

Turn, Turn, Turn
Finding Purpose and Identity in Transition
Acts 1:1-14

Intro:

How many of you feel like some part of your life in transition? (raise hands)
What part of your life is in transition?

Beginning a summer talk through the book of Acts.

A number of reasons for this:

- It deals with issues of identity and purpose, key issues we think about in times of transition.
- It is a book about living in transition- it describes a people being scattered abroad, a movement as it expands, and how they live in the midst of this movement. Key to note because sometimes we think purpose, identity are rooted in things like finding a normal pattern in life, or finding a place called "home." But finding ourselves really comes from finding and resting in God. As an early Christian once said: Our hearts are restless until they come to Him. Remember, Jesus said that he had no place to lay his head, he did not have a place he could fully call home.

Before we get started:

- General info about reading through Acts.
 - a. It is a book written in conjunction with Luke, detailing the Christian movement after Jesus leaves the planet. Its like Chapter two, after the first chapter which deals with the life and work of Jesus. Talk about transition!
 - b. Purpose: Luke 1:1-4, Walt Russell quote.
 - c. Description vs. Prescription- we can prescribe behavior if it is repeated.
 - d. The issue of history and accuracy- see John Stott's book.

Read Text: Acts 1:1-14

Three points I'd like to bring up today...

We need God's presence in us before we can do anything (v.4-5, 8, 14)

The Bible explicitly says elsewhere that we cannot do a number of things without God's Spirit working.

Have a relationship with God, 2 Cor 3- John 3

Worship/Experience God- John 4

Living the Jesus life- Galatians 5

Find purpose- Acts 1

How do we have God's Spirit in our lives? How do we live by the Spirit?

- First Step: repent and believe in Jesus. (Acts 2:38)
- How are we continually filled?
 - a. do not grieve (Eph. 4:30)
 - b. yield to the convicting work of the Spirit (John 16:7-10). If you give in to Him, He will bring more of His goodness in your life. If you don't, don't expect Him to keep working.
 - c. set our minds on the things of the Spirit (Rom 8:4)
 - d. wait (Acts 1)

The Spirit's role in transition, finding purpose and identity: we cannot do it without Him.

We have a mission to engage in, above and beyond any situation/transition (v.6-11)

It's starts in v.6, and it starts with a question:

- Restoring the kingdom to Israel. Bringing God's Kingdom full of goodness, love, and Jesus, one void of evil, to Israel (not the earth). This is an interesting verse because Jesus doesn't rebut them about that idea- he just says the mission right now is key. This of course has made people wonder if Israel still as a role to play, or if Israel is redefined in Jesus' teachings. We can get caught up with that and forget mission, so that's where I want to end.

- Be a witness: testify to the facts you have seen as true, to this person of Jesus.
- Geography is key.
- Jesus really is gone, and this is really what we have. Reason for ascension to witnessed: Jesus is really gone. Jesus did disappear from time to time during the 40 days after his resurrection. And so sometimes he would disappear, and then come back. But not this time. There is a change, a new chapter unfolding.

This mission in transition, in finding purpose and identity. We may think this is optional, that I should figure out my career first, or my living situation, or my other identity and purpose issues in the middle of transition. Core identity: salt and light. Being a witness, being on mission with God, is not an option. It's not a program, it's not someone else's job. It's who we are.

We have to live with purpose together for the long haul (v.13-14)

Note what they do as Jesus leaves. They go back to town, stay together, and pray together. Note especially how they do it: a) with one accord (note: luke loves this word. 10 of 11 occurrences in NT is in Acts. b) devoting themselves, attend to constantly, persevere. Prayer is key in Acts: 20 of 28 chapters involve prayer.

The community in transition, finding purpose and identity.

We need each other. But not just that. We need to move toward Jesus with each other. Growth happens there- with the deliberate, persevering purpose.

Challenge:

Are you dealing with a transition, or an issue of finding purpose and identity?

How might God be challenging you to be filled with His Spirit, to embrace the Mission, to Pray in Community during this time?