful conduct of Christians experiencing unjust suffering create opportunities for them to explain their faith?

Memorization Reminder: Continue memorizing 1 Peter 3:15. As you practice, use the progression of Peter's instruction to help you remember the verse: **honor Christ → always be prepared → give a reason for your hope → respond with gentleness and respect**. Recite the verse several times, and try to do so without looking. Then return to the text and check your accuracy.

“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”

1 Peter 3:15

At the theological center of 1 Peter 3:15 stands the lordship of Jesus Christ. Peter’s instruction to explain our hope begins with a command concerning our allegiance: “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.” Everything that follows grows from this foundational conviction. Christians can remain hopeful under pressure and prepared to speak because Jesus Christ is Lord.

Peter’s language carries considerable theological significance because it draws from Isaiah 8:12–13. Isaiah spoke to God’s people during a period of political instability and fear, commanding them to resist the fears of those around them and instead, “the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy.” Peter applies this language directly to Jesus Christ. The One whom Isaiah identifies as the LORD is identified by Peter as Christ the Lord. Peter therefore grounds Christian courage in the divine identity and sovereign authority of Jesus.

This truth becomes especially important when we remember the circumstances of Peter’s readers. They faced hostility, slander, and the possibility of suffering “for righteousness’ sake” (1 Peter 3:14). Their circumstances could produce fear, yet Peter directs their hearts toward Christ. To honor Christ as holy means recognizing His supreme authority and allowing allegiance to Him to govern our response to every other authority, pressure, and fear.

From this settled allegiance comes readiness. Peter commands believers to be prepared to explain “the hope that is in you.” Throughout his letter, Peter grounds Christian hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, through which believers have been “born again to a living hope” and promised an imperishable inheritance (1 Peter 1:3–4). Christian hope is therefore confident expectation rooted in what God has accomplished through the risen Christ.

When Christ is established as Lord in our hearts, we have both a reason for our hope and a reason to speak. We know whom we trust, what He has accomplished, and what He has promised. Preparation for Christian witness begins with understanding these truths well enough to communicate them when someone asks.

Even the manner of our response flows from Christ's lordship. Peter requires believers to answer with "gentleness and respect." We do not need hostility or arrogance to defend Christian hope because our confidence rests in the sovereign Christ.

The theological progression of 1 Peter 3:15 is therefore clear: Christ is Lord, His resurrection gives us hope, and that hope prepares us to speak. Evangelistic readiness begins with a heart so convinced of who Jesus is that we are prepared to explain why our hope rests securely in Him.

Reflection Questions:

1. How does Peter's use of Isaiah 8:12-13 strengthen our understanding of what it means to "honor Christ the Lord as holy"?
2. According to 1 Peter, what gives Christians a "living hope," and why can that hope remain secure during suffering?
3. How should a settled conviction concerning the lordship of Christ affect our readiness and manner when explaining our faith?

Memorization Reminder: Continue memorizing 1 Peter 3:15, then practice moving from memorization to understanding. Without consulting your notes, write the verse in your own words. Consider each part carefully: what does it mean to honor Christ as holy? What does it mean to be prepared? What is the hope within you? Why should your answer be marked by gentleness and respect?

“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”

1 Peter 3:15

Inductive Bible study helps us move carefully from the words of Scripture toward faithful obedience through three movements: observation, interpretation, and application. As we apply this method to 1 Peter 3:15, pay attention to how conclusions about our lives emerge directly from what Peter wrote.

Observation: What does the text say? Begin by identifying the commands and important words in the verse. Peter first says, “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.” The location is important: *in your hearts*. The object of devotion is also clear: *Christ the Lord*. Peter then commands believers to be “always...prepared,” indicating an ongoing state of readiness.

Prepared for what? To “make a defense” to anyone who asks for “a reason for the hope that is in you.” The verse assumes that Christians possess hope, that this hope can become evident to others, and that believers should be capable of explaining its source. Finally, Peter specifies how the answer should be given: “with gentleness and respect.”

Interpretation: What does the text mean? Now consider what these observations mean within Peter’s argument. Verse 14 addresses Christians who may “suffer for righteousness’ sake” and commands them to resist fear. Peter then directs their allegiance toward Christ. Because Jesus is Lord, opposition does not determine their response.

Their hope rests in the risen Christ and the promised inheritance Peter described in 1 Peter 1:3–4. When suffering causes others to question the source of that hope, Christians should be ready to explain it. Peter therefore expects believers to understand their faith well enough to communicate why their confidence rests in Jesus.

Application: How should this shape my life? Peter’s command raises a practical question: Am I prepared to explain why I have hope in Christ?

