

This is the **GO** Challenge.

Go therefore...Jesus has commanded us, not asked us, to be his witnesses wherever we are, and also across the entire planet. As a follower of Christ, there is no question as to whether or not you should be involved in missions-Jesus has already declared you to be a missionary. The only questions are when will you go, where will you serve, how will you get there, and what does God need to do in your life to prepare you for your involvement. This is why we have created the Go Challenge. It begins with God's commandment for us to join Him on mission on planet Earth. **Over the next 10 days, you will be led through a process of discovering God's plan for the nations and His desire for you to be involved.** Our prayer is that you will align your life's agenda according to God's global agenda, that you will seek to make God famous in your school, your community, and to the ends of the earth, and that you will clearly see the path towards missions involvement that God has paved for you. **The Go Challenge is a 10 day Bible study designed for you to take your time and develop your thoughts through daily meditation on God's Word and in-depth scripture study.** Print out the pages one day at a time and take them to a quiet place where you can get alone with God. This is why we have created the Go Challenge. It begins with God's commandment for us to join Him on mission on planet Earth. Over the next 10 days, you will be led through a process of discovering God's plan for the nations and His desire for you to be involved. Our prayer is that you will align your life's agenda according to God's global agenda that you will seek to make God famous in your school, your community, and to the ends of the earth.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." -Acts 1:8

BETHEL'S GLOBAL REACH

WE WILL GO!

DAY ONE - GO CHALLENGE

Passage Acts 1:1-10

As followers of Jesus, we have become witnesses.

Jesus never gave a choice when it came to spreading His message. When He called Peter, Andrew, James, and John he said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." The only choice was whether or not they would drop their nets and follow Him. As they did, Jesus began to teach them what their lives would look like as they joined Him on mission in the world. The question they ask Jesus in verse 6 shows that they still haven't caught on to Jesus' plan and agenda. They are still thinking about themselves and hoping Israel would be restored to power over all other nations. Jesus answers their question by redirecting their thoughts. Instead of an earthly kingdom, they should focus on the task at hand. They are going to receive power when the Spirit comes, and the result is they will BE His witnesses. These are Jesus' last words to his followers. This is not just a call. It is even more than a commandment. It is a description of the life of a true follower of Jesus. If you follow, you are on mission. As a follower, have you caught on to His plan and agenda or do you find yourself much like the disciples concerned mainly with your own life, your own success, and your own country?

God's plan for His witnesses is global in scope. He desires for us to join Him "On Mission" Across the planet.

Too often we use Acts 1:8 as an excuse instead of as a mission statement. We try to make it sound as if we are on pace with Jesus if we take it one step at a time, starting in our hometowns, moving out to our state, our nation, and then out to the world. There are many problems with this attitude. First, the disciples were not from Jerusalem, they were mostly from Galilee. If Jerusalem is to be the beginning point, then we at least have to admit that they weren't sent to begin in their hometowns and move out. The second problem is that Jesus is not giving a step-by-step formula, but is simply describing the life of a witness. We will share his message where we are, all around us, and even in the extreme parts of the planet when we follow Jesus. Jesus' target for us is the world. If we aim for the world, surely we will also hit our hometowns. Many of us need God to broaden our view so we can see His vision for the nations.

Not only does God empower us for the task, he prepares us for the task as well.

Jesus' disciples were asking him about political power, but he responded by promising them another type of power, much more suitable to the task. This power would enable them, in fact would cause them to become His witnesses around the globe. This power would come to them along with the Holy Spirit. As believers on this side of Acts chapter 2 (when the Spirit arrived), we have been indwelt by the Spirit from the moment of salvation. "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." Romans 8:9b This means that we have already been empowered, and we have everything we need to be His witnesses wherever we are and to the ends of the earth. However, if you continue to read this story into chapter two, you will find that the disciples were instructed to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit to come. After Jesus ascended, they spent the next 10 days praying and meeting together in the

upper room before the Spirit was sent to empower them as witnesses. We don't know everything that happened in those upper room meetings, but chances are God was getting them ready for the task at hand. Attitudes like selfishness, prejudice, and apathy towards others had to be dealt with if this group was going to take this message of hope to the rest of the world. God had to prepare their hearts and their minds to cross cultural barriers, suffer persecution, overcome opposition, etc. in order to get them ready to join God's mission. Over the next 10 days, God will hopefully show you some things, stretch you, and challenge you as you seek to join Him on mission in your world, even to the ends of the earth.

Prayer Father, I want to be about what you are about. My desire is to be used up like fuel for your glory to spread throughout the earth. I am asking you to show me what it means to BE your witness where you have already put me, and to allow me to be part of making you famous in all the earth. Thank you for sending me your Spirit when I first believed in you. I know that the Spirit was given to empower me as your witness, and I want to align my life's agenda accordingly. I am setting aside these next 10 days to hear and learn from you. I give you total freedom to work in my life in order to enable and equip me to join your mission. Show me things in my life that would hinder my ability as a witness, and I will confess them and turn them over to you. Please help me to live my life for your fame and your glory. Amen.



