



AUGUST

## God, Where Are You At Work?

BY Anna Fox

“What do we learn about God, and what do we learn about people in Acts 2:42-47?” I sat waiting for a response from two women in my discipleship group. My questions were sometimes met with silence, while the conversation won’t stop at other times. These are some of the answers that evening:

### God:

Is always looking for disciples.

Created us for fellowship.

Uses believers to meet others’ physical needs before meeting their spiritual needs.

His plan is for us to go and do.

### People:

Fellowship is important to the believer.

When we are obedient, God will work.

People want to be together and when unified, will do more.

Focus on the task given.

I followed up with, “How will you obey the passage this week?” This question is always the most challenging part of the entire night—obedience. Discussing what we discovered is one thing, but obeying and

sharing how we obeyed is totally different.

**Discipleship can only happen with accountability.** Our discipleship group’s application statement was, “I will pray every day to find a physical need to meet that could lead to a spiritual conversation.”

God speaks through His Word, and we can find truths in His Word by asking these three questions:

1. What do I learn about God?
2. What do I learn about people?
3. How will I obey this passage?

What a neat experience to watch young believers read a passage and work through discovering Who God is by answering those questions and applying them directly to their lives.

I was reminded of this discipleship night while reviewing old notes in preparation for this study. While we may have missed some deeper knowledge and application, we understood the concept of the passage. God revealed Who He is and what our responsibility is. As we dive deeper into Acts 2, you will notice four truths about the early church. First, they cared deeply about sound doctrine. Second, their love for one another

unified them. Third, they broke bread together. Lastly, they were actively involved in the work.

**Application: God is always looking for disciples.**

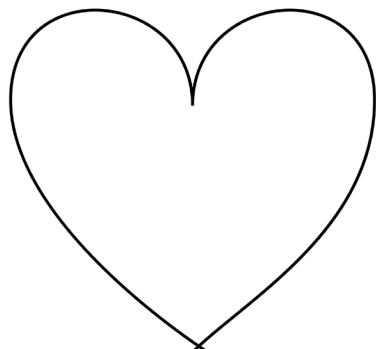
**What does this mean for us?**

**How do we join Him in His search for disciples?**

### Devoted to teaching and learning.

First, in Acts 2, they were continually devoted to teaching and learning. Those believers thought it important to have the correct doctrine and understanding. Being continuously dedicated to proper teaching equips us with a biblical worldview of God and man. As we develop our biblical worldview, the desire to apply and obey what we learn will grow, aligning our hearts, minds, and actions with Christ. We will be replicates of Him.

Correct teaching should transform our lives. When we enter that time of learning, whether in a church service, small group, discipleship group, or personal devotions, we should



join  
with our  
hearts open and  
our ears ready to hear.

We should ask God to reveal our downfalls and shortcomings, reveal truths that He wants us to learn, and

help us find ways to obey those teachings immediately.

Ephesians 1:17-19 teaches us to have a spirit of wisdom—good judgment and discernment. Pray for spiritual depth and endeavor to know God and the revelation of Who He is. It is impossible to have a deep relationship with God and continue to make foolish decisions all the time. Knowledge must transform our hearts; it cannot stay in our minds.

### Unified by Love

The second truth we learn from Acts 2 is—love unified them. When our lives are transformed by correct knowledge and understanding, the result will be a desire to have fellowship with others. The church in Acts 2 obeyed Jesus' command in John 13:34-35 (ESV), "love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus did not say to love only those you deem worthy, who share your politics, have your skin color, meet your standards, or participate in your church friend group. No. He said to love one another, and all people will know you are His disciple by your love.

**Application: How well do you love others? Search your heart, then answer the following questions:**

**Do your everyday actions show this type of love?**

**Does your Facebook page—what you share and post—show this kind of love?**

**Do your actions and attitude toward your pastor show this kind of love?**

**What area of your life needs improvement so all will know you are a disciple of Christ by the way you love?**

When our hearts align with Christ and we replicate Him, our lives will produce love and be unified as one body of Christ. We cannot have unity until we

surrender our selfish wants and desires.

This type of love in Acts 2 produced a unified group that sold their belongings and combined resources to meet each person's needs. This required intentional, self-sacrificing love. Stop right here and examine your own life. Are you daily living an intentional life and meeting the physical needs of others? Would you know if someone in your church was struggling and needed support, or would you have to wait for the pastor to tell you? Are you rushing around from place to place, not thinking about the people you encounter?

How many God-ordained appointments have we missed because we are focused on 'me' and not on "love one another as I have loved you."

### Breaking Bread Together

The third thing we learn from Acts 2 is breaking bread together. Most commentators agree that when the New Testament church practiced Communion, it was typically with an entire meal. One commentary said the phrase could be described as "Christians fellowshiping together at mealtime" (John-Michael Wong, *Opening up Acts, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2010), 31–33). Good news—our church dinners can stay!

### Become Involved in God's Work

The last thing we learn is that the believers did not only worship but also became actively involved in God's work. It is our duty to be enthusiastically

engaged in the work. This group was known for its faithful attendance and involvement. The church is the avenue in which God has chosen to display His glory, according to Ephesians 3:20-21. Therefore, all ministries begin and end in the local church. If you are not engaged in a local church, then you may not be allowing the power of God to work through you.



Often, we let ourselves off the hook of serving and doing what God has asked us to do by saying, "I can't; I am not good at that." What we're really saying is, "I won't. I won't allow myself to be uncomfortable and pushed out of my comfort zone. I want to serve God on my terms and how I think it should be done."

