

THE PEOPLE OF EMPOWERMENT

Text: Acts 1:9-26

Key Word: People

Key Thought: The People God Empowers Have Distinct Ideals to Live by.

Have you ever noticed that God chooses to use people to accomplish His will when He would so often be able to effectively do His work without our help? Why on earth would an All-Powerful – All Knowing – Ever Present God need us to aid Him? He could have accomplished the need to evangelize this world so much quicker and much more effectively without our assistance.

God chose to give us this building and land and we had our first service here on Pentecost Sunday on June 12, 2011. **Why would He choose us and place us here on this important date?**

The fact is, He has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the wise. He has made foolish the wisdom of this world (I Corinthians 1:20) and has used the foolishness of preaching to save those who will believe (I Corinthians 1:21). Who are these people that God chooses to use?

What Distinguishes the People of God Who Wish to Be Empowered for Change?

I. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF VISION (Acts 1:9-11)

II. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF PROVISION (Acts 1:12-14)

III. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF DIVISION (Acts 1:15-26)

I. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF VISION (Acts 1:9-11)

It is clear from this portion of Scripture that even God's people do NOT always have their eyes on the right things. It was only natural to expect that when Jesus was ascending into the clouds of heaven that they would look up for as long as they could. After all, wouldn't we do the same thing? It would be a wonderful experience to watch our Lord ascending into the clouds. We must remember that this was a fulfilment of the prophecy recorded in Psalm 68:18.

The problem is that we often want to "camp out" during these times. We don't want to leave because these are such incredible visions. What could be better than watching Jesus? The problem was that He had disappeared from out of their sight and they were continuing to look up into the clouds that had concealed Him from their sight.

"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight."

Acts 1:9

I. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF VISION (Acts 1:9-11) (Contd.)

The word used for “*sight*” speaks of “*an eye*.” He was literally taken away from their eyes or as the word also indicates “*from their vision*.” But what they were left to see was also incredible. **It wasn’t just a cloud, but rather the shekinah glory cloud.** This was the same kind of cloud that rested above the Tabernacle of Moses when Israel spent 40 years in the Sinai desert.

The disciples realized this was not a common experience so they wanted it to last. They had to learn early in their walk with God that there is a time when they needed to go on from even their “*high times*.” They needed to understand that God wanted their vision to be directed toward their everyday surroundings. **We can’t help God if we keep our head in the clouds.**

“Vision is the ability to understand the history, the present condition, and the potential of the church, and to conceive a plan for action that will maximize the ministry potential. More often than not, vision is a result of having spent much time absorbing the facts about the community, knowing the resources upon which the church can call (people, funding, facilities, equipment, etc.), and devising sound but creative strategies for moving forward. **Vision always entails progress: it is never satisfied with the status quo.**”

George Barna,
“*How to Find Your Church*”
p. 104

*** About 350 years ago a shipload of travellers landed on the northeast coast of America. The first year they established a town site. The next year they elected a town government. The third year the town government planned to build a road five miles westward into the wilderness.

In the fourth year the people tried to impeach their town government because they thought it was a waste of public funds to build a road five miles westward into a wilderness. Who needed to go there anyway?

Here were people who had the vision to see three thousand miles across an ocean and overcome great hardships to get there. But in just a few years they were not able to see even five miles out of town. They had lost their pioneering vision. With a clear vision of what we can become in Christ, no ocean of difficulty is too great. Without it, we rarely move beyond our current boundaries.

Lynn Anderson

II. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF PROVISION (Acts 1:12-14)

There is a second ideal that distinguishes God's people. It is found in these next three verses. Yet before we look at this I want to point out something that becomes a great hindrance in receiving it. It is casually mentioned and can be quickly overlooked.

‘Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath's day walk from the city.’

Acts 1:12

A Sabbath's day journey was about 3,100 feet or 2,000 paces. Any Jew who walked beyond this limit on the Sabbath was considered a law breaker. The armies that marched against Jerusalem knew this important part of the Jewish belief system. That is why many attacked them on the Sabbath Day. A Jew would stop in the middle of his tracks once he reached the 2,000 pace limit. **Their enemies butchered them as they stood their ground.**

This same weapon is used today to annihilate the effects of this provision. That weapon is legalism. **We can become so bound within manmade boundaries that we are no longer benefiting from the wonderful provision of God.**

“In contrast to the two commands of Christ, the Pharisees had developed a system of 613 laws, 365 negative commands and 248 positive laws . . . By the time Christ came it had produced a heartless, cold, and arrogant brand of righteousness. As such, it contained at least ten tragic flaws.”

- (1) New laws continually need to be invented for new situations.
- (2) Accountability to God is replaced by accountability to men.
- (3) It reduces a person's ability to personally discern.
- (4) It creates a judgmental spirit.
- (5) The Pharisees confused personal preferences with divine law.
- (6) It produces inconsistencies.
- (7) It created a false standard of righteousness.
- (8) It became a burden to the Jews.
- (9) It was strictly external.
- (10) It was rejected by Christ.

J. Stowell
Outlined from “Fan The Flame”
Moody, 1986, p. 52.

II. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF PROVISION (Acts 1:12-14) (Contd.)

*** One of my favourite stories comes from a man who used to be in our church. He and his wife were close friends of our family, but they have now moved to another part of the country. We really miss their joyful presence. When he was a youth worker many years ago in an ethnic community, he attended a church that had Scandinavian roots. Being a rather forward-looking and creative young man, he decided he would show the youth group a missionary film. We're talking simple, safe, black-and-white religious- oriented movie.