Imagine someone asks you today, “Why do you trust Jesus?” Could you answer clearly? Preparation begins before the question arrives. Write a brief response explaining who Jesus is, what He has done for you through His death and resurrection, and why you trust His promises for your future.

Then consider your manner. Ask God to make your words clear, your hearts courageous, and your demeanor gentle. Being prepared means knowing what you believe, why you believe it, and how to communicate that hope in a way that honors the Lord you proclaim.

Reflection Questions:

1. **Observation:** What four movements or commands can you identify in the progression of 1 Peter 3:15?
2. **Interpretation:** How does the surrounding context of suffering help explain Peter’s emphasis on Christ’s lordship, hope, and readiness?
3. **Application:** If someone asked you today why you have hope in Jesus Christ, what would you say?

“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect”

1 Peter 3:15

This week, 1 Peter 3:15 has taught us that readiness to share our faith begins with our allegiance to Jesus Christ. On Day 1, we learned that opportunities to speak about Christ can arrive unexpectedly, so preparation must begin before the opportunity comes. On Day 2, we examined Peter’s original audience and discovered that his command was given to Christians facing suffering, opposition, and fear. On Day 3, we identified the lordship of Christ as the theological foundation of our readiness: because Christ is Lord and His resurrection gives us living hope, we have a reason to speak. On Day 4, we used observation, interpretation, and application to consider whether we are personally prepared to explain the hope we possess.

Remember the Word

Without opening your Bible, recite 1 Peter 3:15 from memory. Use the progression of the verse to guide you: Honor Christ → be prepared → give a reason for your hope → speak with gentleness and respect

Recall What You Learned

Imagine that another Christian asked you, “What does it mean to be prepared to share my faith?” Using what you have learned this week, write two or three sentences explaining 1 Peter 3:15 in your own words. Include the relationship between Christ’s lordship, Christian hope, preparation, and the manner in which we speak. Then complete this sentence:

I can be prepared to share my faith by

Final Prayer

Father, I honor Jesus Christ as Lord and thank You for the living hope I have through His resurrection. Help me understand my faith clearly enough to explain it faithfully, and prepare me for the opportunities You place before me. Give me courage when I am afraid, wisdom when I speak, and gentleness toward every person I encounter. May my life display the hope of Christ, and may my words faithfully explain the reason for that hope. In Jesus' name, amen.

GLOW

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

One night a year, the community comes to your doorstep.
Let us help you reach your neighbors for Christ by making this Halloween your mission!

G – Go to God

Pray for your neighbors and the families who will visit.

L – Let Others Know

Personally invite your neighbors, coworkers, and friends to stop by your house on Halloween. Place the provided GLOW yard sign in a visible spot so families know they're welcome.

O – Open Your Home & Share the Gospel

Create a fun, welcoming space and invite the community to our church using the provided GLOW resources. Create a fun, welcoming space and invite the community to our church using the provided GLOW resources.

W – Watch God Work

Pay attention to how God shows up through simple conversations, smiles, and connections. Tell your church family about the ways God worked so we can celebrate together!



Scan the QR code to register to be a host home!
Please contact the church office with any questions.

“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

In the classic 1952 Western *High Noon*, Marshall Will Kane, played by Gary Cooper, faces a crisis that steadily becomes his alone to confront. A dangerous outlaw is returning to town on the noon train, accompanied by men determined to settle an old score. Kane knows what is coming, and he spends much of the film seeking help from people he has served. One by one, they refuse. Some are afraid. Others offer excuses. By the time the train whistle sounds, doors are closed and streets are empty.

Kane finally walks into the street knowing that he cannot control what others will do. He can only decide what he will do. He must act according to what he knows to be true.

There is something instructive in that image for Christians who feel intimidated by evangelism. We often imagine that sharing our faith requires us to control the conversation, answer every objection, persuade the other person, and somehow produce a spiritual decision. The weight of all those expectations can make evangelism seem overwhelming.

Jesus gives His followers a clearer assignment. Shortly before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). Notice the word Jesus chose: *witnesses*.

A witness has a defined responsibility. A witness testifies truthfully about what he knows. He does not determine the verdict. He gives testimony.

That distinction can transform the way we approach evangelism. Our responsibility is to be a witness and share faithfully about Jesus Christ; God is responsible for the saving work that follows.

“You will receive power” Jesus begins with a promise: “you will receive power.” The disciples were about to receive an assignment extending far beyond their natural ability. They would proclaim a

crucified and risen Messiah in Jerusalem, cross cultural boundaries into Samaria, and eventually carry the gospel throughout the world.

They could never accomplish such a mission through personality, intelligence, eloquence, or determination. They needed divine power. Jesus identifies its source: “when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.”

