

Let the Church Know



SABBATH—JUNE 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 4:1–31; Acts 21:19–25; 1 Corinthians 9:19–23; Numbers 13:17–33; Acts 11:1–18.

MEMORY VERSE: “The apostles gathered around Jesus. They told him all they had done and taught” (Mark 6:30, NlrV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: As a report of the early church's missionary work, the book of Acts is filled with lessons for us today.

THE FAST GROWTH OF THE EARLY CHURCH HAS CAUSED MANY TO STUDY THE BOOK OF ACTS. As a result, many areas of church life have been examined in the book of Acts, such as church growth, foreign missions, church management, and evangelism.¹ Much has been collected from Acts on these topics. But there are other areas, such as reporting, that have not received much attention.

The reporting in the book of Acts builds upon the reporting in the Gospels. Both show that this important activity of church life has an important influence upon the success of witnessing and evangelism. We need to know what is going on, what works, and what does not.

This week we will examine how the early evangelists² reported to their leaders and to the church as a whole. The goal is to understand the importance of reporting and to see in what way it can improve the witnessing and evangelistic planning of a local church.

1. evangelism—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

2. evangelists—preachers who traveled from place to place, preaching the good news about Jesus.

SUNDAY—JUNE 10**A BIBLE PRINCIPLE (IMPORTANT RULE) (Acts 4:1–31)**

When someone makes reports, you may expect piles of paper filled with facts and figures that will probably gather dust. But reporting is not a modern invention designed to bore people involved in witnessing and evangelism. It is a Bible principle. As our memory verse for this week shows, when the disciples returned from a missionary tour, they reported to Jesus all that they had done and taught. So, reporting seems to be an important part of the work of the gospel.

We cannot point to one special Bible verse that says, “You must report because . . .” But there is enough proof showing that reporting was important in both the Old and New Testaments. This is because reporting is an activity that takes place in a chain (series) of events. Someone prepares a report. Someone receives the report. The report is studied. And then decisions are made, and actions are planned based on what was reported.

Examine Acts 4:1–31. What did Peter and John report back to their fellow workers? And what did this report make the church do? What lessons are there for us today?

Because the first church was without newspapers, radios, or television, word of mouth (talking; sharing face to face) was the easiest way

of spreading the good news about Jesus. If these early believers had given in to the threats made against them, then their influence for God would have been much smaller. But they met together, listened to the reports, and then decided on a plan that would help them to be true to their evangelistic duty.

From this story, we can see how important prayer and the study of God’s Word were to early believers. It should not be any different for us today.

We do not have details of what they might have planned. Verse 29 shows that even though threats were made against them, they were going to continue to speak about Jesus.

The Bible was quoted in front of both the leaders in Israel and the other Jewish believers. This shows how important Bible reading was to the early believers’ faith and their witness. How important is the Bible in your own life? (Hint: you can know the answer by asking yourself how much time you spend with it.)



Reporting helps the church to know what your ministry is doing.

MONDAY—JUNE 11**“WHAT GOD HAD DONE”
(Acts 21:19–25)**

We are reminded that in most areas of life, good communication is important to understanding and unity (oneness). As we think about the church family, we see that the reporting of church activities and their results is an important part of good communication. In many churches there is much activity. But only people who are involved in each ministry (work done for God) know what is happening in that ministry. Because of this, there is a hidden feeling among those who lead ministries that there is not much interest in what they are doing. These feelings are not surprising if leaders never share their goals and plans with the church and never report their activities and results.

Read Acts 21:19–25. How did church members feel when they heard the missionary reports of the apostle (teacher and leader) Paul? The reports were good, but there were examples of disagreement among the believers. What were those problems? How did Paul answer? What lessons are there for us today? Read also 1 Corinthians 9:19–23.

Returning to Jerusalem from a missionary journey, Paul reported to James and all the elders of how God had blessed his ministry among the Gentiles (non-Jews). As Paul explained

the progress of the gospel, the church leaders answered with praise to God.

But, at the same time, there was disagreement and confusion, even with the good news of Paul’s witnessing.

Today we also struggle with disagreement among ourselves over how to best reach souls. What are some of the struggles of your church? How can you help to solve this problem?

TUESDAY—JUNE 12**WHY REPORTING IS IMPORTANT
(Acts 8:4)**

People often have not seen the importance of reporting evangelistic and witnessing activities and their results. As a result, they have often failed to follow up on such reports. In all areas of our modern busy lives, we list things based on how important they are. Things that are seen as a waste of time do not receive much attention. So, the church members need to see why reports are important and to study their results.

There is a difference between the simple reporting of cold hard facts and the sharing of how successful the activities are in reaching people for Christ. It is the responsibility of people making reports to share with others the excitement and joy of success that comes from the reported work.

If we removed all reports from the book of Acts, what exciting and encouraging information would we miss that is given in Acts 5:14;

Acts 8:4, 12; Acts 11:21; and Acts 14:21?

The amazing church growth that is reported in the book of Acts did not just happen. With the Holy Spirit's leading and Jesus' promise of success, the believers worked hard to bring about these results. They paid close attention to what they wanted to achieve and on how best to achieve it. Through the reports, we learn that the preaching of the gospel led many men and women to the Lord and then to baptism. This was the result of the early church members' work as disciples. This again shows the importance of reporting the results and the activities with as much detail as possible. In fact, the Bible shows the results of the witnessing and evangelistic activities more than the details of the activities themselves.

Those very early missionaries went everywhere they possibly could. Then they preached about Jesus and His kingdom. Because of the reports and results, we guess that they also gave powerful invitations to their hearers. These sermons and invitations led to the wonderful results in church growth that are described in the book of Acts.