DAY TWO - GO CHALLENGE

Passage Acts 2:1-41

The Spirit was given to bring about the evangelization of all peoples (nations, tribes, peoples, tongues).

The Day of Pentecost is one of the most strategic moves of God recorded in Scripture. Why did Jesus tell the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit empowered them to be his witnesses? Because God was going to bring people from all over the world to that city so they could hear the message of Jesus Christ (2:5-10). The timing was perfect. "God-fearing Jews" from at least 15 different regions of the near and Middle East had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the religious feast known as Pentecost. All of them heard the gospel. But notice how they heard the message – "we hear them declaring the words of God in our own tongues (v.11)." All of these Jews most likely spoke Hebrew or Aramaic, but had adopted the Gentile languages of the regions where they lived. When the Spirit came upon the disciples they spoke miraculously in these Gentile languages. They could have spoken in Hebrew or Aramaic and the people would have understood them just as well. So why did God give the message to Hebrew people in Gentile languages? Why did God perform this miracle? God gave this marvelous outbreak of Gentile languages to demonstrate that the gospel is for everyone regardless of race, color, country, or language. This shows us that the Spirit was given to bring about the evangelization of all peoples (nations, tribes, peoples, tongues). **The Spirit wants the world for Christ.** He is empowering

God's people to take the gospel to every people group and he will accomplish that purpose. In Revelation 7:9-10 we see the scene of heaven: After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb." On that day, there will be representatives from every people group in heaven worshiping our God. The Spirit will see to it. Will you let him use you to be a witness to the nations? *When we speak of people groups we are speaking of what the Bible refers to as nations. The word nation comes from the Greek word ethnos. We get our word ethnic or ethnicity from it. It refers to a group of people who share a common ethnicity. This means they share a common culture, common customs, common language, and originate from the same general Geographical location. Conservative estimates claim that there are over 11,000 people groups on planet earth. Nearly 2000 of these people groups are considered unreached – they have little or no access to the gospel message – but they will! As a follower, have you caught on to His plan and agenda or do you find yourself much like the disciples concerned mainly with your own life, your own success, and your own country?

Jesus is God's offer of Hope to the World (2:22-36)

Throughout Jesus' life and ministry, God constantly endorsed Jesus as the Messiah. His miraculous signs and wonders (22), his death which was according to the plan of God (23), his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God (24-32,34-35), and his reception of the Holy Spirit whom he freely poured out upon his disciples (33) all attest to the fact that Jesus is the long anticipated Messiah that God throughout the past centuries had promised the world. Verse 36 makes it clear that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Messiah). What is this Messiah supposed to do? Answer: reveal to us the True God, provide forgiveness of sins bringing us into a relationship with God, give to us the abiding presence of the Spirit of God who transforms us and empowers us, and establish an everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace that will one day be worldwide and victorious over those who would choose to remain Christ's enemies. Not a bad Messiah! Peter addresses verse 36 to all the house of Israel. But we know from the rest of Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah not only for Jewish people, but for all people. In Luke 2 we read of a man named Simeon whom God had promised that he "would not die before had seen the Lord's Christ." One day in the temple, Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to him and as he held him in his arms he said, Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles (literally, nations) and for glory to your people Israel. Jesus the Messiah is salvation for the world. Isaiah records God's words about His Messiah in Isaiah 49:6, "I will also make you a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach the end of the earth." This salvation, this hope, this light of the nations has yet to penetrate some of the darkest places on planet earth. Will you go and shine that light? Will you go and proclaim Jesus, the hope and salvation for the nations?

Prayer You, Jesus are the long awaited Messiah, the hope of the world and salvation for all peoples. You are the light of the nations, yet many live in darkness having never heard about you. Help me to never be content knowing that, but to be moved with compassion for the lost in

this world. You, Spirit of God, are zealous to have the world for Christ; to see him honored and adored in all the earth. Give me the same zeal and empower me to be a witness for Christ daily. Lead me and I will follow. If you desire to send me to the ends of the earth, give me the faith to obey. For the glory of Christ's name I pray, Amen.

Jesus is the only hope for the entire world. (4:12)

Peter's answer to the high priest was a simple presentation of the gospel message. This message is continually repeated throughout the book of Acts as followers of Christ are given opportunities to teach and to share. The message is that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of the Living God. There is no salvation anywhere else. Jesus is the only way. That may not be the most popular message these days, but it is still the truth. In fact, this message wasn't popular in those days either. It is common to find people today who believe there are many paths to God or many roads to heaven. Christianity is seen as intolerant and exclusive, and therefore only for the narrow minded. But no matter what the common perception is of Christianity's claims, the truth still remains. There really is only one way to heaven, one way to God, and that way is through God's son, Jesus. And if this is truly our message, then we have to face the reality that the whole world must hear it. In the same way that Jesus is the only hope for your school campus, He is the only hope for Japan where they worship thousands of gods, or China where they deny God's existence, or Turkey where almost everyone is Muslim. There is no other name that can bring salvation, therefore, we must go to our world and share this message of hope, whether it is received or not.