Acts 1:8 points forward to Pentecost in Acts 2, when the promised Holy Spirit came upon the disciples. From that point forward, Acts repeatedly demonstrates what Spirit-empowered witness looks like. Peter, who had once denied knowing Jesus, publicly proclaimed Christ. Ordinary believers spoke the Word with boldness. The gospel crossed boundaries that had divided people for generations.

The same principle remains true for Christian witness. We depend upon the Holy Spirit. He gives courage to speak, directs the mission of the church, and works through the proclamation of Christ. Evangelism therefore begins with dependence rather than self-confidence.

“you will be my witnesses” Jesus then defines the disciples’ task: “you will be my witnesses.” The book of Acts places particular emphasis upon the apostles as witnesses of the resurrection. They had seen the risen Christ and were commissioned to testify that Jesus, who had been crucified, was alive. Their testimony became foundational to the church’s proclamation of the gospel.

Christians today did not stand at the empty tomb or see the risen Jesus with our physical eyes, yet we bear witness to the apostolic gospel recorded in Scripture. We proclaim what God has revealed concerning His son, and we can testify personally to the grace of Christ we have received.

This means you do not have to know the answer to every theological question before you can speak about Jesus. You should continue growing in biblical knowledge, but faithful witness begins with truths every Christian should know: who Jesus is, what He accomplished through His death and resurrection, and why you have placed your faith in Him.

“to the end of the earth” Jesus also gives His witnesses a field: “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” These locations provide the geographical movement that unfolds through Acts. The gospel is proclaimed first in Jerusalem, spreads throughout Judea and

Samaria, and eventually advances into the Gentile world. By the end of Acts, Paul is proclaiming Christ in Rome.

The mission continues wherever Christians live. Your witness may begin across a kitchen table, in a workplace, beside a neighbor's driveway, during lunch with a friend, or in a conversation with someone whose life and background differ greatly from yours. God places His people throughout the world as witnesses to His Son.

One of the greatest freedoms we can discover in evangelism is understanding the boundary of our responsibility. Paul later described gospel ministry by writing, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:6). We proclaim. We explain. We answer questions. We invite people to repent and believe. We pray for their salvation. Yet we cannot regenerate a heart. God alone can save.

Acts 1:8 gives us both our assignment and our source of strength. The Holy Spirit provides the power. Jesus Christ is the subject of our testimony, the world is the field, and we are the witnesses.

Memorization and Meditation

1. **Memorize the Word:** Begin memorizing Acts 1:8. Read the verse aloud several times, paying attention to its natural progression: receive power → Holy Spirit → be my witnesses → Jerusalem → Judea → Samaria → end of the earth
2. **Meditate on the Word:** Reads Acts 1:8 multiple times, emphasizing a different phrase. Then consider this question: How would my approach to evangelism change if I truly believed that my responsibility is to be a faithful witness, while God supplies the power and produces the saving result?

Think about the people and places God has already placed within your regular life. Where might He be calling you to bear witness to Christ?

3. Pray the Verse:

Father, thank You for giving me the privilege of bearing witness to Jesus Christ. Teach me to depend upon the Holy Spirit rather than my own ability, and give me courage to speak faithfully about Your Son. Help me recognize the people and opportunities You place before me. Make my testimony clear, truthful, and centered upon Christ, and teach me to trust You with the results. In Jesus' name, amen.

“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

Acts 1:8 stands at a pivotal moment in the biblical story. Jesus has been crucified and raised from the dead, and Luke tells us that He spent forty days appearing to His disciples and teaching them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). As those days draw to a close, Jesus prepares His followers for His ascension and for the mission that will follow. He instructs them to remain in Jerusalem and wait for “the promise of the Father,” the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5). The disciples have received years of instruction from Jesus and have now encountered the risen Christ, yet they are still told to wait. Their mission will require a power that God Himself must provide.

The disciples respond by asking, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Their question reveals their continuing interest in how and when God will fulfill His kingdom purposes. Jesus does not provide the timetable they seek. He reminds them that the Father possesses authority over “times and seasons,” then directs their attention toward the responsibility immediately before them. They will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and they will become His witnesses. The disciples are therefore given a mission rather than a timetable, and Acts 1:8 explains how that mission will unfold.

Jesus describes their witness geographically: “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” These locations establish the expanding movement that shapes the book of Acts. The mission begins in Jerusalem, where the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost and empowers the disciples to proclaim the risen Christ. Peter preaches, thousands believe, and a growing church becomes established in the city. Acts 2–7 records the continued ministry of the apostles in Jerusalem as the Word spreads, disciples multiply, and opposition against the church intensifies.

