

Apostles Houston  
Life Group Study: Acts 1:1-11

## **Love and Laughter**

### Creating a Sacred Space

Welcome→ Embrace→ Refresh

## **Remembering Our Purpose**

### Why Do We Do Life Groups? *(feel free to communicate this in your own words)*

In Acts 2, we read how early Christ followers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In Life Groups we follow their example with the hope of becoming more like Jesus, the goal of our salvation.

## **Being Known**

### Story Telling

*In 5-7 minutes, what do you want us to know about yourself (~5Hs)?*

### Pray and Celebrate

Be sure to honor whatever is good or beautiful about their story, and ask one or two people to pray over those who just shared.

## **Following Up**

### Responding to God's Word

Last week, we were encouraged to reflect and respond to the Spirit's invitation to participate in the radical ways he was at work in the world, loving others. Would anyone like to share their experience?

## Hearing/Obeying the Word

Hearing: (Read “Context” and then Acts 1:1-11. Then pray for God’s grace to understand.)

- Before we dive in, what are some big themes that stand out to you as significant in this passage? When you think of Jesus’ ascension (prior to tonight), what comes to mind? Is it significant?
- In vv 6-7, the disciples rightly assumed that Jesus’ resurrection implied that he was the world’s true lord and king, and that his kingdom would come to bear on earth as in heaven. But they were wrong in thinking it would happen right away (at least, in full). What are some things you can point to in the world as evidence that God’s kingdom has already come (partially), but not yet in full? What about in your personal life? Why the delay?
- In v 8, Jesus says the disciples would be his “witnesses,” testifying to all the world of his resurrection and coming kingdom. He also said they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so. In what ways have you had the opportunity to be a “witness” to the gospel? In what ways have you sensed the Spirit’s help in doing so?
- In vv 9-11, the “two men” explain to the disciples Jesus’ ascension to power (at the right hand of God), and the assurance that he would come again (to fully establish his kingdom on earth as in heaven). This gave the disciples assurance that Jesus would be actively working *with* them and that their work in the Lord would not be *vain*—he would finish it. With this same assurance, in what ways do you sense the Spirit calling you to be a witness in this season of life (be specific: at home..., at work..., etc)? What are some risks you would be willing to take if you knew that, ultimately, you could not fail?

Obeying (application):

- The main idea is that Jesus is still at work in the world, bringing his kingdom to bear on earth as in heaven. Only, now, he is working through his spirit-empowered witnesses (the church), to continue the work. Reflecting on the ways his kingdom has *not yet* come in full, discuss how you—as a Life Group— can work with him to further the kingdom in a concrete way that bears witness to the gospel. (Clarification: this should be a group activity)

## Soul Care/Prayer

This week, break up into groups of MEN and WOMEN for prayer. Along with sharing prayer needs, create some space for confession. Pray for God’s grace to repent and be healed.

**Announcements:** *See handout*

## Teacher's Notes

### Context

This week's passage comes at the beginning of the book of *Acts*, but at the end of *The Gospel According to Luke*—*Acts* is part II of Luke's account. The two accounts have a little bit of overlap in that they both record Jesus' "ascension" into heaven. Now, for most of us, the ascension of Jesus makes us think of the "absence" of Jesus in the world. As though Jesus did his part, and now he's left us to do ours—he'll be back when we are done. However, the ascension isn't actually about Jesus' absence, but about his "presence" —at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). From there, he is actually *ruling* over heaven *and* earth, interceding in prayer on our behalf (Hebrews 7:25), and providing all the grace we need to be witnesses to his resurrection and coming Kingdom.

### Specific Insights

- The Kingdom of God has often be characterized as—*already* and *not yet*—because Christ's resurrection is evidence that new creation (i.e., the kingdom) has already begun, but it has not come in full. There is still a lot of old creation that needs to be redeemed/restored. This is the mission of the church: to participate in the unfolding work of God to bring about "new creation," where God and humanity dwell together again. However, this "delay" can be confusing. Why did God not bring about all of the new creation when Jesus rose from the dead? The answers to this question vary, but a good answer can be found in Genesis. Remember, God's original plan wasn't to snap His fingers and have his creation complete. His plan was to work *with* his image-bearing creatures (man and woman) to create a world of self-giving love. This takes time. This takes cooperation. Likewise, in our salvation, God has not only redeemed us from sin, but he has given us the power of His Spirit to cooperate with Him again to finish the work He originally tasked us to do, and that takes time. Thus, the already/not yet feature of His kingdom isn't so much a "delay" (as though God were slack or slow), but rather a reflection of the "process" of the kind of world He intends to ultimately re-create. One where we have the opportunity and honor to create with Him.