

Bi134 Acts

Lesson Bi134-36 The New Testament Strategy of the Spirit

The missionary arrived by airplane. The pastor of the church where he was to minister picked him up at the airport. As they were driving through the heart of the great city, the missionary asked, “Pastor, what is your strategy for reaching this city for Christ?” The pastor was embarrassed and had to admit that he had no real plan for reaching his city with the gospel. In fact, he had never even thought about such a thing.

In the book of Acts, when the apostle Paul arrived in Ephesus, he had a well-developed strategy for reaching the city—and all of Roman Asia—with the gospel. In this lesson we will look at that strategy. We call it the ‘New Testament Strategy of the Spirit.’ You will remember that in our last lesson, we examined the ‘Ephesian Outpouring.’ In this lesson, we will look at Paul’s ‘Ephesian Campaign’ and the strategy he used to carry it out.

Every good strategy begins with a clear goal. On arriving in Ephesus, Paul’s goal was to evangelize the lost. He wanted to plant Spirit-empowered missionary churches in Ephesus and throughout the Roman province of Asia. We know this because Luke says that, after Paul had been in Ephesus for only two years; “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10). But, how did this happen? The preceding nine verses tell us what Paul did to accomplish this goal. Those verses reveal the three pillars of Paul’s strategy: (1) Holy Spirit empowering, (2) Spirit-empowered witness, and (3) mobilizing workers. Let’s see how Paul implemented each part of his strategy.

The first pillar of Paul’s Ephesian strategy was the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Paul himself entered the city full of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, he was able to proclaim the gospel with power. He prayed with others to be filled with the Spirit. God also used him to heal the sick and cast out demons. Paul understood, however, that it was not enough for him alone to be full of the Spirit. If the work was to prosper, the church he was seeking to mobilize would need to be Spirit-empowered too.

So, when he arrived in Ephesus and discovered 12 disciples, he immediately asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” Paul asked them this question because he wanted to know if they were spiritually ready to help him. His mission was to reach Ephesus and Asia Minor with the gospel. He knew that, if they were to be effective helpers, they too would need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. When “he placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.” Thus empowered, the church in Ephesus became a powerful center of missionary activity. It reached into every corner of the province.

When leading our churches into any evangelistic, church planting, or missions outreach we, like Paul, must ensure that we are full of the Holy Spirit. We move in *his* power. We must further ensure that those who participate in the outreach are full of the Spirit. This fullness of the Spirit comes from an experience Jesus called the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is maintained through prayer and openness to the Spirit.

The second pillar of Paul's missionary strategy was Spirit-empowered witness. Like the first pillar, this one also has two parts. First, Spirit-empowered witness involves anointed proclamation of the gospel. It further involves demonstrations of kingdom power through the manifestation of signs and wonders. Once the 12 disciples had been empowered by the Holy Spirit, Paul immediately took them into the synagogue. He "spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God." In other words, Paul boldly proclaimed that Jesus, the Messiah, had come to set up his kingdom on earth (Acts 19:8).

Paul also witnessed by performing signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit. The Bible says that "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul." These miracles included healing the sick and casting out demons. As a result, "the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power" (Acts 19:20).

Today, we should follow Paul's example. We must faithfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, we must trust God to confirm his Word by performing miraculous signs and wonders.

The third pillar of Paul's missionary strategy was mobilization. Like the previous two pillars of Paul's strategy, the mobilization of workers had two parts, training workers and sending them to the field. Once the disciples had been empowered by the Spirit, Paul began training them for regional missions. Luke says, "He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus." In other words, he started a school for training workers. In this school, he must have taught them the basics of the gospel. He also likely taught them church planting and missions strategy.

Then, Paul began sending the disciples out into every corner of the province. No doubt, they employed the same missionary strategy as Paul. They preached with power and planted Spirit-empowered missionary churches. The application of this strategy resulted in a spontaneous multiplication of churches throughout the entire region. As a result "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord."

Paul's strategy for Ephesus and Asia Minor was not original with him. He was simply following the example of Jesus. Jesus mobilized his followers by training them and sending them out. As they went, they were to preach the gospel and to demonstrate its power with signs following. However, before they did any of this, they were to wait in Jerusalem to be empowered by the Spirit. Paul was simply "working the plan." He was following the example of Jesus in sending his church into the world.

We, as ministers of the gospel, must do the same. We must approach our work with a well thought out, biblically-based strategy. Everything we do must be focused. We must intentionally plant Spirit-empowered missionary churches. To do this, we must ensure that we are full of the Holy Spirit. We must further ensure that our church members have been empowered by the Spirit. Only then will these believers have the zeal and power needed to spread the gospel to the surrounding areas. Further, we must preach the gospel in the power of the Spirit and expect Christ to confirm his Word with signs following. Finally, we must carefully

mobilize the churches we plant for further missional ministry. We can do this through focused training and by sending and supporting those who have been trained.

This lesson is **important** because we learn about the ‘New Testament Strategy of the Spirit’ used by Jesus and the apostles.

The **main truth** we learn from this lesson is that we must follow the biblical plan for church planting and missions. This plan includes the empowerment of the Spirit, the proclamation of the gospel, and the mobilization of workers.

Let’s **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. Name the three pillars of Paul’s strategy for reaching Ephesus and Roman Asia for Christ.
A. [PAUSE] If you answered, the empowerment of the Spirit, the proclamation of the gospel, and the mobilization of workers, you answered correctly.
2. What were the two parts of Paul’s strategy of empowerment?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the two parts of Paul’s strategy of empowerment are the empowerment of the leader and the empowerment of the workers, you are correct.
3. What were the two parts of Paul’s strategy of witness?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the two parts of Paul’s strategy of witness are Spirit empowered proclamation of the gospel and miraculous signs, you are right.
4. What are the two parts of Paul’s strategy of mobilization?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the two parts of Paul’s strategy of mobilization are training workers and sending them to the field, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson over and over until you understand it thoroughly. Then, sit down with your church committee. Discuss how you can implement the ‘New Testament Strategy of the Spirit’ into your church’s evangelistic, church planting, and missions outreach.