That opposition becomes one of the means through which the witness moves outward. Following Stephen's death, persecution scatters believers throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). Those scattered Christians carry the message of Christ with them, and Philip's ministry in Samaria demonstrates that the gospel will cross longstanding ethnic and religious boundaries. The movement continues when Peter enters the home of the Gentile Cornelius in Acts 10 and witnesses God granting the Holy Spirit to Gentile believers. Beginning in Acts 13, Paul and his companions carry the gospel farther into the Gentile world through successive missionary journeys. By the conclusion of Acts, Paul is in Rome, the center of the empire, openly proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about Jesus Christ.

Acts 1:8, therefore, provides a geographical outline for Acts while revealing something greater about Him to move outward, crossing geographic, ethnic, and cultural boundaries until it reaches the nations. The Holy Spirit supplies the power, Christ provides the message, and His witnesses carry that message wherever God sends them. Acts records the beginning of that expansion; the church continues participating in it today.

Take Action: Open your Bible and read Acts 1:1–11. Pay attention to the disciples' question in verse 6 and Jesus' response in verses 7–8. Then trace the geographical progression Jesus gives. As you read, consider how Acts 1:8 prepares you for the story Luke is about to tell.

Reflection Questions:

1. Why did Jesus instruct the disciples to remain in Jerusalem before beginning their mission?
2. How does the progression from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth provide a framework for the events recorded throughout Acts?
3. What does the gospel's movement across geographical, ethnic, and cultural boundaries reveal about the scope of Christ's mission?

"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

At the theological center of Acts 1:8 is the relationship between the power of the Holy Spirit and the witness of the church. Jesus gives His disciples an enormous mission: they will testify about Him from Jerusalem to the end of the earth. Yet before describing where they will go, Jesus explains how they will accomplish the task: "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Christian witness therefore depends upon divine empowerment. God calls His people to speak, and He gives them the power necessary to fulfill that calling.

The promised power in Acts 1:8 is directly connected to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The disciples already possessed significant knowledge about Jesus. They had heard His teaching, witnessed His miracles, observed His death, and encountered Him after His resurrection. Their experiences gave them a message to proclaim, but Jesus still instructed them to wait for the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes in Acts 2, the disciples begin publicly proclaiming the risen Christ, and their witness becomes the means through which the gospel advances. This pattern continues throughout Acts as the Spirit gives boldness (Acts 4:31), directs missionary activity (Acts 13:2–4), and guides the expansion of the gospel into new places.

Spirit-empowered witness does not mean that the Holy Spirit speaks so that Christians can remain silent. God works through the testimony of His people. Peter stands and preaches at Pentecost. Philip explains Scripture to the Ethiopian official. Paul reasons and proclaims Christ throughout the Roman world. In each case, believers open their mouths and communicate the gospel while depending upon God to accomplish what their words alone could never produce. The Holy Spirit empowers the witness and works through the truth being proclaimed.

This distinction helps us understand our responsibility in evangelism. We cannot create spiritual life, produce repentance, or force

another person to believe. Salvation belongs to God. Yet dependence upon the Spirit never becomes an excuse for inactivity. The Spirit supplies the power, and the believer supplies the testimony. We prepare, speak, explain, answer, and invite while trusting God to work through our faithful obedience.

Acts 1:8 therefore gives Christians confidence without placing the burden of conversion upon them. We do not witness because we possess extraordinary persuasive ability. We witness because the risen Christ has given His church the Holy Spirit. Our confidence rests in God's power working through faithful testimony about Jesus Christ.

Reflection Questions:

1. Why were the disciples instructed to wait for the Holy Spirit even though they had personally witnessed the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus?
2. How does the book of Acts demonstrate the relationship between the Holy Spirit's power and the spoken testimony of believers?
3. What responsibilities belong to the Christian witness, and what work must ultimately be entrusted to God?

Memorization Reminder: Continue memorizing Acts 1:8, concentrating today on the relationship between power and witness. Write the verse from memory, then circle or underline the words that identify the source of power, the responsibility given to believers, and the places their witness will reach.

"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

Inductive Bible study moves through three basic questions: What does the text say? What does the text mean? How should this truth shape my life? As we work through Acts 1:8, this process helps clarify what Jesus expects from us as His witnesses and where our confidence should rest.

Observation Begin by noticing the subjects and actions in the verse. Jesus tells His disciples that they "will receive power" when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. The power is received rather than produced. Jesus then says, "you will be my witnesses." Their responsibility is directly connected to Him; they are witnesses belonging to Christ and testifying about Christ. Finally, notice the expanding locations: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth. The witness begins where the disciples are and moves outward across increasingly distant geographical and cultural boundaries. The progression is clear: receive power → be Christ's witnesses → carry the testimony outward.

Interpretation Jesus is preparing His disciples for a mission they cannot accomplish through their own ability. The Holy Spirit will provide divine power, while the disciples will provide faithful testimony concerning Christ. The book of Acts demonstrates this pattern repeatedly as Spirit-empowered believers speak about Jesus and the gospel advances.

