



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

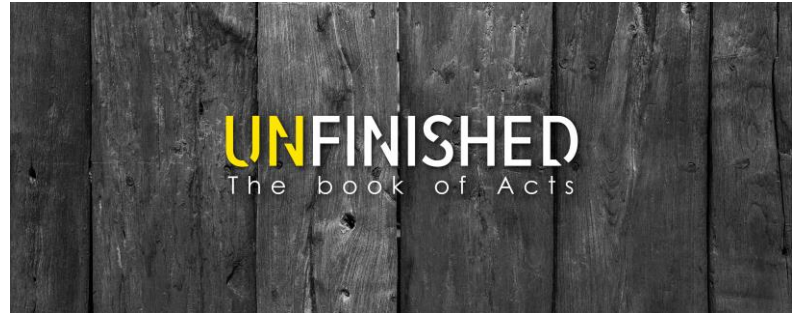
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Unfinished

Part 1: What Is A Christian? – Part 1

Acts 1:1–5

Tim Badal | September 10, 2017



Let's turn our attention now to the book of Acts which describes events that took place in the best of times and the worst of times. For the previous three years, twelve men had had their lives turned upside down as they followed this Rabbi named Jesus, Who had called them to leave their families and friends and livelihoods. It was a radical change, but it was also an awesome experience. They had heard this Man teach in a way they'd never heard the Torah or the law taught before.

This Jesus they were following seemed to be afraid of no one. He seemed to have all the right answers for every question, perfectly balancing grace and truth. In addition to giving amazing sermons, He did amazing things. He changed water into wine. He healed broken people. He exorcised demons. He even raised the dead.

Let's not forget the crowds. The crowds loved Him. People were coming from various places and social positions to hear and see and touch this Man. The disciples knew that when they arrived in Jerusalem something amazing was going to take place. And on that Palm Sunday, a parade broke out in His honor. These men believed they were on the ground floor of a revolution. Everything was going their way.

Their parents must have been so proud. Their friends must have told others, "I know one of His closest followers." That is, until Judas, the turncoat, betrayed Jesus. Everything seemed to unravel so quickly. Judas hands Jesus over to the religious leaders who had been looking for a way to stop the movement. It seemed as though they had landed a knock-out punch against this Man Who seemed untouchable. But after this, everything fell apart.

The disciples found themselves running in fear, most of them disowning this Jesus they had come to love. They even said to strangers, "I don't know Him." As they ran for safety, they began to hear the heartbreaking news that the worst had happened. This Jesus Who had changed them, this Jesus Who had impacted the lives of so many, this Jesus Who was seemingly able to help everyone else was unable to help Himself.

The religious leaders tried and convicted Him. They beat and flogged Him, then hung Him on a criminal's cross. In that moment, the disciples realized what all of Jerusalem must have been thinking: this great movement was over. The run was done. It was time for the eleven disciples to close up shop and head for home.

Still in a raw state of denial, experiencing the aftermath of the whiplash from these events, the disciples gathered together in an upper room to lick their wounds. Some had not given up hope for there was word that the women had gone to the grave and found the stone rolled away. Even their leaders, Peter and John, said they had found that to be true. When they had gone into the grave, there was no body and a glorious man appeared saying, "He is not here. He has risen from the dead."

Still, no sign of Him had been found. There was no proof. That is, until that night in the upper room behind locked doors, as they waited in fear, Jesus Himself appeared. In the following days, He walked and talked with them and even ate with them. They could touch Him and see His wounds. For 40 days He hammered home one indispensable truth: that while He had been put to death on a cross and buried in a grave, Jesus did what He had said He was going to do. He died for our sins, He conquered the grave, and He rose from the dead. Jesus proved all He had said was true.