By working mightily through ordinary people, God receives glory. (4:13-22)

There really is no argument here. The man who was healed was standing there before them, and it was evident to all that Peter and John were in some way responsible. If Peter says that it was the power of Jesus who healed the man, there is no way to deny his claims. The thing that is hard for these religious leaders to swallow is the fact that Peter and John were just average guys. They hadn't studied in the same schools as the high priest and his men. In fact, they had no substantial education at all. Even so, the boldness and power by which these followers of Jesus possessed caused them to take notice. Maybe the religious leaders didn't get it, but the people did. In verse 21, we see all the people praising God for what happened. Whenever God decides to work through his ordinary people, He always gets the glory. This has to be why He has chosen this method for sharing His message with the world. He empowers people like you and me, and sends us out to the ends of the earth, or even to our schools and communities. He then works through us with His unbelievable power, and people are left praising the one true, living, and great God. There is no more time for excuses. God still doesn't need your abilities; He will supply the power you need. Will you allow Him to work through you?

When we align our hearts with God's, nothing will stop us from being His witnesses.

I hope there isn't any confusion. Your decision to join God on mission in the world doesn't promise to be an easy one. The task is a challenging one at best. For many years, people have

hardened their hearts towards God and many are trapped by spiritual blindness to the truth. You may face opposition, rejection, even persecution when you decide that following Christ means being a witness for Him. However, when you truly become a witness, there really is no other choice. Faced with the imminent threat of persecution if they continued as witnesses for Christ, Peter and John make a bold reply (verse 20). Their message is simple. Even if we wanted to stop telling others about Jesus, we couldn't. This is who we are. We are His witnesses. We can not stop speaking about what He has done for us. Is that a statement that matches up with your life as His witness? Many times we come up a little short of this mark. In fact, in most cases we don't need any good reason to be quiet. Yet, when the God of the universe invades your life with power, it has to change the way you live. When you become truly convinced that Jesus is the only hope for the world, it should be difficult to remain silent with that news. There are thousands of people in our world today who have not even heard of this Jesus. Acts 1:8 witnesses will share this message no matter what it costs them personally, simply because Jesus is the only hope for the world.

DAY THREE - GO CHALLENGE

Passage Acts 4:1-22

Prayer You, Jesus are the long awaited Messiah, the hope of the world and salvation for all peoples. You are the light of the nations, yet many live in darkness having never heard about you. Help me to never be content knowing that, but to be moved with compassion for the lost in this world. You, Spirit of God, are zealous to have the world for Christ; to see him honored and adored in all the earth. Give me the same zeal and empower me to be a witness for Christ daily. Lead me and I will follow. If you desire to send me to the ends of the earth, give me the faith to obey. For the glory of Christ's name I pray, Amen.

Prayer Great God, you are committed to reaching the ends of the earth with the message of Jesus Christ. Work in my heart that I might share that same passion. Do whatever it takes to give me your heart for the nations. Kill my prejudice and my sinful sense of cultural superiority and help me to love all peoples with the love of Christ. I praise you that you are a Good Shepherd who seeks after lost sheep. Thank you for finding me. Impress on my heart more and more that you desire to use me to seek and find others in my community and around the world. I want to be open to your divine appointments in my life, even if it requires great distance and sacrifice on my part. Use me God for the sake of your name. Amen.

God is committed to fulfilling his plan of global evangelization (8:1-3)

Jesus clearly laid out His plan in Acts 1:8 that the disciples would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and then the ends of the earth. They did a great job with Jerusalem. In 5:28 their opponents complained, "You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching." The writer Luke adds in 6:7, "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly." Yet the disciples were not being obedient to the rest of Christ's commission. The gospel had not made its way into Judea, Samaria, and especially not the ends of the earth. At the end of chapter 7 all the apostles and thousands of Christians were huddled in Jerusalem. They had become settled, staying where it was easy, convenient, and culturally comfortable.

But even when the early church was reluctant and disobedient to take the gospel across national and cultural boundaries, God remained committed to his unchanging purpose of global evangelization. Apparently God was willing to go to great lengths to keep the gospel from becoming isolated among one people so he scattered the believers by allowing a great persecution to break out against the church in Jerusalem. Notice what happens to the disciples: "all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria." The gospel crossed cultural boundaries. God was fulfilling his plan even when the methods of moving his people out are painful! He continues to carry out his eternal unchanging purpose for the world.

