

## Student Lesson

### Learning Readiness Activity

**Materials needed:** Any necessary to complete the task you assign

#### Instructions

1. Choose a large-scale but simple task that requires one or more small tools to complete (i.e., coloring a large picture, icing/decorating cupcakes, working a puzzle, removing wallpaper, painting a wall).
2. If your group is small, choose one person to complete the task while everyone else watches. Give them a time limit impossible to beat on their own, and tell them that if they complete the task within the time limit, the entire group gets a prize. Tell the rest of the group they may cheer and encourage. When it becomes apparent that the person will not complete the task in the allotted amount of time, allow more or the rest of your group to help, equipping them with the necessary tools. Make sure they beat the time and win the prize.

If your group is large, form two teams from part or all of your group. Give each group the same task. Give a time limit impossible for one person to beat if working alone, and tell them that if they complete the task within the time limit, the entire group wins a prize. In one group, only allow one member to work on completing the task in the given time limit, providing only them with the necessary tools. In the other group, allow all members to work together to complete the task, providing everyone with the necessary tools. Make sure the team working together wins the prize.

#### Application

Some jobs are just too big for one person to complete when time is limited, but when we work together, difficult becomes doable. Add God to the mix, and the impossible becomes possible (Matthew 19:26). Jesus' parting instructions to his disciples seemed impossible (Acts 1:8), but he didn't expect them to accomplish the task on their own.

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### Intro

The church is fascinating! A bunch of people who may have little to nothing in common except the gracious and merciful God who rescued them from sin choose to get together on a regular basis and do relatively similar things no matter where they happen to meet up—study the Bible, pray, sing worship songs, give, etc.—then go out into the world doing what the Bible says, telling people about Jesus, and trusting God to do big things.

But why? What's the point? That's a very good question. Today, you'll learn the answer, along with who, what and how.

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### Lesson

Before his death, resurrection and ascension back into heaven, Jesus spoke the following words to prepare his disciples for his departure.

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father (John 14:12-13).

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Up until this point, the disciples had spent almost every waking moment with Jesus, lending their unconditional support while he said things they'd never heard and did things they'd never witnessed, drawing bigger crowds than they'd ever seen and more attention than they'd ever received. Having left everything behind to follow him, the disciples had become fully dependent on Jesus' provision, power and perspective.

Jesus' announcement that he would be leaving must have rocked their world. His promise that they would not only do what he'd been doing, but "even greater things" must have absolutely blown their minds. Thankfully, we have the benefit of hindsight and an entire New Testament to help us determine the meaning of Jesus' words as we figure out how to accomplish the "greater things" God has prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). The first disciples had to figure it out as they went.

### **1. What things had Jesus been doing?**

Basically, Jesus had been obeying God, saying what God told him to say (John 12:49) and doing what God told him to do (Philippians 2:5-11), no more, no less, with the goal of rescuing the world.

Before this passage, Jesus' obedience required him to preach the truth whether people liked it or not. After this passage, Jesus' obedience required him to die on the cross for our sin, be raised again, and ascend back into heaven. Had Jesus chosen not to obey—he did have a choice—we would all be dead in our sin with no hope, separated forever from the God who created and loved us. Thankfully, Jesus chose obedience even though it was hard!

**This is a good place to include a full Gospel presentation and/or student testimonies.**

### **2. Who did Jesus say would do the things that he'd been doing and "even greater things"?**

Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me will do the things that I have been doing, and they will do even greater things (John 14:12)."

To believe in Jesus is to know with certainty that Jesus is the sinless Son of God, that he died on the cross for our sin and God raised him from the dead, and that he is our only hope of salvation from the consequences of sin. It's to be so convinced of these things that you have no choice but to surrender complete control of your life to him.

Notice that Jesus didn't say to those listening, "You will do the things I have been doing, and you will do even greater things." Why not? Because it wasn't a given that everyone listening would believe in Jesus once his mission on earth was complete. Surrender was then and still is a choice that each of us has to make for ourselves. If we give our lives to Jesus, we will do what he did and even greater things; if we don't give our lives to Jesus, we are not only hopeless, but helpless (John 15:5).

There's a big difference between believing the story about Jesus and believing in him! The first is simply an acknowledgement of the facts that puts you in the company of demons (James 2:19); the second is an act of life-changing sacrifice that puts you the company of God himself (Matthew 16:24-25).