Soon He would be leaving them again, but He would give them a parting gift—the gift of the Holy Spirit—that would empower them and enable them to finish the work He had called them to do. But in that moment, questions arose. Would the disciples be able to rise to the occasion? How would they do without their Leader in their midst? What would happen when the authorities would push back against their message? What would happen when the world would see their fervor and excitement about a Man Who said He had died and claimed to have come back from the grave? What would this promised Helper do with the ministry they were about to embark on?

To understand the answers to these questions, we're going to look at the book of Acts. There we'll find not only answers to these questions, but much more. In Acts we'll learn about a group of rag-tag followers of Christ who changed the world with the same message we have today. Acts reminds us over and over again that while the church back then did much to impact the society in which they lived, they did not complete the mission. That's why a church like Village Bible Church is called to pick up the mantle, to reach the Fox Valley area—and the uttermost parts of the world—with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So let's look at the first five verses of Acts 1:

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.³ To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me;⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Have you ever heard a story that was so good you just had to tell somebody? This last week Amanda and I were at our oldest son's high school soccer game. Noah is a freshman playing on the team and Amanda had to leave to pick up some of our boys from the youth group events at church. After she left, Noah was put into the game—and would you believe it? Noah scored a goal! I'm so excited. I'm cheering. I'm being as obnoxious as I can be. I quickly get on my phone to tell Amanda, "You missed it!" I'm texting away with my fat little thumbs: "You missed it. He scored a goal! You should have seen it. It was glorious." I'm sitting there pounding away on my phone. I'm thinking, "I'm lucky she had to pick up the kids and I got to stay here. I got to experience it. I got to see it with my own eyes." To which Amanda responded, "I'm still here." I looked around and there she was—even closer to the action than I was. To which I responded, "Quit abandoning our other children and get to work."

Have you ever had a story that was so great, so exciting, that you wanted to share it with someone. I have to be honest: I'm one of those dads. I was texting everybody. So if you got a text from a random number, that was me. I was excited. Whether we see our children do something exciting or see things on TV or have an experience at work or at play an exciting story—something that changes us—is a story we want to tell the world.

Luke has already spent a great amount of time telling the story of Jesus Christ in his Gospel. We know he was telling that story to his friend who I am going to call "Theo." Luke told Theo about all Jesus had taught and done, and now in this second installment he's going to give Theo, as Paul Harvey would say, "the rest of the story."

Luke wrote Acts somewhere around 60 A.D., about 30 years after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He's a doctor who became a companion of the Apostle Paul. Luke himself was not a disciple of Jesus, nor was he an eye-witness of what he was writing about in his Gospel. But he was a close associate of Paul and had hung around people like Peter, James and John. He had come to know the story so well that he felt qualified to be the church's first historian. And what he wrote was amazing. Both Christian and secular scholars agree. Based on his accurate description of towns and cities and islands and people, as well as naming various official titles, archeologist Sir Walter Ramsey wrote, "Luke is a historian of the first rank, not merely with regard to his statements being fully factual and trustworthy, but he should be placed in the pantheon with the greatest of all historians."

A professor of classic literature and archeology at Auckland University, E.M. Blaylock, wrote this: "The Acts of the Apostles is not a shoddy product of pious imagining, but a trustworthy record. It is the spadework of all archeology which first revealed that truth."

Luke is telling the story that changed his life. For 30 years he had witnessed the impact of Jesus and His ministry on people not only in Galilee, but eventually reaching the fringes of the Roman Empire. He's writing to Theophilus, his friend. We really don't know much about Theophilus. Only Luke mentions him in Luke 1 and Acts 1. It seems that Theophilus may have had a title given under the Roman authority, which leads some scholars to think he was in some high position in Caesar's government. In fact, it may have been Theophilus who paid for Luke to write these books.

We might ask why Theophilus would have such a concern that the story of Jesus and His followers be written. Turn for a minute back to the Gospel of Luke. In Luke 1 we read that Luke is dedicating this book to Theophilus:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

It would seem that Theophilus was at least a seeker, if he wasn't already a believer in Jesus Christ. As a good Christian, Luke wanted to provide him with the resources that would help him know the story of Jesus and His followers. He wanted to give Theophilus greater certainty about what he had been taught and perhaps actually believed.

