



Sermon-Based Group Discussion Guide

GOD GROWS HIS CHURCH

The Book of Acts

Message by Pastor Shawn Thornton

Discussion Guide by Jimmy Peña

February 17-18, 2018

In the back of the room, a tax collector is talking with tired fishermen. In the far corner, a local outcast is getting to know a zealot. And standing in the middle of that dusty floor, a former business owner shakes the hand of a converted thief. Charter members. A motley crew. That first small group became the first church. And while they all had varied pasts and different personalities, they were given the same instructions: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8)

Notice the pattern. Start in Jerusalem, next serve the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria, and then just keep going. For context, try replacing Jerusalem with Westlake Village. That would turn Samaria and Judea into Moorpark, Woodland Hills, Malibu, and the greater Conejo Valley.

God is growing His church. This week, Pastor Shawn unveiled plans for our church that parallels the movement of the church in the Book of Acts. God is *calling* Calvary to invest in future generations – to maximize our campus, to create more secure and accessible areas, to reach many more with the Gospel, and to more effectively disciple every soul – from the cradle to the grave. God has inspired us with a vision to capture the space, transform the campus and extend the blessing. *"The Generations campaign is so daunting that it's doomed to fail unless God is in it,"* says Pastor Shawn.

Indeed, we're not the first church to pray it, and we won't be the last, but *"God, what You did back in Acts, please do again. What You did through them, please do through us. Please grow Your church for your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

Introductory Q: What year did you come to Calvary and what brought you here?

I. The Acts Church:

Read Acts 6:1-7

This passage shows how the early church dealt with the issues related to growth. The expectation for the believer is to grow (to live and love like Jesus) as individuals and collectively as a church. This only happens when we are intentional and recognize these two critical truths: growth is mandatory for both the believer and for the Church and growth requires we engage in the Body of Christ by stewarding our time, talents, and treasures.

1. Share one area of ministry at Calvary where you have seen God grow us as a church. How have you been able to contribute to its growth?
2. Review the "growth cycle" chart below. This cycle can also apply to our personal spiritual journey. Share an area of your life where you have seen this cycle lived out -- where the truth of the Gospel impacts you, then you face hurdles, God helps you overcome hurdles, which then results in greater trust in Jesus, and a growing surrender to the impact of the Gospel in your life.

II. Growth Cycle



As Calvary begins to address the challenges and invest in Generations...our part is to:

- I. **PRAY:** The disciples and early followers of Jesus were eyewitnesses who lived life with Jesus. But despite three years of first-hand experience with Him, Jesus asked them to wait and pray.

Read Acts 1:4: *“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.’”*

1. Why was it important to wait? Do you think it was hard to wait? What might they have prayed about as they awaited the promised gift of the Holy Spirit?
2. How can we be praying for our Pastor, the leadership, our small groups, and our Calvary family regarding this campaign? Take the Prayer and Key Dates card that was passed out during services and pray over a few of the items together. With thankful hearts, let us join together to seek God’s guidance in every outcome of this project for His Glory.

- II. **ATTEND:** As Pastor Shawn mentioned, over the next few weeks, we will be invited to a meeting to learn more about the vision and the specifics of this Generations project.

1. It was important for believers in Acts to meet often, learn, pray, and grow together. What are some positive outcomes that may result from attending a Generations meeting with Pastor Shawn and others at Calvary (e.g., being part of the growth; sharing feedback to leadership; helping others understand the church’s vision)?
2. By attending the meetings, we realize the challenges that we face as a church, and such challenges can only be conquered together with the help of God’s Spirit.
 - a. Of the specific challenges Pastor Shawn mentioned, which one connects most to your heart? (i.e., space inefficiencies, parking, special needs, middle school?)
 - b. As Calvary members, we have the honor of being involved in the work that affects us, our church, our ministries. Do you plan on attending one of the nine sessions?

- III. **GIVE:** Read Acts 2:44-45: *“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”*

1. We learn in the early church how they prayed and gave to anyone in need.
 - a. How is their sacrifice an encouragement to us during our time of growth?
 - b. What challenges do you think they faced? How do you think we can relate?
 - c. Would you commit to praying about what God might ask you to give in terms of time, talents, and treasures to this project?