**This is a good place to give an invitation to salvation.**

### **3. What "greater things" did Jesus mean?**

When Jesus said those who believed in him would do "even greater things," he wasn't talking about quality, but quantity. Jesus expects those who believe in him to obey God with the end goal of rescuing the world in mind just like he did.

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Jesus lived the gospel. Now it's our turn to share, prove and illustrate it so more people will believe in him. The more who believe in him, the bigger our team. The bigger our team, the greater our impact.

#### **4. How does Jesus expect those who believe in him to do these greater things?**

By the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though Jesus wore skin and sandals during his time on earth, he was still God (John 1:1). Even so, he employed the power of the Holy Spirit—also God—to do things God the Father told him to do (Luke 4:1, 10:21). Before he left, he promised his disciples the comfort, counsel, and power of that same Holy Spirit in his absence if they believed in him (John 14:15-16, 25-26).

Once Jesus' mission was accomplished and he had died, risen, and ascended back into heaven, Jesus did send the Holy Spirit to live in those who believed in him just like he promised, and God accomplished extraordinary things through ordinary men by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit within them. The church, made up of everyone who believed in Jesus, was established, and the gospel began to spread.

Jesus' promise still holds. When someone believes in Jesus, surrendering complete control of their life to him, the Holy Spirit comes to live in their heart forever (Galatians 4:6). The Holy Spirit's presence both guarantees their place in heaven when they die and guides and empowers them as they obey God now (2 Corinthians 1:22; Philippians 2:13).

When believers pray the kind of prayers Jesus would pray—that's what it means to pray "in his name"—Jesus answers those prayers with a "yes" through the same Holy Spirit who played a significant role in his own ministry (John 14:12-13, 1 John 5:14-15).

#### **5. Why did Jesus do the things he did? Why does he continue to do what he does?**

Jesus loved us—that's for sure—but he did everything he did to glorify God the Father, or turn everyone's attention to God, so he would receive the recognition and praise he deserves for his perfection (John 17:4).

Jesus went to the cross to glorify God the Father. The night before he was crucified, Jesus asked God the Father to let him out of his assignment (Matthew 26:39). Had there been another way for us to be rescued from the consequences of our sin, he would have stepped down gladly, but God told him to follow through, so he did, for God's glory. Ultimately, the greatest act of love ever performed was the result of Jesus' unwavering devotion to God, not his affection for us (1 John 5:3, 2 John 1:6).

Jesus ascended back into heaven to glorify God the Father. Jesus wanted God to receive as much glory as possible. Knowing his ministry would not multiply according to God's plan until he left the earth, Jesus ascended, clearing the way for the Holy Spirit to indwell believers and multiply his ministry efforts.

Jesus still loves us, but God's glory is still the ultimate goal of everything he does as our high priest and mediator. It's why he continues to send the Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of those who believe in him. It's why he responds to our prayers. This should be a comfort to us. If Jesus' service for us were dependent on anything less than God's constant perfection, we'd be in trouble!

This brings us back to our original question. Why do church members do the things they do? Why do we meet regularly? Why do we work to grow in our faith? Why do we share, prove, and illustrate the gospel at every opportunity? Why do we give?

As followers of Jesus, our goal is the same as his, God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). We, the church made up of all those who believe in Jesus, do the things we do so more people will recognize God's perfection and give him the praise he deserves for being who he is and doing what he's done.

We meet so people will see something supernatural causing people who wouldn't otherwise get along love each other well and want to be a part of it. We work to grow in our faith so people will believe God has the power to transform hearts and put their faith in him. We share, prove, and illustrate the gospel so they will understand and accept it. We give so we can combine our efforts and reach more people with the gospel.

**In Texas alone, there are at least 19 million reasons to do the things we do,** lost souls who need to see the Holy Spirit at work in us so they will believe in Jesus and join us in giving God the glory he so richly deserves.

**You may want to take this opportunity to talk about the things the Reach Texas Mission Offering accomplishes, how the money is distributed, and what it means for people in your students' own community.**

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### **Small group discussion questions**

(Use only as many questions as needed to fill the allotted time. Don't rush, but allow discussion to continue, especially on the first question.):

1. What stuck out to you in today's lesson?
2. In what ways were you encouraged? In what ways were you challenged?
3. What change(s) and/or commitment(s) do you feel God leading you to make?
4. How will you respond? What's your game plan moving forward?
5. How can we pray for you? (spend time praying for one another)