Similarly, the book of Acts is written to help believers be more certain about what Jesus said and did. Picking up from where he left off in his Gospel, he continues to give us the story. At the end of Luke he describes how Jesus ascended into heaven. After that, the disciples returned to Jerusalem. They were excited, praising God—and then the story ends. What happened next?

If we didn't have the book of Acts after the Gospels we'd go right to the book of Romans. And we would definitely wonder how the story jumped from Jerusalem to Rome. Acts gives us those missing pieces of the story, covering about 30 years.

The title of the book is "The Acts of the Apostles." While that description applies, it's really not a slam dunk. Yes, we will read about the work of the apostles, but the real title should probably be "The Acts of God." God is the superstar, the center of this book. If we just focus on the cool things the apostles do, we might forget that He is the One Who is actually working.

This is a transitional book. It gives us a look at the ebb and flow of the early church. It begins in Jerusalem and finishes in Rome. There were moments of great celebration, especially the day of Pentecost that we'll talk about in a few weeks. But then a few chapters later we'll see some followers of Jesus—Ananias and Sapphira—who speak a lie before God and His people and are put to death by God Himself. These are times of celebration and times of defeat, times of great clarity and times of confusion.

Some people like to focus on the exciting things they read in Acts. As we'll see, there are lots of miracles in this book. We'll read about people talking in different languages. There are people teleported from one place to another. That sounds pretty cool, right? But we might forget that the real purpose of the book is not those ecstatic things. Rather, it's an ongoing reminder that God is changing the world through His Son—and you and I get to be part of that unfinished mission.

You need to know that during these 30 years, the entire movement of Christianity is in transition, which makes interpreting the book of Acts a little tougher. First, while it begins with 12 and then 120 who are all Jewish people, it moves to being a church in which the majority of the people are Gentile.

A second transition is this: in the early days the role of the apostles is essential as the church's leadership. But by the middle of Acts, their role is diminishing and is being replaced by the role of local elders in local churches, even as we have here at Village Bible Church.

Third, the church is transitioning from being centered in Jerusalem to being in all the far-flung places in the Roman Empire.

Fourth, in the beginning of Acts the attention is focused on the ministry of Peter and John, but by chapter nine it becomes almost entirely the story of the journeys of the Apostle Paul as he carried the gospel to the Gentiles in the known world.

When we understand that Acts is a book of transitions, it may help us to understand why we're no longer doing some of the things we read about. As Christians, and for me as a Bible teacher, we need to test what we read in the book of Acts using the "descriptive/prescriptive test." This book describes some things that we no longer see going on in our church today.

We'll run into one next week. Judas ends his life because of the guilt he feels after betraying Jesus. But because Jesus taught about the 12 apostles sitting on thrones, ruling and judging the nations, Peter and the others decided they needed to replace him. They pick a man named Matthias to replace Judas as the 12th apostle. However, they didn't do it through a vote—they rolled the dice. They cast lots, which might lead someone to think, "Why don't we do that?" We've got some elders to be elected here. Why not grab some dice and roll them to see if they should be elders or not? That's a practice we see once in the New Testament, which we would now classify as "descriptive." God allowed them to do it once and worked through it, but it's probably not something we would "prescribe" for Village Bible Church or any New Testament church moving forward.

And there are other things like speaking in tongues, performing miracles and healings. Why are we as pastors not spending less time on preaching and more time on bringing people forward for healing? Why don't we take the infirm, the broken, the demon-possessed and have a healing ministry, like we read that James and John did in Acts? Why aren't we doing what we see on TV?

While we would agree that God still heals, the role of the Healer was for a moment in time which is being described in the book of Acts. Those things had their moment, but we've moved on now. God may still use that in special circumstances, but it's probably not prescriptive for the church to follow.