If we are going to be a part of God's "Global Rescue Operation" we must die to our personal prejudices (8:4-8, 14-17, 25)

Philip was one of those who was scattered. He made his way into Samaria and began to proclaim Christ there. God was doing powerful things among this people and many responded. The text tells us "there was great joy in that city." When the apostles in Jerusalem heard about what God was doing in Samaria, they sent Peter and John there. Don't read past that too quickly. These were Samaritans. The Samaritans were a mix of Jewish and Gentile blood. The Jews considered them detestable. We read in John 4:9 that "Jews do not associate with Samaritans." There were some major cultural boundaries here. Peter and John had to die to their own prejudice and recognize that God was at work among these people that he obviously loved and wanted to include in His Kingdom. God loves all people regardless of race, color, culture, or language. For us to look down upon or try to avoid people from other cultures because they look different, smell different or eat different foods is to miss the heart of God. We must face our own prejudice and die to our sinful sense of cultural superiority so we can be free to love people who are different. Remember the only distinction in the Scriptures is those who know Christ and those who don't. We who know him are to share his love with those who don't regardless of differences.

God is the God of Divine Appointments (8:26-40)

Philip, under the guidance of the Lord, finds himself on a desert road where he encounters an Ethiopian eunuch. The Ethiopian is reading the book of Isaiah and Philip, explaining the words to him, leads him to faith in Christ and baptizes him. It is an amazing story. God is working in the life of this Ethiopian. He is giving him a curious heart and drawing his attention to the Word, specifically to a passage about Christ. At the same time, he is leading Philip into this cross-cultural encounter. The Lord brings to the two together for a divine appointment. When we go on mission we are stepping into an ancient work. God has been and is at work all over the world, drawing people to himself. In East Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, and all across the globe, God is seeking after the lost. He is constantly at work in the hearts of people. He invites us to join him on that search and to be on the telling end of a divine appointment. There may be someone on the other side of the world that God wants to use you specifically to bring the message to. Are you willing to go?

DAY FOUR - IGO CHALLENGE

Prayer God, I want to thank you for inviting me to join You in Your work in the world. You have been, and continue to be at work all over the world, turning hearts towards you, raising up worshippers from all nations, and covering the whole earth with your glory. Thank you for allowing me to enter into your ancient work in the world. As I join you, would you please open up my eyes and soften my heart so that I can see people the way you see them. God, give me the ability to cross cultural barriers in order to demonstrate your love to people of any background, race, religion, culture, mindset, or ethnicity. Help me to see opportunities to tear down cultural barriers that may exist even in my school or community, and give me the strength, power, and sensitivity needed to cross over those barriers. Thanks God, for being a God who loves all people from all nations, tribes, and tongues. Amen.

When we join God on mission, we enter into a work that God has already started (10:1-8; 30-33).

It is interesting in this chapter to note that God was already at work in the life of Cornelius and those with him before Peter showed up on the scene. In fact, God was at work there before Peter even heard and responded to God's call. We should never take this principle for granted. God calls us to join His work, not begin His work. God's "bottom line" purpose is to bring glory to Himself in all the earth, and He has always been about accomplishing this purpose. You may think that you are entering into a brand new work when you go to a place like China (where so few have even heard His name), but the truth is that in China you enter into the ancient work of God. He has been shaping history for hundreds of years in order to raise up worshippers in China, as well as other places where His name is not known. This principle has to be encouraging for us, even exciting. We do not go alone. Not only does God go with us as we go, he actually goes ahead of us to prepare the way. God is already at work in the places that He is going to call you to join Him. He is at work on your school campus, in your community, and even in those places where very few if any even know who He is. It is our privilege as His witnesses to join God in the work that God Himself has begun, and the work that God Himself will finish. Therefore, as we go (whether it be to school every day, or on a trip to Turkey), let us go expecting to find God already at work. Let us go expecting to be used by God in the areas that He has already prepared for us. Let us know that we are just one small part of the process: the ancient work of God.

Joining God on mission requires us to cross cultural barriers (10:9-29; 34-48).

For Peter, cultural barriers were almost a hindrance to his ability to join God on mission. God gave Peter this vision three times, before Peter was willing to respond. Even in his response, there is a sense that Peter went to Cornelius' house in a state of confusion, if not reluctance. Upon entering Cornelius' house, Peter made it clear that it was against Jewish laws and customs for him to be there at all, but God was using all of this to change Peter's heart. Jews thought of Gentiles as different, unclean, impure, unacceptable, maybe even weird. God's message to Peter was that there would no longer be any distinction between nations, races, ethnicities, or cultures. Peter recognized the work of God as he saw that God was working in the lives of the Gentiles in the same way that He was working in the lives of the Jews. Peter responded by sharing the gospel, baptizing the new Gentile converts, and tearing down cultural barriers as he stayed with and ministered to Cornelius and the other believers for a few days.

As you join God on mission, He is going to call you to cross cultural barriers. He may ask you to go to a culture that you think is weird, different, backwards, etc. He may want you to eat something you have never even thought of eating, wear something you would never wear back at home, or befriend someone no one else will even talk to. God makes no distinctions between people; He loves them all. He desires to use you as His witness as you cross cultures. He wants you to love people into His kingdom by being willing to enter into their world and their culture. Like Paul, he desires for you to become all things to all men in order to win some (1 Cor. 9:22). As we join God on mission we must remember that other cultures are not wrong, they are just different.

