

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 14 – Lesson 1



### Camaraderie

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Scripture reading Acts 4:23

*“And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.”*

The early church had a spirit of camaraderie. As soon as Peter and John were threatened and released, our passage says, *“they went to their own company.”* They were discouraged, but when they got together with their brothers and sisters in Christ, they were encouraged to move forward in the name of Jesus. God’s Word teaches us that we need one another. Jesus sent His disciples out two by two. The writer of Hebrews tells us that we need to *“consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is”* (Hebrews 10:24-25). You may be thinking, “Well Pastor, we are to be self-quarantined. How can we encourage one another during this time?” In these times of quarantine, I would encourage you to do a number of things.

1. Call other church members. Let them know you love them and are praying for them. Share positive and uplifting stories.
2. Text your church family to let them know you love and appreciate them. Encourage them to text you back. Use social media such as Facebook and Marco Polo to interact.
3. Pray for one another. We need one another, and we need to know that others are praying for us.
4. Drop by another church members house to drop off a gift to say, “I love you.” It doesn’t have to be anything large. It could be a cupcake from a bakery, a box of doughnuts, a small devotional book, or some homemade cookies. (You can drop those off at my house.)

The early church was used in a powerful way. In the midst of adversity, they had camaraderie. Paul said, *“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:2). The law of Christ is that we love one another the way He loved us. You need camaraderie. You need companionship. You need the encouragement of brothers and sisters in Christ and others need you. When you reach out and encourage others, it will be an encouragement to you and you, as a believer, will SHINE.

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 14 – Lesson 2



### Unity

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Scripture reading Acts 4:24a

*“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord...”*

Today, I want to look at another quality of that early church, which is unity. Our passage tells us that they were in *“one accord.”* Does that mean that every one of them were exactly alike? Absolutely not. They were all different. You can’t have 8,000 people without having a diversity of backgrounds, personalities, and in this group a diversity of languages. Just looking at the twelve apostles, there were major differences in personality. Peter was the bold, aggressive, and outspoken leader. James and John were the sons of thunder. Matthew had been a tax collector. Thomas was a skeptic. James was a zealot. There were of course the ladies and Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary was a God-fearing lady from her youth. One of her closest friends was Mary Magdalene, who had been demon possessed. They certainly came from different backgrounds and, yet, they were unified.

When my wife and I came back to Las Vegas forty-two years ago, we realized that we were dealing with people from all different backgrounds. Yet, we have had great unity within our church. Why? Because like that early church, though we don’t agree about everything, we agree on the essentials! Jesus Christ is God, and salvation is by grace through faith alone in Him. The number one agenda is to share that good news with the world. An interesting phenomenon has taken place during our present crisis here in the United States and I thank God for it. I have noticed that since the onset of the coronavirus, there has been a lot less critics on social media and a lot more encouragement. Maybe God is using this virus to unify His family, because where there is unity there is power. When there is unity within the local church, there is the blessing of God within that church. David said, *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”* (Psalm 133:1). That first local church reflected the glory of God because they had camaraderie and unity. When we choose to adapt these qualities in our church, Liberty will SHINE.

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 14 – Lesson 3



### Recognition of the Person, Power, and Presence of Jesus

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Scripture reading Acts 4:24

*“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:”*

Any church that is going to SHINE for Jesus Christ, must recognize the person, power, and presence of Jesus Christ. As soon as the Apostles were threatened and released, they came back to their companions and immediately called on God, the Lord Jesus Christ, to hear and answer their prayers. They were very aware of the presence of God in their midst. Jesus said to His disciples, *“where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matthew 18:20). Jesus also promised His disciples that He would come and dwell with them. *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you”* (John 14:18). As a believer, you need to be continually aware that Jesus is with you. He is God. He is the Creator. He is present. He is powerful. There is no need that you have that He cannot take care of. The early disciples knew they were called to represent Him. They knew He was the all-powerful and ever present one, Who created the heaven and the earth.

Several years ago, I worked for a preacher across town. He gave me a small office right next to his and told me that if I needed anything to let him know. One day, I needed some paper to print a flyer. I noticed his door was locked and I didn't want to disturb him in his time of study. So, I went through the entire church looking for a ream of paper. I finally found a ream. It wasn't exactly what I wanted but I figured I would use it. I started to print the flyer. The pastor came out of his office and asked me what I was doing. When I showed him, he said, “Why didn't you ask me. I would have given you some paper that was appropriate. The paper you are using is very expensive paper and not meant for this project.” He then quoted Scripture. *“David, ‘ask and it shall be given to you.’”* He was present, but I didn't call on him. Like the early church if we want to SHINE, we must recognize, the person, power, and presence of Jesus and call upon Him continually.