A witness is responsible for giving truthful testimony. This helps establish an important boundary in evangelism. Christians are responsible for communicating the gospel faithfully, while God accomplishes the saving work that human effort cannot produce. Jesus calls His followers to witness, and the Holy Spirit empowers them for that responsibility.

Application Now bring the verse into your own circumstances. Where has God already placed you as a witness? Your Jerusalem may include your home, workplace, school, neighborhood, friendships, or regular activities. Identify one person within those places who needs to hear about Jesus.

Then ask a second question: What keeps me from speaking? Perhaps you fear rejection, feel unprepared, or worry that you will say something incorrectly. Acts 1:8 redirects your confidence toward the Holy Spirit. Pray for His help, then determine one specific step you can take this week to bear witness to Christ.

You do not control the response. Your responsibility is to depend upon the Holy Spirit, speak truthfully about Jesus, and faithfully bear witness where God has placed you.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does Acts 1:8 identify as the source of power, the disciples' responsibility, and the scope of their mission?
2. How does understanding the role of a witness clarify the difference between our responsibility in evangelism and God's saving work?
3. Who is one person within your regular sphere of life to whom you can intentionally bear witness about Jesus this week?

“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

This week, Acts 1:8 helped us understand our calling as witnesses of Jesus Christ. On Day 1, we discovered that Jesus gives His followers a defined responsibility: we testify faithfully about Christ while trusting God with the results. On Day 2, we examined the setting of Jesus’ words and traced the geographical movement of the gospel from Jerusalem through Judea and Samaria and ultimately toward the ends of the earth. On Day 3, we considered the theology of Spirit-empowered witness, recognizing that the Holy Spirit provides the power through which believers carry out Christ’s mission. On Day 4, we applied the verse inductively and identified the people and places where God has already positioned us to be His witnesses. Acts 1:8 leaves us with a clear calling: depend upon the spirit, testify about Christ, and carry the gospel wherever God has placed you.

Remember the Word

Without opening your Bible, recite Acts 1:8 from memory.

Recall What You Learned

Think about the places you regularly go and the people you routinely encounter. Write down your own immediate field of witness.

- **Jerusalem:** Who is already close to me and part of my everyday life?
- **Beyond My Jerusalem:** Where might God be calling me to cross a relational, cultural, geographical, or personal boundary to speak about Christ?

Final Prayer

Father, thank You for calling me to be a witness to Jesus Christ and for giving Your Holy Spirit to empower Your people. Help me recognize the mission field You have already placed around me. Give me courage to speak, wisdom to communicate clearly, and compassion for those who need to hear the gospel. Use my life and my words to point people toward Jesus, and teach me to trust You with the results. Wherever You send me, make me a faithful witness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ambassadors of Reconciliation Monday, October 26, 2026

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:20

In American diplomacy, the title *ambassador* carries considerable significance. An ambassador is sent to another nation as an official representative of the government that appointed him or her. Although an ambassador may possess considerable experience, personality, and influence, the authority of the office comes from the nation being represented. The ambassador speaks and acts with an awareness that personal words and conduct can communicate something about the country that sent them.

This creates an unusual way of life. An ambassador lives in one country while representing another. The customs, pressures, and expectations of the host nation surround the ambassador every day, yet the ambassador’s assignment remains connected to the interests and instructions of home. Faithfulness requires accurate representation. An ambassador cannot rewrite official policy according to personal preference, soften an important message because it may be unpopular, or substitute a private agenda for the assignment received.

That familiar picture helps us understand the remarkable language Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 5:20: “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ.”

For Christians living in the modern world, representation is an important part of our witness. When we identify ourselves with Jesus Christ, our words, actions, priorities, relationships, and responses communicate something about the Lord we profess to follow. Christian representation therefore carries both privilege and responsibility. We want people to hear an accurate message about Christ from our lips and encounter a life increasingly shaped by the Christ we proclaim.

Paul develops this idea within a passage devoted to reconciliation. Sin has alienated humanity from God, yet God has acted through Jesus Christ to provide reconciliation. Paul explains that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” and that He had entrusted to His

servants “the message of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19). Against this background, Paul declares verse 20: “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ.”

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ” The word “therefore” connects Paul’s statement to everything he has just explained. Christ’s love controls His servants (v. 14). Those who are in Christ are new creations (v. 17). God has reconciled them to Himself through Christ and given them the ministry of reconciliation (v. 18). Paul and his fellow gospel ministers therefore serve as “ambassadors for Christ.”

An *ambassador* represents the authority of the one who sends him. Paul did not travel throughout the Roman world proclaiming his own philosophy or inviting people to admire his personal wisdom. He represented Jesus Christ. His authority came from Christ, and his message centered upon Christ.