DAY FIVE - GO CHALLENGE

The Holy Spirit calls believers and desires to send them with the support of their church

During a time of prayer, worship, and fasting, the Holy Spirit told the church at Antioch to set apart Barnabas and Saul (Paul) to a work which he called them. The Spirit had a plan for these two men. This is the first missionary journey recorded in the Book of Acts. Today, God is still calling people to missionary journeys, even students. Through times of worship, prayer and fasting, students are encountering the sending heart of God and hearing his call to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Notice in the passage, both the Spirit and the church are said to have sent Barnabas and Paul (compare 13:3 with 13:4). It was the Spirit who called the men out, but it was through the support of the church that He sent them. The church in Antioch supported Barnabas and Paul with their prayers and their finances. That same pattern holds true to today. When the Spirit sends you out, he will send you with the prayer and financial support of fellow believers in your church and believers in surrounding churches. We have numerous testimonies from students who through the support of their churches and fellow believers were able to raise more money than they needed for the trip. What great affirmation from God that he was truly sending them! If he is calling you to go, you can be sure that he is going to move on the hearts of his people to help send you.

The enemy will always oppose the spreading of the Gospel (vv. 6-12).

In these verses we see the enemy at work through a Jewish sorcerer named Elymas who tried to oppose Paul and Barnabas' ministry to a man who wanted to hear the word of God. The enemy will always try to oppose the work of God. If you seek to join God on mission, you can be sure that the enemy will seek to distract you, discourage you, or dissuade you from it. But as our passage shows us, God's power is greater than Satan's. Through the power of the Spirit, Paul confronted Elymas and miraculously silenced the influence of the enemy. The display of God's strength was so great, that the inquiring man believed the message about Jesus. All over the world, Satan is seeking to destroy humanity by keeping them from the gospel. But God is at work, unleashing his power and bringing people to Christ.

Jesus is the only Savior for the world (vv.13-52).

This is a truth that is constantly emphasized in the Book of Acts and in the Go Challenge. Jesus is God's promised Savior for the world. Through his death, burial, and resurrection, he is able to provide forgiveness of sins to all who believe in him, regardless of ethnicity (vv. 38-39). Paul and Barnabas believed this truth so strongly that even in the face of hostility they proclaimed it.

They believed that Isaiah 49:6, which spoke of Christ, also applied to their calling, “I have made you a light for the Gentiles (nations) that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47). It also applies to us. He has made us a light to our friends, family, community, but also to the nations so that we might take His salvation to the ends of the earth. It is not enough that the light be contained in the little corners of our own community or even our continent, but that it would spread to the extreme parts of the planet.

God has a part for you to play in his purpose for your generation (v. 36)

The verse says that “when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep.” This verse tells us that God has a purpose for each generation. He had a purpose for the people of David’s generation. But notice, David had a decision to make: “Will I serve my purpose or God’s purpose?” David chose to serve God’s purpose for his generation. At iGo Global, we believe that God is doing something special with your generation. It is a generation that is waking up to the greatness of God and his eternal purpose to be exalted in all the earth. It is a generation that is saying “no” to the common cultural cravings of wealth, comfortable lifestyles, and safe environments and is willing to lose its life so it might truly find it. It is a generation that is tired of dabbling in the things of God and is ready to be consumed by God. This is a generation that we believe he will use to take the gospel to places it has yet to penetrate. The question for you is the same one David faced: “Will I serve my purpose or God’s purpose?” Don’t give yourself to meaningless, passing, pitiful, insignificant pursuits. Give yourself fully to the eternal purpose of God.

DAY SIX - GO CHALLENGE

Passage Acts 13:1-52

Prayer God, I want to daily surrender to your plans for my life. Keep me from the love of money, comforts, possessions, or anything else that would hinder me from fulfilling my role in your agenda for my generation. I know that when you call, you equip. I acknowledge that if you should call me to the remotest parts of planet earth, you will move your people to help send me. Strengthen my conviction that Jesus is the only Savior for the world and fortify my resolve to proclaim that truth even when the enemy would oppose me. You have made me light. Holy Spirit, empower me to shine at home, in my school, and even around the world so that your salvation may reach the ends of the earth.