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 14 – Lesson 4



### Faith in His Word

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Scripture reading Acts 4:25-26

*“Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.”*

Our Scripture reading today is a direct quote from Psalm 2. It is obvious that this first church had absolute faith in the inspiration and preservation of God’s Word. When you hold the Bible in your hand, are you confident that it came directly from God? We believe in what is technically referred to as plenary (which means “complete”), verbal (which means “word for word”), inspiration (which means “God breathed”). That means we believe that God inspired every word that we find in the Bible. It is sad that today when many people who call themselves Christians deny God’s inspiration. The true believer does not have to look for authority. He carries the authority with him. God gives us pastors and teachers to preach and teach His Word and to help bring Christians to maturity.

The story is told of a young man in college several years ago, who needed five hundred dollars for an emergency he faced. He wrote to his father (this was obviously before cell phones) about his need. A few days later, he received a package in the mail. When he opened the package there was a Bible. On the outside of the Bible was a note from his father. The note said, “Son, everything you need for your emergency can be found in this book.” Frustrated with his father’s religious fanaticism, the boy put the Bible down and ignored the note. Several months later after the emergency had passed the father stopped by to visit his son at college. His son was very upset and asked him why when he was in a state of emergency did he not come through. His father had a puzzled look on his face and said to his son, “Did you open the Bible I sent to you?” His son responded, “Of course not. I didn’t have time.” His father walked over to the nightstand where the Bible sat, opened it up, and pulled out five one-hundred-dollar bills. If the boy had just opened the Bible, he would have found his father’s provision. The early disciples had faith in God’s inspired and preserved Word. As a church we must trust His Word in times of emergency. When you, as a believer, puts your confidence in God’s Word, then you, as a believer, will SHINE.

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 14 – Lesson 5



### Applying God's Word to Our Present Circumstances

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Scripture reading Acts 4:27-28

*“For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”*

I find this passage of Scripture very fascinating. If you read Psalm 2, it is obvious that David is speaking about persecution that he was enduring during his lifetime. He was the king of Israel, anointed by God. After he was anointed king, King Saul, who was the disobedient king of Israel, began to persecute David, causing David to live the life of a fugitive. After King Saul died and David became king, he ruled in righteousness for forty years. During that time, David faced criticism, rebellion, opposition from within the kingdom, and criticism and attacks from outside the kingdom. Even his son Absalom stood against him and tried to overthrow his kingdom.

In Psalm 2, David lamented the fact that the world was fighting against his rule and recognized that God had placed him where he was. Yet, in Acts 2, Peter applies this Psalm to the circumstance. The nation of Israel had denied Christ who was the physical descendant of David. They had put Jesus on a cross. They had rejected His offer of the kingdom. We learn from this passage of Scripture that it is God's will for us to take truth from God's Word and make it applicable to our present circumstances. There was a crisis in David's day, there was a crisis during the time of the Apostles, and there is a crisis presently. In David's day, he concluded that he had to trust God and that God would deliver his enemies into his hand. In Peter's day, the church claimed the promise that was given to David and watched God give them great deliverance. In our day, we must believe that God is in control of the powers that be and that He will use the present distress we are in for His glory. As His church, we can believe that as He worked in David's and Peter's time, He will work in our day if we trust, cry out to Him, and believe in Him. The Christian that applies this truth of God's Word to His life will SHINE.

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 14 – Lesson 6



### Pray for Power and Boldness

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Scripture reading Acts 4:29-31

*“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”*

The early church was in a time of crisis. They had been told to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. They were detained and they were threatened. What did they do? They went back to their company, united together for prayer, put faith in the Word of God, and prayed. They did not pray for deliverance from the crisis, but for power and boldness to preach God’s Word and be an effective witness in the midst of the crisis. When they did, the Spirit of God filled them, they began to boldly preach God’s Word, and gave generously to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

All around us today, there are people hurting, afraid, and wondering what is next. You have the answer to what is next. You have the answer to their dilemma. You have eternal life. You have the God that is living inside of you. God wants you, me, and Liberty Baptist Church to be where we are right now representing Him. We are limited in our ability to meet together collectively, but we are not restricted from getting together with two or three to pray together, encourage one another, or to witness on a one on one basis.

Let me encourage you to be like those early apostles. Stay in the Word. Stay connected with the church through social media, KVXL 101.1 FM, or KVXL101.com. Witness every opportunity you have. Personally encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ on a one on one basis. Instead of your own needs, think of the needs of others. Give generously. Determine to represent Jesus Christ as the early church did. Because the early church did, they saw the blessing, power, and provision of God. God wants us as a church to SHINE. God wants you as an individual to SHINE. Remember your sovereign God is in control, so go SHINE for Jesus.