So what are the prescriptive things? Prayer. The fellowship of the saints. Communion. The preaching of God's Word. Evangelism. Being bold about our faith. These are the things we see over and over and over again. These are the things that are reinforced in the apostles' writings later, after the book of Acts. When we find examples of things not only in Acts but in other parts of the Scriptures, we'll think, "Maybe there's a prescription here. Maybe this is for us as well."

If we use the example of casting lots in Acts 1 as our model, in Acts 6 and Acts 15 we find that no dice are being used. Instead, prayer and seeking the Spirit's leading through the collective body of believers is the prescribed action in times when the church needs to make decisions.

So we're not rolling dice to pick our new elders, are we? What we're doing is bringing these decisions before the entire body—Acts 6 and 15—with the leaders asking, "Do we believe it is the Lord's will that we bring these elders into our church leadership?" We'll either hear a resounding yes, or a resounding no from the people who are being led by the Spirit, because that is the prescribed way of making decisions within the church.

We'll go over this again a number of times as we encounter things in Acts that seem a little odd. If we see things in Scripture that we don't do, we'll apply the descriptive/prescriptive test to find our answers. But now let's look at these opening verses. What Luke is saying to Theophilus is simple but important—although I didn't expect to see this when I started preparing this sermon.

Luke is describing in these verses what a Christian actually is. He's not describing the church—we'll get to that later. But by looking at how Luke speaks of the eleven apostles, we can get a picture of the kind of people who would eventually fill the church. Christians are people who have had their lives changed by the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ.

I see here three characteristics of Christians that we can use to evaluate our own lives. Are we just saying we're Christians but aren't? As we'll see in this chapter, it's possible to talk a good game, it's possible to hang around Jesus for a long time, it's possible even to do ministry in the name of Jesus—and still not be truly Christians.

Our example here is Judas, who walked with Jesus and who did ministry in the name of Jesus. When Jesus sent out the 12, we don't read that only 11 came back reporting great things, with Judas having seen nothing. No, he fully experienced the ministry, yet he was far from God. Some of us as well might talk a good game, might even fake the Christian life, but we need to evaluate these characteristics in our lives to see whether or not we pass the test.

This is where the words of Luke in Acts 1 can be helpful. You see, the definition of a Christian has remained unchanged from the 1st century to the 21st century.

Christians are people who are convinced.

The first characteristic of authentic Christians is that they are convinced. Luke begins by saying the reason the disciples were carrying this message to others was that they were convinced the gospel was true. They had seen Jesus put to death and they had seen Him alive again. How could they have been sure? Acts 1:3 tells us that Jesus *"presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."*

They had seen everything that happened on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. What were some of these convincing proofs? After His death and burial and resurrection, they had eaten meals with Him. They met Him in Galilee, just as He told them He would meet them there. He allowed them to touch His body. He instructed them about the nature of His Kingdom and what would happen in the future. He appeared to over 500 people. It wasn't just something a few people saw. More people than are here in this room today saw the risen Jesus on one particular occasion. Then He continued to manifest Himself publicly for 40 days. As a result, the disciples were changed by what they had seen and heard concerning Jesus. It produced in them a conviction that had massive implications for the way they would live the rest of their lives.

But what about those who hadn't seen these things, who weren't there? More to the point, what about us? We didn't see Jesus before He died. We didn't see Him on the cross, nor did we see Him after He was resurrected from the grave. Well, Acts helps us

because neither Luke nor Theophilus were there either, but this record can convince us of the truth of the claims of Christ. How do we gain this confidence?

We are convinced through Jesus' words and works.

First, Luke says in verse one that in his Gospel he had *"dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach."* In other words, he wrote about the works and the words of Jesus. So the question for us today is this: how convinced are we of these two things? How convinced are we that what has been written in the Holy Scriptures is actually true? How convinced are we that His way of living life is the right way and in fact is the only way we can experience the abundant life He speaks of?

