

Discipleship Moment

Acts 18:5-8

The book of Acts is the second part of a two-volume work by Luke. The Gospel was the first volume, and the book of Acts is the second volume. We traditionally call this book *The Acts of the Apostles*, but the main character in the book is not any one of the Apostles, but the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is very active in the book of Acts. So maybe a better title for this book is *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*.

The Acts of the Holy Spirit is set into two main parts: part outlines the Holy Spirit working through the Apostles while they are in Jerusalem and Samaria, and the second part outlines the Holy Spirit working through the Apostles in the greater Roman world. This outline follows Jesus' commission to the disciples before his ascension, "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The passage for yesterday falls squarely into the second half of the book.

We are introduced to several characters in this passage, but the most important one for us this week is Crispus. Crispus is the leader of the Synagogue, which means he would have known his Scriptures well, so when Paul comes around, we can imagine that Crispus was gripped by Paul's preaching and use of the Hebrew Scriptures to show that Jesus was the new kind of human that God wanted, and that through Jesus, all people could be in right relationship with God.

So Crispus becomes a Christian. He is awakened by the Holy Spirit to Jesus, he puts his faith in Jesus, is baptized, is born again through his baptism, and enters into the Kingdom of God. Then his whole family follows suit. And this is the crux of our message this week: as the father goes, so the family goes. We heard that when a father is a committed Christian, 93% of his children will be believers too!

What is it about dads that produces this change? I think it is this: dads provide the primary model for the family. The mother (generally) is the nurturer, she is the one who carried the children, nursed the children, and generally nurtured their health and life. The father, on the other hand, may have help nurture the children, but did not feed the child out his body the way the mother did, he did not carry the children the way the mother did. But the father serves another role: that of the model. The father is the primary person (other than the nurturing mother) that children know and interact with. Which means that all non-motherly influence comes from the father. Which means that primary way the children look at and operate in the world comes from their interaction with the father.

More often than not, we turn out like our dads. Sometimes, if we have a bad father, we are able to grow out of those bad habits, but, more commonly, if a father is a bad father, the children will have a hard time readjusting. The statistics are shocking: overwhelmingly if the father is out the picture, addiction, poverty, and a life of crime follow. If a father is present, the chances of living a life of addiction or poverty goes down significantly. If a father is absent, the children are more likely to create a fatherless household for their children, which just perpetuates poverty and addiction.

And we learn something important by this observable pattern: healthiness and unhealthiness is more caught than taught. We catch habits and approaches to life. Our dads do teach us, but they spend much more time simply modeling how to live. Children are always watching their fathers, how they react, how they speak to their wives, how they react to their children's misbehavior. And just like this, we are all watching each other. Our reactions and words show others what we're about and what our values are.

Fathers, good and bad, can teach us something important. More is caught than is taught. Listen to the Spirit, obey Jesus, and proclaim his resurrection.

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once.

1. What was your dad like? Was he present, absent, gentle, tough, loving, distant? How did that impact you growing up?
2. Do you find yourself acting like you father? Do you respond like he does? Do you talk and work like you father? What are some things you do that your dad did? What are some things you do different?
3. Why are dads so important?
4. How do our actions show others what we value and what we believe?
5. What are some unhealthy actions you have that reveal negative things about you?
6. Ask God to forgive you for your unhealthy habits, reactions, and actions. Trust in his forgiveness through Jesus, and be free from those habits, reactions, and actions.