The God and Father of Jesus Christ is the One True God who desires to be known by all peoples (vv. 16-27)

Humanity is incurably religious and always has been. We see this very clearly in this passage. The city of Athens was filled with idols and had many altars. One altar had the inscription, “To an Unknown God.” It is as if they wanted to make sure they did not leave out any deities. When Paul saw this, the passage says that he was greatly distressed. Paul seized an opportunity to boldly proclaim that there was only one true God – the God and Father of Jesus Christ. He made the world and all that is in it. He is Lord of Heaven and earth. He is self-sufficient and has no needs. He is not some weak idol that needs to be carried by its craftsman. As the creed says, he is “God the Father, Almighty Maker of Heaven and Maker of Earth.” We know from other

scriptures that God is jealous with a holy jealousy. Isaiah 42:8 says, “I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.” He alone is God and He alone is worthy of the worship of all peoples. When someone in Japan burns incense to Buddha, or a Muslim in Turkey prays to Allah, or Hindu in India bows down to a statue that represents one of 300 million gods they worship, God’s jealousy is incited. Worship, passion, trust, sacrifice, creativity, artistry, dancing, hope, are all being wasted on false gods while the true God is unknown, unloved, and belittled. We need to taste the jealousy of God and like Paul be greatly distressed by the idolatry of the nations. We need to sense the longing of God to be known and worshiped worldwide. **John Piper says, “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.”** In other words, the reason we do missions is because there are places on this planet where our God is not worshiped. Do you desire to see your God exalted by all peoples? Do you long to see God gain the worship of the nations -worship that is being wasted on false gods? Are you passionate for the salvation of those who have yet to hear of him, the One True God?

Idolatry is not a symptom of stupidity but ignorance (vv. 23, 30)

The first time you ever see idol worship you wonder, “How can anyone possible believe that this block of wood, or this golden statue has life and power?” It is easy to begin to view the people as ridiculous and stupid for their beliefs. Notice in our text that Paul is dealing with fairly intelligent people. They are educated philosophers. They were not stupid, but Paul says that they act out of ignorance. The word ignorance simply means, “without knowledge.” The people of Acts 17 had no knowledge of the true God. They were blind spiritually. Blind and ignorant their search for God brought them to their own conclusions about reality and about deity. So Paul took the opportunity to address their ignorance and tell them about the God that they were really searching for. He did not ridicule them for worshipping idols, but saw those idols as symptoms of their longing for God and ignorance of him. (In the OT we see the prophets ridiculing Israel and Judah for their idolatry, but Israel and Judah had knowledge of the true God; they just rejected it). As we look around the world we see the idolatry of Hindus, Buddhist, adherents to the Shinto religion adherents to tribal religions, and numerous others. We must see their idolatry as a symptom of their longing for God and of their ignorance of Him. They are trapped in spiritual blindness left to make their own conclusions about God. What they need is light. What they need is knowledge of the true God.

God is sovereign over all the nations and one day will judge them through his appointed judge, Jesus Christ (26-31)

There is coming a day when Jesus Christ will return and judge the world. For those who did not embrace him as Lord and Savior and become his worshipers, they will be forever separated from God. The coming judgment is presented in Scripture as a motivation for the nations to believe. It is also presented as a motivation for us to go into the entire world with a sense of urgency and proclaim the message of repentance unto God and faith in Jesus Christ (v. 30). When this day comes it will be a day of justice. Injustice, poverty, disease, famine, will all be wiped out and Jesus Christ will reign. But, the end will not come until the gospel penetrates every people group on planet earth. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus says, “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to the nations, and then the end will come.” Jesus will not return

until the gospel is preached among every people group. From a human perspective, we only delay his return as we delay our obedience.

DAY SEVEN - GO CHALLENGE

Passage Acts 17:16-34

Prayer God, you alone are the One and True God; there is no other. You are Maker of Heaven and earth and rule over your creation. Your desire is to be known and worshiped in all the earth. Let me taste your jealousy for your glory among all nations and let me taste your compassion for those who are trusting in idols and false gods. Let the reality of Your judgment on the nations give me a sense of urgency to go as your messenger and proclaim the truth that saves. Thank you for the confidence that many will believe. You have promised it, you have guaranteed it, and you will see to it. Then the end will come. I want my obedience to quicken your return. Here am I, send me Lord. Amen.

We must put calling before comfort (vv. 17-38)

In verse 22 Paul shared with the elders that the Spirit was calling him to Jerusalem. Notice what Paul expected to happen, “in every city, the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardship await me.” Imagine reading that in a missions recruiting advertisement. The truth is that God never promised us that we would live a life free of risks if we followed him. As a matter of fact, the closer you follow him, often times the greater the risks. But notice Paul’s response, “I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given to me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.” Paul put God’s call on his life before comfort. His goal was not to live a comfortable risk-free life, but to obey God’s call and finish the task he had been given - even if that meant dying. In 21:13 when Paul was getting ready to depart for Jerusalem, the people pleaded with him not to go. Paul answered, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am not only ready be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” Wow! Paul was willing to lose his life to make Jesus’ name famous in Jerusalem. Calling – not comfort. What about you? Do you put calling before comfort? If it is your goal to live a risk free comfortable life, you will miss out on the calling God has placed on your life. God may be calling you to join him on mission for a summer, a year, or even for the rest of your life. Yet, maybe there are some fears: Is it safe to travel? Will I like the food? Will I get sick? Will I find a spouse? What will the living conditions be like? Some of you might eventually end up on the field in a country that is hostile to Christianity and you will live everyday with looming risk that threaten your well being or even your life. Throughout history, men and women of God have taken the gospel to the most extreme parts of the planet at great cost. Many lost their children to disease. Some became deathly ill themselves. Others were imprisoned, beaten, even killed as they carried out their calling. As you read their stories, there is not a hint of regret. They gladly put calling before comfort. The reward was greater than the cost and it will be with you as well.