Further, how many of us are convinced that when Luke says Jesus healed people, that He actually did that? Or that He exorcised demons and raised people from the dead? Do we believe that? A lot of people will say those are just stories, or maybe they're speaking of healings from some emotional problem or social ill, but not really miracles. Do we believe Luke when he says Jesus did these things? Do we believe Jesus died and was raised by the power of God and has now ascended to heaven and resides at the right hand of the Father?

How convinced are you of these things? The book of Acts can grow our conviction about what Jesus has said and done. Please understand. The rise and fall of your walk with Jesus Christ—your ability to fight off temptation, your ability to make wise and godly decisions—depends on how convinced you are that these things the Bible speaks of are true. If you're wishy-washy on the claims of Jesus, then you will live a "take it or leave it" life. "I like some of these things, but I'm not sure I buy some of what He says." In short, some of us have a confidence issue.

Right now the Chicago Tribune has an ongoing meter that I see now and then on Facebook. They will ask Chicago Cub fans, "How confident are you that the Cubs are going to be repeat world champions?" I'll assure you of one thing: we're more confident than the White Sox fans.

It's been funny to watch the ebb and flow of the confidence of Cubs Nation. When the Cubs start losing like they're doing right now, confidence begins to drop. People think, "Right when they seem to be doing well, they let me down. If I'm not sure they're going to repeat, I'm not going to step out and speak my confidence in the team's ability to win." Our confidence impacts what we say about our sports team—and about our Savior.

So some of you are really quiet about your faith, because deep down inside you're not altogether confident in the things of the Lord. You're not convinced Jesus could in fact change your workplace, or that He could use you in a powerful way. You're just not sure all He said and did was the real deal.

The disciples give us a strong picture of what it was like to go from being unconvinced and unconfident about the claims of Jesus to a place of confidence. At first they ran, telling others they didn't know Him. They no longer thought they could put their hope and trust in Him, and they were ready to give it all up. But only a short time later they were able to stand before religious leaders, saying, "You can imprison us. You can beat us down. You can kill us. But we will proclaim the name of Jesus."

What changed? Their education hadn't changed. Their eloquence hadn't. What changed was their confidence in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. And as Christians, we need to become more and more confident. How do we do that? We study the Scriptures, especially the book of Acts, where we are given the clear example of godly believers who were able to take big steps of faith for Jesus.

Christians are people who are commissioned.

In Acts 1:2, Luke records that Jesus *"had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles"*—the called out and sent out ones—*"whom he had chosen."* At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus had chosen these men, telling them they would become fishers of men (Matthew 4:19). He led them and taught them with the goal that one day they would be able to imitate Him in ministry. He explained to them, "I'm not calling you to be the smartest guys in the room and you won't be the most popular." But in verse eight, He repeats what He had told them earlier: *"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* He sends them out to do a specific work and He expects it will be accomplished.

Yesterday, my catering company—5-B's—had four different events going on at the same time. I know you think I'm pretty special, but I can't be in four places at once. So I went to one of the events and I commissioned my employees to do the other three. I told them, "Here's what I'm expecting you to do. I want you to do these events as if I'm there doing them myself." I didn't want them to

cater using their own game plan as if it was their own business. I have trained them and given them core convictions about how I want my catering business to be run. I've prepared them to do things as I myself do them.

And that's exactly the sort of commissioning Jesus is giving His apostles. "Go tell the world about Me as if I'm right there with you, doing the work with you." But here's the great truth. Jesus will be giving these apostles His Holy Spirit, so in a very real sense He will be right there with them, working with them in all places and at all times.

Our commissioning involves godly obedience.