The same principle should shape our witness. We do not have authority to redesign the gospel according to cultural preferences or personal opinions. Christian witness is an act of representation. We seek to communicate faithfully who Christ is, what he has accomplished, and how people are called to respond to Him.

“God making his appeal through us” Paul then makes an astonishing statement about gospel proclamation: God makes His appeal through human messengers.

Consider the significance of those words. God could have chosen countless ways to announce the message of reconciliation, yet He has chosen to place this message into the mouths of people. Paul speaks, but through proclamation of the gospel, God’s appeal is being announced.

This gives evangelism tremendous dignity and urgency. When we faithfully explain the gospel, we participate in God’s mission of making Christ known. Our weakness does not disqualify us from the task. The effectiveness of the gospel rests upon God’s power and the truth of His message.

“We implore you on behalf of Christ” An ambassador must communicate the message accurately, but Paul’s language reveals that faithful representation also involves earnest concern. He says, “We implore you.” Paul is pleading, urging, and appealing to his hearers.

Christian witness should carry this same concern. We speak about Christ because eternal realities matter and because people matter. We want others to know the grace we have received. The gospel deserves clarity, and the people hearing it deserve our compassion.

“Be reconciled to God” Finally, Paul gives the substance of the appeal: “be reconciled to God.” This is the heart of the message. Humanity’s deepest problem is alienation from God because of sin, and reconciliation has been made possible through Jesus Christ. The following verse explains how: the sinless Christ bore sin so that those who are in Him might receive righteousness before God (v 21).

Our message, therefore, is not ultimately “become more ‘religious,’” “improve behavior,” or “become more like us.” We announce what God has accomplished through Christ and call people to respond to Him in faith.

This is the privilege of Christian representation. We belong to Christ, we carry His message, and we appeal to others to be reconciled to God through Him. Every conversation, relationship, workplace, neighborhood, and ordinary encounter provides another place where Christ can be faithfully represented.

We do not speak on our own authority, and we do not invent our own message. We represent the King. We carry the message of reconciliation. We are sent to tell the story.

Memorization & Meditation

1. **Memorize the Word:** Read aloud or write out the verse several times to begin the memorization process. Learn the verse progression:
Ambassadors for Christ → God makes his appeal → through us → we implore → be reconciled to God.
2. **Meditate on the Word:** Read 2 Corinthians 5:20 and consider what the word “ambassador” communicates about representation, authority, and responsibility. Then reflect on this question:

- If someone formed an understanding of Jesus by observing my words, attitudes, relationships, and conduct, how faithfully would I represent Him?

3. Pray the Verse:

Father, thank You for reconciling sinners to Yourself through Jesus Christ and for entrusting Your people with the message of reconciliation. Help me represent Christ faithfully in my words, conduct, and relationships. Give me courage to speak the gospel clearly, compassion to appeal to those who need Christ, and humility to remember that the message belongs to You. Use my life and my words to point others toward reconciliation with You through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen.

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:20

Second Corinthians is one of Paul's most personal letters, written within the setting of a complicated relationship between the apostle and the church at Corinth. Paul founded the church during his second missionary journey and spent approximately eighteen months ministering in the city (Acts 18:1–18). In the years that followed, however, the congregation experienced significant problems, and Paul's relationship with some of its members became strained. Second Corinthians reflects seasons of painful confrontation, sorrow, repentance, and restored affection. Paul writes with deep pastoral concern while also defending the integrity of his apostolic ministry against those who questioned his motives and authority.

This background is important for understanding 2 Corinthians 5 because Paul is explaining what drives his ministry. He is not presenting abstract philosophy of Christian service. He describes a ministry shaped by the saving work of Jesus Christ. Beginning in verse 14, Paul declares that "the love of Christ controls us" and explains that Christ died so that those who live would "no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (v. 14–15). The death and resurrection of Jesus have changed both the identity and the purpose of those who belong to Him. This leads to Paul's familiar declaration in verse 17: "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." Reconciliation with God produces a new life that is now oriented toward Christ.

Paul then explains where this reconciliation originates: "All this is from God" (v. 18). God takes the initiative, reconciling sinners to Himself through Christ and entrusting Paul and his fellow ministers with "the ministry of reconciliation." Verse 19 develops the idea further by explaining both the accomplishment and announcement of the gospel. God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, "not counting their trespasses against them," and He had entrusted to His servants "the

message of reconciliation.” The gospel they proclaim is therefore a message they have received rather than one they have created.

Against this background, Paul reaches the conclusion of verse 20: “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ.” The word *therefore* gathers the preceding argument together. Christ has died and risen, people in Christ have become new creations, God has accomplished reconciliation through Christ, and the message of that reconciliation has now been entrusted to His messengers. Paul and his fellows ministers consequently speak as representatives of Christ, so that Paul can describe their preaching as “God making his appeal through us.”

