

Bible Reading Plan

WEEK OF APRIL 19, 2020

WEEKLY READING: ACTS 10-14

PASSAGES REFERENCED: MATTHEW 28:18-20; ACTS 2:14-41, 3:11-26, 6:8-7:53, 13:13-52; 1 PETER 3:15

When I think about evangelism, there are two passages of scripture that come to mind: Matthew 28:18-20 (The Great Commission) and 1 Peter 3:15...

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" – Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

"...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have..." – 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

But the Bible has so much more to say about evangelism. Particularly the book of Acts. I mean, it's basically an entire book about evangelism. I think it's about time we start going to it for information and encouragement when we want to learn about evangelism.

So, what does Acts teach and encourage us about evangelism? Well, as I've been reading through our Bible Reading Plan, I've been particularly struck by Peter's speeches in Acts 2:14-41 and 3:11-26, Stephen's in Acts 6:8-7:53, and Paul's in Acts 13:13-52. These days we often think of evangelism as sharing our testimony with others. And yes, it is that. But it's also so much more. It's not just about our story – it's about God's story. The examples Peter, Stephen, and Paul set prove just that. Whether they spoke to gathered crowds of Jews and Gentiles or religious leaders, they boldly shared God's story.

They went back to the beginning and pointed out the need for a savior. They talked about the major Old Testament players: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and David. They pointed out how Jesus fulfilled prophecies. And they shared about His life and death; they even called people out for their involvement in His death. And then they brought all of that to this point: the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. In Acts 2:3,6 Peter says, *"therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made Jesus, whom you crucified both Lord and Christ."* And in Acts 13:38-39, Paul says, *"therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses."*

And the beautiful thing is that once people heard this, many of them believed. So, what do we do with this? How do we turn this inspiration into action? Well, we have to recognize that it takes time to become equipped for evangelism. To share our own stories, we have to know them. We have to take time to reflect on our lives and gather the relevant information into a testimony – not just a story about our past, but one focused on when we came to know Christ. And it takes even more time and effort to become prepared to share God's story. We have to spend time reading and studying His Word. We have to know the order of the story and how it all points to Christ. Peter knew God's story. Stephen knew God's story. Paul knew God's story. Do you know God's story? And Peter, Stephen, and Paul were prepared to share it. Are you? Are you prepared to share your story? And maybe more importantly, are you prepared to share God's story? Keep digging in. Keep studying. Keep reflecting and praying for wisdom. Still not sure where to start, let us know, we want to make sure you're equipped and prepared to share. – Sarah Neel