## How does all of this apply to making disciples?

We can only make disciples if our hearts are right. That is where we start. We must align our hearts with God, find where He is at work, and join Him. This mindset might find us needing to radically change our thinking, work on one area of our life displeasing to God, or



dive deeper into His Word. We will all have different starting points, but everyone needs to aim for the same goal—to align our hearts with Christ, obey Him, and make disciples.

We must understand the seriousness of our calling

to make disciples. Luke 10 is a beautiful chapter that teaches us three lessons about making disciples: the work is hard, the task is dangerous, and discernment is necessary.

First, the work is hard. Luke 10:2 (ESV) says, “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Notice they did not pray

for the work to be easier; they prayed for more workers. They understood that the task at hand was difficult and they needed help. How often have we prayed for someone else to do the work we were called to do? Our task is difficult, and we need help. We should pray for more laborers. We must make more disciples.

Second, we learn that the task is dangerous. We must serve with a purpose. Luke 10:3 says we are like sheep in the middle of a wolfpack. Vance Havner said, “Any man who takes Jesus Christ seriously becomes the target of the devil. Most church members do not give Satan enough trouble to arouse his opposition.” Ouch! How convicting is that statement? The job of making disciples is not up to our pastor, his wife, or church leadership. That charge is for every single follower of Jesus. When it says in Matthew 28 to go and make disciples, it means, as you are going,

make disciples—it is a lifestyle of making disciples. As we go and do, we need to look for opportunities to make disciples. We need to serve with a purpose.

What does serving with a purpose look like? It looks different for everyone and every church. This is when we put into practice aligning our hearts with Christ to

know where He is leading so we can join Him. We must do more than the programs and activities we enjoy. We must seek the Lord and His wisdom to know what He is asking us personally to do and what He is asking our church to do.

Serving my community in Smyrna, Tennessee may look different from serving the community where you live. Our communities are different and have different needs. Ask yourself, “Am I standing in the way of my church reaching my community because of what I want to happen, not because the Lord is directing?” Remember our discussion earlier about being pushed out of our comfort zones and saying I will instead of I can’t (which means I won’t)?

The third lesson from Luke 10 is the necessity of discernment. Luke 10:6 warns about not having discernment in sharing the Good News. It says, “...if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you.” All the lessons we have learned up to this point are essential to having discernment. Be careful about having spiritual conversations with people who are not ready; you could potentially do spiritual damage. Living a life in tune with God prepares us to hear when He speaks and know when to act. We are looking for persons of peace—people in whose hearts the Lord is working. He works, then uses us as the laborers in the harvest.

The theme verse this year for *Treasure* is Revelation 7:9, “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” How do the lessons from Acts 2:42-47 and Luke 10:1-6 apply to Revelation 7:9? God is always looking for disciples. He uses believers to meet the physical need before meeting the spiritual need. God works through us when we are obedient.

We must align our thoughts and attitudes with Him as we constantly look for disciples—as we are going. Correct teaching and faithful attendance at the local church are vital to our walk, allowing us to have spirits

of wisdom and discernment. A disunified local church cannot reach its community. Fellowship, unity, and a direction of oneness are the ingredients for a church to effectively reach its community and disciple. Discipling is more than encouraging words and checking in.

Discipleship is getting in the trenches with someone, teaching them what Scripture says, and living it out as an example.

Our focus must be on the task at hand as we are going to make disciples. Living in America, we have the amazing opportunity of having all nations in our backyard. Remember, we learned that Jesus said we are known as His disciples by how we love one another. How can our love for others help us produce tangible ministries to reach all nations? Let me share a few ways my local church is trying to accomplish this mission.

First, my church has focused on assisting our Spanish pastor, Rufo Gomez, with outreach opportunities in a community close to ours. We helped him with an Easter Egg Hunt—a very neat experience because the people in the apartment complex knew that Brother Rufo was a follower of Jesus, so they were curious about what the Easter Bunny had to do with Jesus. This cultural confusion was a beautiful example of how God was working and opening doors for Brother Rufo to share the Gospel. These people were seeking, and now a new church has been established.

The church has also offered English as a Second Language (ESL). The goal is to meet a physical need and pray for “persons of peace” to be open to spiritual conversations. It takes time, effort, and patience to make disciples.

A third way my church is trying to reach all nations is by examining the population of our community. We participated in the *Know Your Community* demographic study that the Free Will Baptist Executive Office offers in partnership with Church Answers with Thom Rainer ([www.churchanswers.com](http://www.churchanswers.com)). The study allowed us to see the demographics around us using five and fifteen-minute drive times. Meeting as a group, we are also learning about the people in our community, pray-



ing for God to speak and show us what outreaches we need to offer. Remember, often God meets the physical need before meeting the spiritual need. Our church is praying together to seek unity in what God asks us to do. God only works when there is unity, and He will guide us if we truly surrender and obey.

The demographic study was insightful! One of the biggest things we learned about our community was that within a 10-minute drive to our church, we have a large single-parent and single-adult demographic. As we have been praying, we feel the Lord leading our women to host fellowship events or classes for the community—freezer meal ideas, wreath making, cooking on a budget, finance or self-defense classes. We are also praying about opening a food pantry and a clothing closet.

These are all tangible opportunities to demonstrate to our community our love and desire to help them. We are not forcing people to commit to church or have a spiritual conversation. Instead, we love on people and work on our intimacy with God so we are prepared when a “person of peace” walks through our doors.

Here are some challenges for you. How can you fulfill

Acts 2 and Luke 10 to make disciples and seek out “people of peace”?

What tangible outreaches can you, your women’s ministry, and your church begin?

How can you first begin meeting the physical needs of your community to meet their spiritual needs?

Start praying and asking the Lord where He is at work in your community so that as you are going—YOU are making disciples. *W*

*About the Writer:*

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