We must hold Jesus Christ and his agenda more dearly than family and friends (vv. 25, 36-38)

It is obvious from this passage that there was a special love between Paul and the elders at Ephesus. When they heard that they would never see Paul again, they were grieved. The texts says, “They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him.” As much as Paul loved these people, he loved Jesus Christ and his purposes more. He was so committed to fulfilling Jesus’ call on his life that he was willing to leave family and friends. This is what Jesus expects from his followers. In Luke 14:26-27 Jesus said, “If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother; wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes even more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me.” It may be that God calls you not only to a short term trip, but to a lifelong international journey. God is calling and is going to call many in your generation to buy a one-way ticket to another country and to plant your life there away from family and friends to make Christ known.

We need to take responsibility for the condition of our world (26-27)

In these verses, Paul makes a shocking statement. “I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.” What Paul is saying is that he cannot be blamed for anyone being eternally separated from God because he has gone about preaching the gospel to everyone he could. It is true that each person is responsible for making a decision about Christ, but God also teaches us in this passage that we have a responsibility to tell others and we will be held accountable to God as to whether or not we were faithful to that responsibility. We need to take responsibility for the people God has placed in our lives. But we also need to gain a sense of responsibility for our world. We cannot be content with the fact that there are 4x as many lost people in China as there are people in the United States. We cannot be content with the fact that there are over 2,000 people groups consisting of over one-quarter of the world’s population that are unreached and have little or no access to the gospel. This world needs people who will stand up and say, “I’ll go and tell those who have not heard. Let that responsibility fall in my lap and with the help of God I will fulfill it.”

DAY EIGHT - GO CHALLENGE

Passage Acts 20:17-27

Prayer Jesus, You are my treasure. Nothing compares to you. There is nothing greater I could ever do than to give myself fully to you and your objective. Intensify my passion for you and your plan for this planet. Give me a heart that is willing to pay any price, forgo any comfort, and wave any farewell to make you known in all the earth. Burden my heart for the neglected harvest fields of the world where your name is not known and your praise is not heard. Shatter my state of contentment with the lost condition of this world. Put in my heart a sense of responsibility for the nations and move me to act upon that responsibility by praying, giving, and going. Do this for your honor and for the joy of the nations. Amen. You, Jesus are the long awaited Messiah, the hope of the world and salvation for all peoples. You are the light of the nations, yet many live in darkness having never heard about you. Help me to never be content knowing that, but to be moved with compassion for the lost in this world. You, Spirit of God, are zealous to have the world for Christ; to see him honored and adored in all the earth. Give me the same zeal and empower me to be a witness for Christ daily. Lead me and I will follow. If you desire to send me to the ends of the earth, give me the faith to obey. For the glory of Christ’s name I pray, Amen.

God can and will use us to carry out His plan (26:1-11)

There may not have been a more unlikely candidate for this assignment than Paul. As he shares his testimony before Festus and Agrippa, he highlights his strong Jewish background and emphasizes his mission to persecute Christians. From a human perspective, Paul would never be chosen to become the greatest missionary the world has ever known. If the fact that he was one of the leading enemies to Christianity is not enough to disqualify him, then surely his staunch Jewish background and mindset would be. Paul calls himself a Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil. 3:6), which is another way of saying he was a consummate Jew. As a consummate Jew, he would have been taught from early childhood to separate himself from Gentiles at all times. Yet, this is the person God chose to use as a light to the Gentiles. This is what God does. He uses unlikely people to carry out His mission because the mission is all about God and not at all about us. The more unlikely the person that he uses, the greater the glory God receives. It is so easy for us to find excuses as to why we should not join God on mission to the ends of the earth, but none of them will compare to the ones that Paul could have used. We may think that God will never use us because of our past, but Paul's past was as bad as it gets. We may think that we would never relate to people from different cultures, but Paul had to overcome prejudice, dislike, stereotypes, etc. in order to devote his ministry to Gentile people. God can and will use us to accomplish His plan. It doesn't matter what we have done, or what inadequacies we have. It is not your gifts, talents, or personality that will do this, it is His power at work in you.