We sometimes miss this, but Luke tells us the first job of a Christian isn't to change the world—it's to wait on God. Some of us, when we become Christians, think our first assignment is to tell the world about it. But Jesus has a very different first step. First, verse two, Jesus gave commands through the Holy Spirit. Then in verse four we read, *"And while staying with them he ordered them."*

Wait a minute. I thought Jesus was their friend. Friends don't command their friends or give orders to their friends. But Jesus tells His disciples, "I've got a job for you to do and you're going to do it my way or not at all." What does He tell them? "I want you to wait." He instructs them *"not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father."* He says, "The Holy Spirit is coming and I don't want you to do a single thing until you have heard from Me."

As followers of Jesus Christ, our number one job is to follow the orders of our Commanding Officer. Some of us think Jesus is a guy who's all about suggestions. But He's not. It's His way or the highway. We've just seen, and we'll see again next week, what happens when a disciple of Jesus goes his own way, when he goes rogue and doesn't follow the commands of Scripture. We'll see that it didn't turn out well for Judas.

Our commissioning involves a great opportunity.

God has called us as Christians to a ministry that begins with godly obedience—but this commissioning also involves a great opportunity. What is the number one opportunity the disciples would be given? They are about to be given a sneak peek into God's plans. During the time between Jesus' resurrection and His ascension, *"He presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God (1:3).*

In other words, they were given specific insight into what the future was going to hold. He did this so they would not be surprised or anxious about what was happening, but rather they could go full steam ahead with their mission. There's something great about that.

I remember years ago that a couple people from our church were employed by Big Idea Productions, the company that created VeggieTales. One of them was a man named Nathan. One day Keith and I had lunch with him near their headquarters in the suburbs, so he showed us around their facility. We walked by room with a sign that said "Keep Out"—or at least it said something that implied that. It was obvious that what went on in that room was important. Of course Keith wouldn't ask, but I did. "What's going on in there? What do we have to do to get in there?" He said, "I don't think you can go in there." I responded, "Hey, I'm your pastor. I can keep secrets. Tell me what's going on in there." At that point, another guy came and said, "Well, ask my supervisor. He's the guy who will either let you in or not."

So I put on the charm. "Hey, what's going on in there? Tell me—what's the big secret?" And he said, "I'll let you go in." He opened the door and a year before it came out, I got to see the opening scenes of "Jonah: A VeggieTales Movie." I remember thinking, "I'm pretty cool." I also remember that when my wife came home and asked me about it, I responded, "I didn't do anything, honey. Just went out with Keith and Nathan, and we talked about things." So I felt this great excitement that when the movie came out, I would be able to say, "Hey, I knew about that before anybody else did!"

Now you're wondering why I bring this story up, right? Jesus gave the disciples a sneak preview when He drew back the curtain of what was to come. He's also done that for us. He's not just given us the book of Acts, but all of the New Testament books in which we are told a lot about what will be coming in the future. Essentially He's saying, "Take heart. Be encouraged. Don't lose hope." So when we see hurricanes and other terrible things happening, we realize that Jesus taught us about these in Scripture. He said these things would be happening and that it will only get worse until the end of days comes and He returns. Jesus taught His disciples about the Kingdom of God and He has taught us about it as well so we can seek it with all our hearts.

The second great thing He gave His followers was the promise that not only would they be given an assignment, He would guarantee that they would accomplish it.

I hate projects. A couple weeks ago I was putting together bathtub doors. We had had a curtain in the boys' bathroom, but as they grow older more water seems to be displaced. Because we're not excited about waterfalls in our kitchen, the plan was to install shower doors. I boldly told Amanda, "If you buy them, I will build them."

Then I looked at the instructions. They said they're in English, but they're not. I have zero confidence that I'll be able to complete this, so I called one of my employees. I said, "Hey, your boss is up a creek here. You've got to come help me." Then one of my neighbors, who is a member of this church, comes by and brings me tools, since I didn't have anything I needed. "Do you really think you've got this under control?" he asks me. "I don't. I think I've got it upside down!" I have zero confidence that this project will turn out the way it is supposed to.

