

Now What?

South Jersey Small Group Guide

Warm-Up Questions

1. What's the biggest "now what?" moment you've ever experienced — a graduation, a new job, becoming a parent, a move? What did that transition feel like?
2. If you could ask God one question right now and get a straight answer, what would it be?

Key Passage: Acts 1:1-11

Recap

The disciples had just lived through the most extraordinary forty days in human history. Jesus had risen from the dead, appeared to them repeatedly, eaten with them, and taught them about the Kingdom of God. And then, right before he ascended, they asked him a question that sounds embarrassing on the surface — "Lord, will you now restore the kingdom to Israel?" But that question wasn't born out of ignorance. It was born out of centuries of prophetic promise. They had inherited a coherent biblical blueprint: a Davidic king would come, defeat Israel's enemies, restore the nation, and bring the whole world to acknowledge God. Jesus didn't correct the premise. He redirected the energy. The timing is the Father's. The mission is yours.

What Jesus gave them instead of a timeline was a command and a promise. The command: wait. Don't go yet. Even after everything they had seen and heard, they were not yet equipped for what was ahead. The promise: the Holy Spirit was coming — not to visit them, but to live in them permanently. This was the fulfillment of a longing that stretched back over a thousand years, from Moses' anguished wish in the wilderness to Joel's radical vision of a Spirit poured out on everyone. And when the Spirit came, the mission would have a shape: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Not a comfortable, contained mission. A barrier-crossing, Samaria-including, ends-of-the-earth mission. Powered not by human effort or institutional resources, but by the Spirit of the living God dwelling inside ordinary people.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. The disciples had spent forty days being taught by the risen Jesus himself — and still needed the Holy Spirit before they could go. What does that say about the difference between knowing the right things and being equipped to actually live them out?
2. Jesus didn't tell the disciples their question about restoring the kingdom was wrong — he just said the timing wasn't theirs to know. Is there something you've been waiting on God for where you sense he might be saying the same thing to you? What does it feel like to trust him with the timeline while staying faithful to what's right in front of you?
3. The sermon talked about the Holy Spirit not visiting us but actually living in us permanently. Be honest — does that feel like a theological fact you believe or a daily reality you actually live from? What's the difference in your life between the two?

- 4.** Moses stood in the wilderness and wished that all of God's people could have the Spirit. That wish sat unanswered for 1,400 years. When you think about the fact that you have what Moses only longed for — does that change anything about how you see your ordinary week? Why or why not?
- 5.** The sermon named the temptation to run on our own strength — to plan, prepare, and execute without real dependency on the Spirit. Where in your life are you most prone to doing that? What does it feel like when you realize you've been doing ministry, parenting, marriage, or work on your own fuel?
- 6.** Jesus specifically named Samaria in the commission — the most uncomfortable, historically fraught group his disciples could have imagined. Who is your Samaria? Is there a person, a type of person, or a part of your community you've quietly assumed the gospel probably isn't for — or that you've stopped trying to reach?
- 7.** The ascension isn't Jesus leaving — it's Jesus being enthroned. He is reigning right now, interceding for you right now, at the right hand of the Father. What difference does it make to your daily life to know that you are not serving a remembered teacher but a reigning King?
- 8.** If your group or your church took Acts 1:8 seriously as a literal mission — Jerusalem first, then the harder places — what would that actually look like in South Jersey? What's one specific, concrete step your group could take together toward someone outside your comfort zone?

Pray