In its immediate context, the language of ambassadorship especially describes Paul and those who share his apostolic gospel ministry. Yet the principle contributes to our broader understanding of Christian witness. The church has received the same gospel Paul proclaimed and continues Christ’s commission to make that gospel known. We do not invent the message, revise its terms, or speak on our own authority. We proclaim the reconciliation God has accomplished through Christ and call people to respond: “be reconciled to God.” Understanding the context of 2 Corinthians 5:20 reminds us that Christian witness begins with God’s saving action, centers upon Christ’s finished work, and faithfully carries the message God has entrusted to His people.

Take Action: Open your Bible and read 2 Corinthians 5:14–21. As you read, trace Paul’s progression by identifying what the passage says about Christ’s death, new creation, reconciliation, the entrusted message, and ambassadorship.

Reflection Questions:

1. How did Paul's difficult relationship with the Corinthian church contribute to his explanation of what motivates and defines his ministry?
2. What progression of thought connects Christ's death in verses 14–15 with Paul's declaration, "we are ambassadors for Christ" in verse 20?
3. Why is it important to recognize that the "message of reconciliation" originates with God and is entrusted to His messengers rather than created by them?

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:20

At the theological center of 2 Corinthians 5:20 stands the doctrine of reconciliation. Paul describes himself and his fellow ministers as ambassadors, but an ambassador matters because of the message he has been commissioned to deliver. In this passage, that message is clear: God has acted through Jesus Christ to reconcile sinful people to Himself. Therefore, when Paul pleads, "be reconciled to God," he is announcing the central reality that gives Christian witness its meaning.

Reconciliation assumes that a relationship has been broken and requires restoration. Scripture describes humanity's condition apart from Christ in precisely these terms. Sin is rebellion against God that produces guilt and alienation from Him. Paul elsewhere describes sinners as "enemies" who need to be reconciled to God (Romans 5:10). The problem separating humanity from God cannot be resolved through greater religious effort, moral improvement, or human initiative because the offense of sin is ultimately against God. If reconciliation is going to occur, God must act.

This is exactly what Paul announces in 2 Corinthians 5. He writes that "all this is from God" and explains that God "through Christ reconciled us to himself" (v. 18). Reconciliation begins with divine initiative. God is the offended party, yet He provides the means through which His enemies can be restored to fellowship with Him. Verse 19 explains that God accomplished this work "in Christ," while verse 21 reveals its theological foundation: the sinless Christ has made "to be sin" for us so that "in him we might become the righteousness of God." At the cross, Christ bore the judgment our sin deserved, providing the basis upon which guilty sinners can be forgiven and restored to God.

This accomplished work explains the urgency of Paul's appeal in verse 20. When he says, "be reconciled to God," he is not asking people to create peace with God through their own efforts. He is calling them to receive the reconciliation God has provided through Christ. The gospel

announces an accomplished work and summons sinners to respond to Christ in repentance and faith.

Understanding reconciliation also clarifies the responsibility of Christian witness. We have not been entrusted with a vague message of spirituality or self-improvement. We carry the announcement that God has provided the way for sinners who are alienated from Him to be restored to Him through Jesus Christ. That message gives the ambassador both confidence and urgency. Reconciliation is God's work, Christ is its means, and the gospel is its announcement.

When we tell the story of Jesus, this is the good news we carry: through Christ, enemies can become family, the guilty can be forgiven, and those separated from God can be brought near.

Reflection Questions:

1. What does the biblical doctrine of reconciliation assume about humanity's relationship with God because of sin?
2. According to 2 Corinthians 5:18–21, what has God done through Christ to make reconciliation possible?
3. How should understanding reconciliation shape the message we communicate when we tell others about Jesus?

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5:20

The inductive study method moves from observation to interpretation and ultimately to application. As we observe 2 Corinthians 5:20, several important truths emerge from Paul's words. He identifies himself and his fellow ministers as "ambassadors for Christ," describes God as "making his appeal through us," and summarizes their message with the urgent plea, "be reconciled to God." Each phrase contributes to a clear picture of Christian representation. The ambassador belongs to Christ, carries a message originating with God, and communicates that message to people who need reconciliation with Him.

Interpreting these words requires us to consider the larger context. Paul is specifically describing his apostolic ministry and those who served alongside him, yet the responsibility to proclaim Christ extends throughout the New Testament to the Church. An ambassador does not speak independently or determine the content of the message. The ambassador represents the one who sent him. In the same way, Christians have received the gospel rather than created it. We have been entrusted with the truth that sinful people can be reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faithful Christian witness therefore requires us to represent Christ accurately, allowing Scripture to determine the message we communicate.