When God saves us, He sends us (26:12-32)

As Paul shares his conversion experience in this passage, we must acknowledge that his experience was unique at the very least. When God saved us, the experience was not quite as dramatic (we didn't exactly see the risen Lord Jesus), but it wasn't any less significant. When we read Paul's salvation experience, we must remember that there are some strong common ties between his experience and ours. First, God rescued us from darkness, death, punishment, and hopelessness. Second, when He saved us, he sent us. In Paul's case, the two are inseparable. Jesus appears to Paul and announces that Paul has been appointed as a witness (v.14). Paul became a child of God when he met Jesus, and he also became a representative of the family. It is the same for us. When you become a Christian, you become a witness. God did not plan for you to spend months, years, or decades enjoying your relationship with Him until you finally get to some point where you can add witnessing to your Christian experience. His plan is to rescue people and then to use those people to rescue others, all across the earth. When we avoid or neglect our role as His witness, we enter into disobedience. Notice what Paul says in verses 19-20 as he explains that he has not been disobedient to his calling as a witness. The Go Challenge is about becoming an Acts 1:8 Christian. It is about becoming obedient to God's plan to use us as His witness right where we are and to the ends of the earth. In these last two days of the challenge, it is time to begin to seek opportunities for you to do just that. How can you become His witness right where He has already placed you, and how can you join Him on mission even to the ends of the earth?

DAY NINE - GO CHALLENGE

Passage Acts 26:1-32

The ends of the earth continue to be the ultimate objective (Romans 15:20-24).

The book of Acts ends with Paul preaching the good news as a prisoner in Rome, but in the last 10 days hopefully you have seen Acts unfold as a story of how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Rome by the power of the Spirit at work in the lives of Jesus' followers. There is some irony in the story ending in Rome for Paul in the fact that he had wanted to visit the believers there, but he never intended to stay. In fact, he had written them telling them that he planned to visit them as he passed by on his way to Spain (another end of the earth type place). If you haven't done so already read Romans 15:20-24 now. Paul's ultimate objective was to take the gospel to people and places where Jesus was not known. In fact, this objective had become Paul's passion. As a result, Paul's life and ministry was shaped by this passion. Rather than staying and building large churches where Paul had begun works, he continued on the journey to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. The passion to reach the unreached had even kept him away from Rome at times in his ministry (Romans 15:22). What a challenging mindset. You get the sense that Paul could never be satisfied even in a thriving church knowing that there were people in the world that have never even heard of Jesus. We need that same mindset to sweep over a generation of students. Too long we have stayed in the comfort of America where we can easily seclude ourselves in a Christian culture while there are still extreme places on the planet where people do not know His name. American Christians for some reason have adopted a stay until He tells me to go mindset, when the Bible teaches a go unless He tells you to stay lifestyle. Yes, Jesus has declared us to be his witness's right where we are, but it is time to remember the rest of his declaration. We are living in the last days of Acts 1:8. Much of the world has been saturated with the gospel, but there are still many who have never heard. Like Paul, we must make it our passion and objective to share Jesus with those on the planet who have never heard.

So, what does this mean for you as you come to the end of the Go Challenge? The truth is that the real challenge begins now as you decide what you will do with the things God has poured into your life over the past 10 days. For some, you may be ready to go on a mission trip right now and it seems like too long to wait before the next opportunity comes along. Being an Acts 1:8 Christian is not about taking mission trips, but instead is about living an on mission lifestyle. Below are some possible action steps you could take as you respond to the Go Challenge. Build a friendship with an international student on your campus or in your community. Americans have refused to go the nations for so long, it is almost as if God has decided to bring the nations to us. Our universities are filled with international students, many of whom come from end of the earth areas. You may know an international person in your neighborhood or even in your high school. God may be calling you to begin right where you are by crossing some cultural to reach out to those around you. Continue to develop your awareness of God's purpose and plan. You can do this by reading biographies of missionaries or other missions focused books such as Unveiled at Last or Let the Nations be Glad. The internet can be a huge resource as you seek information on missions as well. Pray about and plan towards your involvement in global missions. It is never too early to begin talking with your parents and church leaders about participating in global missions. Search through the opportunities on our website and ask God to point you in a specific direction. God seems to be raising up a new generation of students that will see missions involvement as the norm rather than the exception. Perhaps God is going to use you as a leader in this movement as you commit to participating in global missions for a summer, semester, or even a year before you graduate from college.

DAY TEN - GO CHALLENGE

Passage Acts 28:17-31

Prayer God, I want to be an on mission Christian, so please help me to become one. Give me a passion for your glory among the nations. Make my objective in life to be your witness wherever I am and all the way to the ends of the earth. God, help me to align my entire life according to your agenda and your desires. Don't allow anything to keep me from being involved in what you are doing on a global scale. Use these past 10 days to transform my mindset and my lifestyle, and use it to confirm the calling you have placed on my life. Show me the things in my life that I need to give over to you, change, or work on in order to join you on mission in the world. I want you to know that I am ready to go, and I will go unless I clearly hear you tell me to stay. Give me boldness and strength to speak your truth no matter how unpopular the message may be to those who hear it. Don't let me be silent anymore when I know there are people all around me who do not know you, as well as people all across the planet who have never heard your name. Burden my heart with compassion for lost people and ignite my heart for the glory of your name in all the earth. I love you. Amen.



Go you therefore into ALL the world ...

BETHEL'S GLOBAL REACH

WE WILL GO!