

A young boy asked his mother and grandmother to play with him in his new sandbox in the front yard. He equipped each of them with a shovel and bucket, which they promptly put to use at his request. As the two women became involved in conversation, they began to notice that people passing by seemed very interested in what they were doing. It was then they realized that they had become so busy in talking, they had not noticed that the little boy had gone into the back yard to play—leaving them alone in the sandbox.

It's easy, as time goes by, to lose your focus on what you're doing and why you're doing it. But if you forget what your purpose is, you can look awfully silly. It's not uncommon for churches to forget what their mission is and to get involved in all sorts of activities and programs that do not serve that mission. Thus we must be clear about our mission as a church and how we are to fulfill it.

Jesus had a very clear mission

1. He came to save the lost
2. And He came to build His church

In the Book Of Acts, Luke tells us how Jesus accomplished His mission. Now this is important – because any church that doesn't make it highest priority to save the lost and build the church is failing to obey Him.

Of course... the question is: HOW was Jesus going to go about accomplishing those goals?

Notice what Jesus tells His disciples:

Acts 1:4 says "... (Jesus) ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem but to WAIT FOR THE PROMISE of the Father..." What was this promise? The Holy Spirit!

But why wait for Him? Why didn't Jesus just say "Hey everyone, just go out and share your story and let's get this church started."

Why didn't Jesus say that? Well, because the Spirit was key to what Jesus wanted done. In verse 8 Jesus said

"... 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

What Jesus is saying is this: Yes, the church would be built by ordinary people like Peter, James, John, Mary and Martha. BUT they would accomplish the mission because of the Spirit of God working IN them and THRU them. In fact, the book of ACTS is sometimes called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." And Jesus is telling His disciples that the Holy Spirit would

1. Give them power from on high and 2. Make them effective witnesses.

Now, let's take this one step a time. 1st Jesus said He was sending the promised Holy Spirit... to give them power. The Spirit of God was going to be actively involved in building Christ's Church. WITHOUT THE SPIRIT the church wasn't going to succeed.

Is important for us to realize that same Holy Spirit that was in the early church is at work even NOW in the church. If a church has people coming to faith in Jesus it's because the Holy Spirit is at work.

One New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of petrol. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of petrol. The amusing thing was this float represented the Standard Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of petrol.

Even though Christians have access to God's Holy Spirit we often work by ourselves without the power.

God's Spirit empowers the church if we are willing to do what God designed us to do

As God's church in Cootamundra we need to be praying that people will meet Jesus. To ask God what He wants us to do, as His church and to keep focused on our mission. If we don't depend on God's Spirit to build His church... we have programs and Gimmicks.

- A church in Phoenix got lots of attention when they advertised that folks would receive a "Chocolate Sundae" if they showed up on Sunday.

A guide as to whether people in our church are empowered by the Holy Spirit is whether we display the fruit of the spirit. "Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness Self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). Without those traits a church cannot succeed. You may have the biggest and grandest congregation, a huge advertising budget, pancakes and chocolate sundaes till the cows come home... but unless people are being transformed and coming to faith in Jesus we are not doing as Jesus commanded.

So, first – Jesus sent His Spirit to give His church POWER.

2nd – Jesus sent His Spirit ...to grow His church.

A farmer and his son used to work on a project together hatching chickens. The incubator was used to keep the eggs warm.

One of the key elements in hatching those eggs was temperature control

If the temperature didn't remain fairly constant they wouldn't have good results. But another element was light. The incubator had two windows on top in order to let the light come in. If it was kept in complete darkness they wouldn't have good results, no baby chickens, no new life.

We are like the incubator, we have the potential to bring new life, if we step out and share the story of Jesus, why he came and died, but it's the light of Jesus, the Holy Spirit that brings life not us. Only the Holy Spirit can convict people of the truth about Jesus. We carry the story but we have to be prepared to share it.

Jesus promised that "when (the Spirit) comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" John 16:8

The Spirit has a job and we have a job. The Spirit's job is to convict the world of their sin, to show their need of righteousness and the fact that there's a coming judgment. We simply need to be available to share our story. God's Spirit does the rest.

My job is to be a witness I know the truth I carry it, but I need to be prepared to share it.

Witnessing is simply telling others what Jesus has done for us and what He means to us.

If we are a disciple of Jesus we need to know how to share our story simply.

Paul wrote about this in Romans 10:14-15 How can people have faith in the Lord and ask him to save them, if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear, unless someone tells them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone tell them without being sent by the Lord? The Scriptures say it is a beautiful sight to see even the feet of someone coming to preach the good news.

If I do MY job - if I share my faith – I pray for God's Spirit to do His job. If I witness and share about what Jesus means to me and about what Jesus has done for me, then the Spirit can CONVICT them of their need for Christ.

Jesus does depend on his church to share our faith. If no one shares then the church doesn't grow.

There's a true story of young woman named Jan had been attending a conference about how to share Jesus. As well as praying for opportunities to share she learnt about listening to God and to the person she was sharing with.

After the session she met 2 teenage girls. One of the girls, named Brittany, began passionately telling her friend about an upcoming Wiccan witchcraft gathering she was planning to attend. Their religion includes the use of herbal magic and witchcraft.

Jan said normally I would have lectured the girls but I didn't.

Brittany said she'd had a really traumatic time in high school and the Wiccans welcomed and accepted her. And then she said, "I've gone through so much stuff

just trying to make it through high school that I'll probably be in therapy for the rest of my life!"

Jan responded: "It must be hard for you to even imagine a future where you'd be free from all of the pain you've gone through?"

Tears began to form in the young girl's eyes and then - with complete sincerity-she said, 'Sometimes I wish I could be born all over again. I'd really like to start over from scratch.'

After a long pause, Jan asked if she would really like to be born again... and the girl responded "Yes, I really would." At that point she shared about Jesus dying for us so that we can be forgiven and be born again

Notice what happened there. Jan wanted to share her faith about Jesus... but the Spirit gave her the opening she needed. Only Gods Spirit could have put those words in Brittany's mouth – ***"I wish I could be born all over again."***

As followers of Jesus we have His Spirit who gives us the power and ability to effectively witness for Jesus. All we have to ask.