Paul's statement that God is "making his appeal through us" should cause us to consider the significance of our everyday relationships. God has chosen to make the gospel known through human witnesses, which means our homes, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, friendships, and ordinary conversations become places where we can represent Christ. Our conduct should reflect the character of the One we represent, while our words should clearly communicate the message He has entrusted to us. A faithful life supports our witness, and faithful witness eventually requires us to speak about Jesus.

Application begins by asking a personal question: *How faithfully am I representing Christ where God has placed me?* Consider whether fear, distraction, comfort, or uncertainty has kept you silent around people who need to hear the gospel. Then identify one person in your life who needs

reconciliation with God. Write that person's name down and prayerfully consider one specific step you can take this week. You might initiate a spiritual conversation, share your testimony, explain the gospel, invite the person to church, or ask how you can pray for them.

An ambassador cannot determine how another person will respond to the message. The ambassador's responsibility is faithful representation. We can speak clearly, live consistently, pray earnestly, and trust God with the response. We represent Christ, we carry His message, and we have the privilege of telling others how they can be reconciled to God through Him.

Reflection Questions

1. What does 2 Corinthians 5:20 reveal about the identity of the messenger, the source of the appeal, and the content of the message?
2. How does the image of an ambassador help you understand the responsibility of faithfully representing Christ and communicating His gospel?
3. Who has God placed in your life who needs to hear the message of reconciliation, and what specific step can you take this week to represent Christ to that person?

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” 2 Corinthians 5:20

This week, 2 Corinthians 5:20 has shown us the privilege and responsibility of representing Jesus Christ. We began by examining the ambassador, one who lives under another’s authority and faithfully carries another’s message. We then explored the context of Paul’s words, discovering that God has reconciled sinners to Himself through Christ and entrusted the message of reconciliation to His servants. We considered reconciliation more carefully, recognizing that God took the initiative to restore sinful people to Himself through the saving work of Jesus. Finally, we applied Paul’s words personally by considering how our lives and words represent Christ. Together, these truths remind us that we have been entrusted with good news worth sharing: through Jesus Christ, sinners can be reconciled to God.

Remember the Word

Recite 2 Corinthians 5:20 from memory. If you need help, use the progression you practiced this week: Ambassadors for Christ → God makes his appeal → through us → we implore → be reconciled to God

Recall What You Learned

Without returning to the previous entries, write a brief response to each question:

- What does the image of an ambassador teach us about representing Christ faithfully?
- How does the surrounding context of 2 Corinthians 5:20 help explain Paul’s statement?
- What is reconciliation, and what has God done through Christ to make reconciliation possible.

Final Prayer

Father, thank You for reconciling me to Yourself through Jesus Christ. Help me faithfully represent Christ in my words, conduct, and relationships. Give me courage to speak the gospel clearly, compassion for those who need Your grace, and wisdom to recognize the opportunities You place before me. May my life point others toward Jesus, and may I faithfully carry the message You have entrusted to Your people. In Jesus' name, amen.

***JOIN US
FOR THE***

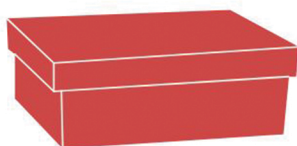
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AI Ethical Guidelines¹

As emerging technologies like AI find their way into the realm of ministry and theological writing, I've developed personal guidelines to preserve the integrity of this devotional work:

- 1 Avoid plagiarism and ensure authenticity: AI tools are helpful for idea generation, word choice, and structural planning, but I avoid copying AI-generated content verbatim. The goal is not expediency but authenticity. My personal study, meditation, and prayer are indispensable to every page written.
- 2 Maintain human oversight and moral responsibility: AI lacks moral agency and theological conviction. Human discernment is necessary to evaluate the appropriateness, tone, and truthfulness of all content.
- 3 Use AI to enhance, not replace, human creativity: AI serves as a helpful assistant but never replaces the divine inspiration that flows from prayerful engagement with the text. The Holy Spirit—not a machine—is the true illumination of Scripture.

These guidelines ensure that *Shaped by Scripture* is not only a tool of spiritual formation but also a product of integrity and pastoral care.

¹ I have chosen to include this disclosure and set self-imposed guidelines because the use of AI in writing and research remains a point of ethical concern and public skepticism. In the interest of transparency and pastoral integrity, I believe it is important to clarify how these tools were used in a supportive— not substitutive— role in the development of this work.

DAILY PODCAST

SHAPED BY SCRIPTURE

Monday - Thursday

Hear the daily devotions and reflection questions.

Friday

Join Bro. Scott for practical insights, spiritual encouragement, and Biblical truth for everyday life.





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