

Beyond Jerusalem

True excitement about something that has changed our lives is hard to keep to ourselves. That's exactly how the first believers began spreading the gospel message around Jerusalem. But there's also a human tendency to remain where we're comfortable and the disciples do just that, almost forgetting Jesus' command to be his "witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Discover how God's mission to spread the gospel to the nations unfolds despite the disciples' slow start and even as violence and oppression try to smother the message.

AWARENESS Before listening reflect on what you already know or understand about topics we'll cover in the episode.

- How would you describe what a “comfort zone” is? When have you been forced to step outside of one of your comfort zones? What was the experience like? How did the experience affect your faith?
- Consider a time when you encountered someone very different than you. Describe feelings or thoughts you had about the person you encountered before you talked to them. Did those thoughts or feelings change during or after your interaction? Why or why not?



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE: [Beyond Jerusalem](#)

READ [Acts 8](#)

REFLECTION After listening, consider the following questions:

- Where in your life or context do you see evidence of God's heart for the nations?
- How or when has tragedy or difficulty refined your faith or helped you be a more effective witness? Why might this be?
- Often, God forces us outside of our comfort zone by bringing opportunities to show his love and share his gospel right to our doorstep. Have you ever felt like God put you in the right place at the right time? Has God ever put someone in your life at just the right time? What made you certain it was a God-ordained meeting? Did you feel prepared, why or why not? Do you feel like you've ever missed an opportunity God placed in your path?
- In his commentary *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12*, N.T. Wright reflects on why Luke includes the story of the Ethiopian eunuch when he writes the book of Acts. *“But he plants this story at the heart of the moment when the gospel is starting to go out into the wider world, to make it abundantly clear that wherever you go, whatever culture you come to, whatever situation of human need, sin, exclusion or oppression you may find, the message of Jesus as the one in whom all the promises of God find their ‘Yes!’ (2 Corinthians 1.20) is there to meet that need.”* How have you experienced this to be true? Apply this truth to your current cultural context. How does it affect your perspective and understanding of issues in society? What might your Christian response be or how might God be calling you to bring this truth to those involved?

RELATED PASSAGES for further study

[Genesis 12:1-3](#), [Isaiah 25:6-8](#), [Matthew 28:18-20](#), [Acts 1:8](#), [Genesis 50:20](#)

CONCLUSION

It is easy to point fingers, even among Christians. “Here’s how THOSE Christians aren’t living up to God’s design or will. Here’s how THOSE Christians are failing.” What about you? Spend some time reflecting on your faith and comfort zones. Even if your values and beliefs line up with God’s in theory, do they in practice? Do an honest evaluation of your life. What reflects God’s desire for all nations? Where are you doing well? Where are you in need of growth? Is there anything you need to confess? Journal and pray through your reflections and be alert to the presence of the Holy Spirit in your thoughts and prayers.

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