It is encouraging when we hear stories of successful evangelistic efforts. But how do we answer when things do not go well, when our plans seem to fail, and when our work appears to do no good at all? What should our answer be? Discuss your answer with the class on Sabbath.



The early missionaries preached Jesus everywhere they could.

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 13

REPORTING AND MOTIVATION³ (Numbers 13:17–33)

When we speak of motivation, we are talking about the good reasons for why we believe or do things. This is also true of reporting. When we report, we do so for a reason (or reasons). Our reason could be to try to ask a committee for more money. Or we could report in a way that would influence people to drop a program or change leaders. Also, if certain information is, or is not, reported, then perhaps decisions made on such reports may not be the best. So, our reporting needs to be honest and fair.

Read Numbers 13:17–33. All twelve spies saw the same things. What caused only two of the twelve to answer as they did? What lesson should we learn from this event for ourselves today?

3. motivation—reason or reasons for doing something.

God had promised that the children of Israel could take over the land. But some of the spies were not sure. Joshua and Caleb gave a good report of the land and suggested that they go at once to claim (take) it (verse 30). Others who were with them when they spied out the land gave a bad report. They argued that there were too many problems and suggested that they return to Egypt.

As we study reports, we must do so with thought about God's will and blessings. We must not just report on how well we are doing but also on how well we are doing the will of God (read Matthew 7:21). There is always the danger of getting too excited about our successes by looking at how much better we are doing than other churches. As we report on our successes, we may be more interested in appearing successful than we are in following God's leading and His will for our church.

This is a challenge to our churches today as we seem to hear of never-ending "better" ways of outreach. In the report of the spies, Joshua and Caleb surely also saw the problems of taking the land. But they knew God's will. So, an important part of Joshua and Caleb's report was to tell the people that claiming the land was surely possible. On the other hand, the other spies' report did not include faith in God's will. Instead, they brought back a completely negative report to make the people believe that returning to Egypt would be a better choice.

How do we keep the balance between living by faith and claiming God's promises and doing things that might not be God's "leading"? How can we make the first choice and avoid the second?



Caleb and Joshua gave a good report of the land.

THURSDAY—JUNE 14

**GIVING GOD THE GLORY
(PRAISE) (Acts 11:1–18)**

Some people are unwilling to turn in successful reports because they wonder if it looks like boasting. But, really, faithful reporting gives God glory. And His church is made stronger in the faith and more eager to continue working for Him. It is true that sometimes someone may report for selfish reasons. But this should not stop humble believers from sharing the mighty (powerful) things God has done through them. It is God who gives them the ability to be witnesses and evangelists for Him. If reporting is done humbly and with a love for

souls, it can greatly encourage other church members to get involved in the work of evangelism and soul-winning.

Read Acts 11:1–18. How did the leaders and members of the Jerusalem church answer Peter’s report of the work among the Gentiles? How could the principles (important rules) shown there prove important for us today?

There had been criticism of Peter and the others who had tried to witness and evangelize outside of the Jewish nation. But, as a result of Peter’s report to the Jerusalem church, the criticism stopped, and the other Jewish believers gave glory to God.

Today, it is not easy for us to understand the issues in Peter’s time. Of course, the gospel is to go to everyone, Jew and Gentile—even if to “the Jew first” (Romans 1:16). Everyone knows that. But the book of Acts shows that taking the gospel to the Gentiles would require a great change in Jewish thinking. But because of the reports of God’s leading and blessing, the church members gained a new understanding of God’s desire to save all people everywhere. Even from the start, it had always been God’s plan to save everyone who would be saved (Ephesians 1:1–4; Isaiah 53:6; Hebrews 2:9).

For the average reader, it will probably take under two minutes to read Peter’s report in Acts 11:1–18. But we can safely guess that Peter’s report, and the questions and answers after-

ward, would have taken much longer. Peter speaks of himself throughout the report, and some members would surely have said, “Well done, Peter.” But all the glory was given to God. And the church leaders were encouraged as they understood better that the gospel command to the whole world could come true.



It is God’s plan to save everyone who would be saved.

FRIDAY—JUNE 15

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Reporting Your Ministry (Work Done for God)

As we have seen this week, others need to know what you are doing. Reports such as attendance records and financial statements are necessary. It is also important that you present reports at church evangelism councils and church boards. A spoken report may touch on important points. But a written report that holds as much detail as possible also should be handed in.

This information will keep people interested in your ministry and make it easier for people to decide to get

involved. It also will encourage people to make improvements for future planning and direction.

Make sure that your reports mention the overall evangelistic plans of the church. Explain how your ministry is part of a plan that will meet all of the church goals.

Challenge yourself about your motivation for reporting. How focused are you on the will of God for your church and the saving of souls?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① Go back to the last question on Tuesday. How do we report “bad news”? It is only natural that we talk about the successes we experience. People do that in everyday life. But what about in the work of evangelism? What do we do if a church program is not working? How should it be discussed and reviewed so that needed changes will be made? Also, discuss this question: If the Lord

receives credit for success, whom do we blame if things are not going so well?

② Think about the change in attitude that the Jewish believers needed for the work among the Gentiles. Look around at your own church, culture, and society. We might preach our belief that the gospel is for all the world. But in what ways might our own cultural and social prejudices (feelings) need the same kind of change that these early Jewish believers went through?

③ This week’s study was about reporting evangelistic activities. But think about giving any kind of report in any kind of situation. How can we make sure that we are always honest and truthful and not dishonestly twisting information in ways that will give us what we want? Why is that so easy to do? And why is it so easy to fool ourselves as we do it?