But that is not true of the Christian mission. God has given us His Holy Spirit and promises us, "It's already a done deal. You win. Evil loses. You are going to change the world with My gospel. I'm with you and I can see the end from the beginning. It's already as good as done."

He's saying that because we have the promised Holy Spirit living inside us, we can rest assured that whatever God puts before us to do we'll be able to accomplish. We might think, "I don't know if God can change my workplace. I don't know if God can change my spouse. I don't know if God will change my neighbor." In the book of Acts God says, "Yes, I can and I will—through your obedience and faithfulness." He will allow us to accomplish whatever He calls us to do.

Christians are people who are contagious.

That leads us to one final characteristic of Christians, which is that we're to be contagious. You see, the more confident you become and the more you understand the call God has given you, the more infectious you become.

Years ago, when I was a child—back in the olden days—we suffered from the great malady known as the Pox. I tell my boys, "Yes. Your mom and I experienced the Pox." Small pox? No. Chicken pox.

If you remember back in the day, when parents didn't care about their kids' wellbeing, parents would learn someone had chicken pox and what would they do? They would have us go play with them! "Hey, drink from the same cup. Eat from the same bowl. We're all part of one big family. Yeah, give 'em a kiss!" These days we can't even eat in the same area code, but back then the kids got spots all over them—on purpose. And we would get the chicken pox which was this great contagious disease that would ruin a couple weeks of our lives. How did we get it? By interacting with those who had it.

We've called today "Pack The Place Sunday." Some of you might think it's just a gimmick to make Pastor Tim feel good. If you think that, that's fine. But I'm going to tell you it's more biblical than that. The reason church attendance is so important is that we become contagious when we interact with one another. The closer we get to one another as we're worshipping God, we more we catch the fever. I pray that when we leave this place we'll be a little more contagious than when we came in. So we have, if you will, these "Christian pox parties" where we gather together and get more and more contagious, then we're sent out with the fever and the fervor to share what we have with the world.

This means we have to grow.

What does this mean? It means we have to grow in some areas. We must grow in our community with one another, as well as grow in our community with God. In the book of Acts we'll see how the people prayed together and worshiped together and spent time together. They shared everything in common and gave freely to one another. In all of the "one another" things we read about that they did, who were they doing it for? They were doing it for God.

So in a sense they received the fever from God and then shared it with one another. And then they went out into the world, spread the fever and more people would come into the group. Then these people also became contagious—and that's the book of Acts. The amazing thing is that the fever they experienced by the Holy Spirit in the 1st century is the same fever we're experiencing 2,000 years later. God is finishing His work.

This means we have to go.

We not only have to grow, we also have to go. God will call us to be His witnesses in the world. We're to be witnesses everywhere—in our communities, in our schools, in our neighborhoods, in our families, in our workplaces, in the grocery store and the department store. We are to be His witnesses with people we know and with people we don't know. We're to be witnesses when

we're working and when we're playing, when we're at home or on vacation. God has called us to be His witnesses so His Word and His gospel will go forth to the uttermost parts of the world.

As I close, notice that our series is entitled "Unfinished." I want to make clear that the unfinished work isn't what Jesus was supposed to have done. Remember, when He was on the cross, He announced, "It is finished." He had completed the work His Father sent Him to do (John 17:4). But now He's commissioned us to pick up where He left off. As long as there are people who don't know Him, that work is not yet complete.

We have some work to do, Village Bible Church. We need to become more confident—convinced about Who Jesus is. We have to believe that Jesus has called us into this mission, and we need to become more contagious by living with God and being close to one another so we can change the world. And here's our example: We'll see in Acts how the world was set on fire by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Can that not happen in the Fox Valley area as we too get excited about our faith? The work is left undone. Will we pick up the mantle and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, complete the task so Jesus can come and take us home?

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.net).