



## (Acts)elerate

(Acts 1:1-5)

### Introduction

1. The church is not a building or institution; it's a gathering of people who follow Jesus.
  - a. Issue: Is our goal maintenance or fruitfulness (in our own lives, as a group, & in our impact on the world)?
2. Background: Acts is part of a 2-volume prequel & sequel (with the gospel of Luke)
  - a. Luke: Educated, articulate non-Jewish physician, compiling a narrative of all the available info about Jesus.
  - b. Theophilus: Non-Jewish official of high standing; wealthy enough to sponsor the research project for years.
  - c. They discover all the reports about Jesus are true, and it is amazing.

### We are changed by Jesus [Acts 1:1]

1. [1:1] Remember the amazing things that Jesus taught & did.
  - a. Remember all the lives and people that were changed by experiencing Jesus, His work & teachings.
  - b. Experiencing life with Jesus is transformative; He transforms us.
  - c. When you stay connected to Jesus, fruit happens
  - d. Apart from Jesus, no spiritually fruitful changes happen in our lives (cf. John 15:5).
2. What if that could happen to you?
  - a. What if you could be freed from addiction/sin? What if Jesus could heal your marriages & families? What if He could transform your work & studies? What if He could invest your life & resources in meaningful, joyful ways?
  - b. Application: What if the goal wasn't to "try harder" but to stay connected (to Jesus)?
  - c. A lifestyle of being intimately connected with Jesus daily so that His work/teachings permeate & transform us.

### We grow in community [Acts 1:2-3]

1. Jesus teaches the followers together as a community
  - a. [1:2] Jesus gives final instructions to His followers before going back to His Father.
  - b. [1:3] He teaches them as a group (about Himself as King & the Kingdom) together for 40 days.
  - c. Jesus intentionally grew them in a community to practice living out His teachings together.
2. [Acts 2:41-47] Jesus creates a new community, adding 3000 more people with unique personalities & cultures.
  - a. They grew in knowing Jesus & love for each other, with nothing in common, except the God who saved them.
  - b. The way we experience genuine growth is through opportunities to learn & practice Jesus' teachings in community with each other.
  - c. Problem: [Schopenhauer] People are like porcupines huddling together on a cold winter's night. The closer we get, the more we are hurt by each other's sharp quills.
  - d. Temptation is to back off, reject & gossip; but we're called to be different from the world (cf. John 13:34-35).
3. Application: Embrace porcupines.
  - a. Repent of our prejudices, preferences, & lack of love.
  - b. Acknowledge & confess how I am a porcupine: Sinful, weird, hurtful, with rough edges.
    - i. As we recognize & deal with the log in our own eye, it puts in perspective others' speck (cf. Matt 7:5).
  - c. Take a position of humility, trusting Jesus will use others to teach, challenge & grow me.

## **We have a mission [Acts 1:2-3]**

1. As they learn & grow through Jesus, His commands aren't to build an exclusive clubhouse.
  - a. [1:2] Remaining 11 disciples are referred to as *apostles*: "sent ones;" agents who speak on His behalf.
  - b. [1:3] Jesus instructs them about the Kingdom: The present spiritual reality ruled by the risen Lord.
  - c. Their mission is to preach repentance from sin & announce good news about the King & His Kingdom.
2. That remains our mission today
  - a. What if followers of Jesus overcame their fears of rejection, failure & performance to be devoted to our King & tell others about His Kingdom?
  - b. What if we told others about what He's done in our lives, what He can do in theirs?

## **We're given an Accelerator [Acts 1:4-5]**

1. I'm already exhausted; how can I stay connected with Jesus, grow in community, & get on-mission?
  - a. Accelerate [physics]: Rate of change in velocity or direction over time.
  - b. When an outside force causes something to move faster, have greater activity, development, progress, advancement, or propels forward.
  - c. 3 pieces: Outside force (an accelerator), changes the pace/direction, propels forward to progress.
2. We are given an Accelerator
  - a. [1:4-5] "Wait for the promise of the Father... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."
  - b. The Holy Spirit: The 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity (one God expressed in 3 persons)
    - i. He's given to every follower of Jesus (cf. Eph 1:13)
    - ii. He is sent to convict, comfort, counsel & empower people to follow Jesus, grow in & serve Jesus.
  - c. We are part of a global movement led by the Holy Spirit to bring good news to everyone everywhere.
3. Acceleration is what happens when the Holy Spirit empowers us.
  - a. He changes the pace & direction of our lives.
  - b. He propels the good news about Jesus through us as the church.
  - c. The Holy Spirit is the vehicle that accelerates us into a transformative, relational, missional life in Christ.
4. Application: "360° Living"
  - a. For the next 360 days, set your watch/phone to chime every 60 minutes during the day as a reminder.
  - b. Goal: Every 60 mins, stop & engage with God in 3 ways (3-60).
    - i. Connect with Jesus: Thank Him for his love, goodness, presence, blessings & plan for your life.
    - ii. Ask God to show you His will in this moment: How can you embrace someone in the family of Christ?
    - iii. How can you bless someone who is not a Christian yet? Then do it as an act of love toward God.
  - c. We'll add texture to this experiment along the way.

## **Conclusion**

1. God gifts us with life to take an amazing journey where we experience fruitfulness instead of maintenance.
  - a. Imagine life experiencing more of Jesus, His family, doing great things by the power of His Spirit.
  - b. But it's easy to fall into a life of maintenance & mediocrity when we're in control.
2. When was the last time you did anything that required faith/dependence on Jesus?
  - a. In order to experience the power of His Spirit, we must take a risk, a step of obedience.
    - i. We can't let fear be lord, if Jesus is.
  - b. So we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us & help us take the next step, and then another.
  - c. He empowers us to take little steps to stay connected to Jesus, embrace porcupines in authentic community, & live missionally, accelerating us out of our comfort zones into a life of faith with Jesus.