That film projector hadn't been off an hour before a group of the leaders in the church called him in and asked him about what he had done. They asked, "*Did you show the young people a film?*"

In all honesty he responded, "*Well, yeah, I did.*"

"*We don't like that,*" they replied.

Without trying to be argumentative, the youth worker reasoned, "*Well, I remember that at the last missionary conference, our church showed slides--*"

One of the church officers put his hand up signalling him to cease talking. Then, in these words, he emphatically explained the conflict: "*If it's still, fine. If it moves, sin!*"

You can show slides, but when they start movin', you're gettin' into sin. ***

Charles Swindoll
[*The Grace Awakening*](#)
Word, 1990, pp. 160-161.

Now that we have looked at one of the greatest hindrances of this provision, lets look at the provision itself. This provision of course, is a united prayer time.

"They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."

Acts 1:14

Prayer is the wonderful provision that God has bestowed upon His Church. It is given for our benefit not for God's. **Anyone who has studied the topic of prayer has found words like asking, benediction, communion, devotion, grace, incantation, intercede, kneeling, ponder, petition, request, supplication.** All of these highlight different aspects of prayer. It is a topic that is so large that any pastor could find years of sermon and teaching material to prepare from.

II. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF PROVISION (Acts 1:12-14) (Contd.)

** There is a story about a young fellow -- one who had been sent to his room because he had been bad. A short time later he came out and said to his mother, *"I've been thinking about what I did and I said a prayer."*
"That's fine," she said, *"if you ask God to make you good, He will help you."*
"Oh, I didn't ask Him to help me be good," replied the boy.
"I asked Him to help you put up with me." **

Our Daily Bread
June 15

Perhaps this is what took place when they gathered to pray in the upper room for 10 days. Lets face it. **They did not come out from that room as perfect people.** But they did come out making use of the glorious provision of God - Prayer.

III. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF DIVISION (Acts 1:15-26)

Lets hit this matter head on. We will never be able to get along with everyone in this world or even within the church. Hopefully, we all try to do our best in this matter, but we should not be too taken back when we walk through temporary (hopefully) disagreements.

Even Paul and Peter had a time of opposing each other (Galatians 2:11-21). This division came about because of **theological differences** that needed to be cleared up or the early church would have headed off in a dangerous direction. Paul, the theologian, set the record straight for Peter, the fisherman. **One thing we must maintain in our churches is our theological standard no matter how many and whoever attempts to change them.**

The fact of the matter is that since we believe in Someone and something also means as well that we don't believe in certain things and people. There are plenty of groups that have divided themselves from us simply because of their false doctrines.

<u>LEADERS</u>	<u>GROUP NAME</u>
Charles Taze Russell	Watchtower Bible and Tract Society - Jehovah Witnesses
Joseph Smith Jr.	The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints - Mormons
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi	Transcendental Meditation - TM
Mary Ann Morse Baker Glover Patterson Eddy	Christian Science
Werner Erhard	Erhard Seminars Training - EST
David Brandt Berg	The Children of God
Sun Myung Moon	The Unification Church - Moonies
Victor Paul Weirwille	The Way International

III. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF DIVISION (Acts 1:15-26) (Contd.)

The early church had to deal with a number of defectors from their ranks. In fact, there were a number of them who turned away from the faith they once believed. Why should we believe with all the cults/occult/non-Christian religions in the world today that we won't face this? Add to this all the trappings of the enemy and it is a wonder that we stand strong in what we believe. So we must divide ourselves from people and doctrines which are contrary to the clear will and Word of God.

*“holding on to the faith and a good conscience.
Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.
20. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander,
whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.”*

I Timothy 1:19,20

*“Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge,
21. which some have professed and in so doing have wondered from the faith.”*

I Timothy 6:20,21

Even before the Day of Pentecost arrived, Peter stood up and addressed the need to replace Judas in order to maintain the 12 apostles. It was because of Judas' wickedness that Judas ended up falling headlong to his death. His replacement had to meet certain guidelines.

*“Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,
22. Beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”*

Acts 1:21,22

Even though a natural branch had been broken off it did not eliminate the opportunity to engraft in another living branch. Whether we agree with the casting of lots or not, it is significant that the final two candidates had to go through a detailed criteria before allowing the final decision from God.

“The hardest thing to learn in life is which bridge to cross and which to burn. “

David Russell

III. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF DIVISION (Acts 1:15-26) (Contd.)

*** In April, 1986, Larry Burkett (on his radio program) spoke of a young couple who wanted to buy a home, but felt it to be too expensive for them. They told God, "If you want us to buy it, 1) have the contractor accept only ½ of what he's asking for the down payment, and 2) have the bank approve our loan. Both events happened and they bought the home. They soon began to go into debt. The problem: what to do now, since God "directed" them to do this! ***

Larry Burkett

I believe that people who are empowered by the Holy Spirit should be able to know where to place a **dividing line**. They become **sensitive to what is their part** and what is **God's part**. This important truth will spare us all many kinds of problems. Lets be truly distinguished as God would have us.

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Date: June 5/22 (Pentecost Sunday) Place: FCA Time: 10:30 Am
We had our first service on Mohawk Dr on June 12/11 which was Pentecost Sunday

Song: Consuming Fire - G

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II. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF PROVISION (Acts 1:12-14)

**III. THEY ARE A PEOPLE OF DIVISION (Acts 1:15-26) - Galatians 2:11-21;
I Timothy 1:19,20; I Timothy 6:20,21; Acts 1:21,22**