

Me the Musher

What did they do in the early church?

Acts 8:1,4 On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria... ⁴ Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. NIV

Acts 8:40 [After sharing the gospel with the Ethiopian Eunuch,] Philip... appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. NIV

Acts 9:20 [After his conversion,] Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. NIV

Acts 10:34-36 Then Peter began to speak [to the gentiles in Caesarea]: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. ³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. NIV

Acts 11:19-21 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. ²⁰ Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. NIV

Acts 13:2 [In Antioch,] while [the prophets and teachers] were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” NIV

Acts 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas answered [the Jews in Pisidian Antioch] boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.” NIV

Acts 14:1-28 ...they spoke...speaking boldly for the Lord...they continued to preach...we are bringing you the good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God...they preached...preached...they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. NIV

Why did they spread the message?

- 1) It’s what Jesus said to do.
- 2) It’s how the Holy Spirit led them.
- 3) It’s the demand of love (read the clip)
- 4) It’s what they wanted to give themselves to.

The Demand of Love

For several pages now, we have been examining the examples of Christ, of Paul, and of the early church to answer one simple question: “Does Christ actually intend for all Christians to take personal responsibility for fulfilling His commission?” The weight of these examples is compelling. But even if these examples were missing, wouldn’t love demand the same conclusions? What if Jesus had never said, “Lose your life for the gospel’s sake?” What if Paul had never said, “Imitate me?” What if the New Testament failed to record the example of the early church? Reason and love would demand the same conclusions from us.

Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). And again, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6). If these simple statements are true, if there is truly salvation in no one else, if we have any love for God or compassion for men, then why do we need carefully reasoned arguments to persuade us of the obvious? Even if God did not command us to fill the earth with the gospel, love demands it. Two-and-a-half billion people have never heard the gospel. Certainly, love demands that anyone who has the Bread of Life should take action to relieve such incredible spiritual famine.

Often, the evening news presents us with great physical famine in the world. When non-Christians see this need, they do not need anyone to tell them that they should respond or why they should respond. Simple human compassion says, “Others need and I have. I must give what I have.” Is spiritual famine so different that it stirs up no compassion in us? We have been given the love of Christ. That alone should motivate us to action.

Andrew Murray, great pastor and author of the [1800s], agrees: “Every believer [has] been saved with the express purpose that he should make the saving of other souls the main, the supreme end of his existence in the world... You have been redeemed to be the witnesses and messengers of Christ’s love. To fit you for it, His love has been given you, and shed abroad in your heart. As He loves you, He loves the whole world. He wants those who know it to tell those who don’t know it. His love to you and to them, your love to Him and to them, call you to do it. It is your highest privilege; it will be your highest happiness and perfection. As Christ gave Himself, give yourself wholly to this work of love.”ⁱ

Paul Abbott, *God’s Will for Your Life*,
Great Commission International, 1984, 1988

What can we do?

Three ideas:

- Invite someone to church.
- Pray for, and prepare for, a spiritual conversation.
- Be involved with our mission trip.