

The
ACTS
of the Apostles



**THE GOSPEL IS FOR
EVERYONE**

ACTS 11:1-13:3

INTRODUCTION

- Luke marks the transition of the Gospel's official movement from the Jews to the Gentiles, highlighting the power of God to accomplish this task.
- Gentile conversion is no longer an isolated experience. It is a full-fledged movement accepted by the apostles and authenticated by the Holy Spirit.
- The passage ends with a transition from Peter to Paul as the primary agent of God's message.

THE SPREAD OF THE
GOSPEL TO ALL PEOPLE
IS BOTH APPROVED
AND INITIATED BY
GOD

ACTS 11:1-30

PETER - CHURCH

- Acts 11 summarizes what transpired between Peter and Cornelius in chapter 10.
- The skeptical Jewish apostles were already hostile toward Peter's endorsement of the half-Jewish Samaritan believers and the Hellenists (Acts 6–8).
- But at least these groups had some sort of connection to Jewish customs. But they are disturbed that he has been fellowshiping with Gentiles.

CAESARIA



PETER - CHURCH

- The general Jewish public are ready to charge Peter with heresy (verse 2). Peter is convinced that God wants to offer salvation to the Gentiles.
- To defend his actions, Peter recounts his experiences at Joppa and Caesarea, including the vision in which God spoke to him (verses 5-10), the divine hand behind everyone involved (verses 11-14), and the verification of the Holy Spirit that salvation had come to the house of Cornelius (verses 15-16).

PETER - CHURCH

- Peter's recollection has a two-fold emphasis:
- First, it was God alone who divinely initiated the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles.
- Second, Peter saw the work of God in the house and family of Cornelius.
- Peter's defense makes it is clear that this Gentile household was given the gift of the Holy Spirit similar to what they experienced at Pentecost.

CHURCH - ANTIOCH

- We see that the entire Church is being filled with Gentile converts (verse 19).
- The main point is that Peter's experience with Gentile conversion was not an isolated event. It's one step in a growing movement.
- Even Christians such as Barnabas and Saul are evangelizing Gentiles in Antioch (a dark pagan city known for its sexual depravity).

CHURCH - ANTIOCH



CHURCH - ANTIOCH

- Luke then highlights that since the same Spirit has been given to both the Jewish and Gentile church, the same fruit is being produced in both:
 - First, just like the Jewish church, this group of believers is dedicated to the apostles' teaching.
 - Second, the Gentile church exhibits the fruit of conversion just as the church in Jerusalem did.

CHURCH - ANTIOCH

- They also have the fruit of remarkable generosity through their collective effort to financially support the Jewish Christians who had once seen them as racial enemies (verses 27-30).
- When the trustworthy Barnabas sees these things on his investigative trip, he heartily affirms them in their validity (verses 22-23).

**THE SPIRIT OF GOD
EMPOWERS HIS
LEADERS TO WITNESS
DURING DIFFICULT
TIMES**

ACTS 12:1-13:3

JAMES - PETER

- Herod Agrippa has assumed rule over Judea and makes the apostles a specific target in his efforts to suppress the Christian movement (verse 1).
- He starts with the murder of James and the imprisonment of Peter (verses 3-4).
- The Church seems helpless to combat the advancing powers of the world. Herod Agrippa is closing in, and the apostles are in the path of his violence.

JAMES - PETER

- While Peter is in captivity, the church remains steadfast in prayer (verse 5).
- Luke highlights two things: Peter's helplessness and God's power.
- Peter's passivity during his imprisonment is seen in many ways. He's asleep between two guards, and he is in chains, while guards stand at the door (verse 6).

JAMES - PETER

- When a flash of light accompanying the angel God sends to rescue Peter, he does not wake up.
- The angel has to jostle Peter awake to give him directions (verse 7-8).
- Even then, he remains dazed as his chains fall off and he passes the guards on the way to freedom (verse 9).

JAMES - PETER

- His stupor does not wear off until he is outside on the streets, where he finally regains his senses (verse 11).
- The only part Peter plays is obeying the angel as he stumbles forward.
- Luke makes it clear that Peter has not escaped by his own earthly strength, but by the power of heaven. Though Rome's army is stationed at the door, it only takes one messenger coming in the power of the Lord to nullify their threat.

PRAYER MEETING

- Realizing the danger he is in, Peter runs to one of the meeting places of the Jerusalem church, the home of Mary, John Mark's mother (verse 12).
- Believers are offering up prayers on Peter's behalf, likely assuming he will be killed as James was.
- When the excited doorkeeper sees Peter, she comically leaves him locked outside as she runs back to the others with a joyful report (verse 13-14).

PRAYER MEETING

- When the believers are told their prayers have been answered, they accuse Rhoda of being out of her mind (verse 15).
- She insists and they delay, claiming she saw Peter's angel.
- Finally, after Peter's incessant knocking, they open the door, where Peter stands, a living answer to their prayer (verses 16).

RESCUE

- Once the commotion fades, Peter tells what happened at the prison (verse 17).
- Then he tells them to spread the story, especially to James (who assumes leadership of the church in Jerusalem from this point onward) since Peter is about to journey elsewhere.
- The story of his rescue becomes a favorite of the early church, encouraging their trust in God and offering laughter in tough times.

HEROD AGRIPPA

- Luke records the conclusion of God's judgment in the death of Herod Agrippa.
- Though Agrippa tries to flex his earthly power by killing the soldiers who failed to end the advancing Christian movement, God demonstrates His divine power by putting an end to Agrippa's advancement.

HEROD AGRIPPA

- Thousands chant Herod's name and ascribe him divine status (verse 21–22), but it takes one agent of God to demonstrate true power.
- Just as God used an angel for Peter's deliverance, He uses one to bring about Herod's downfall, striking him in front of the adoring crowds and bringing him to a gruesome death (verse 23).

SAUL AND BARNABAS

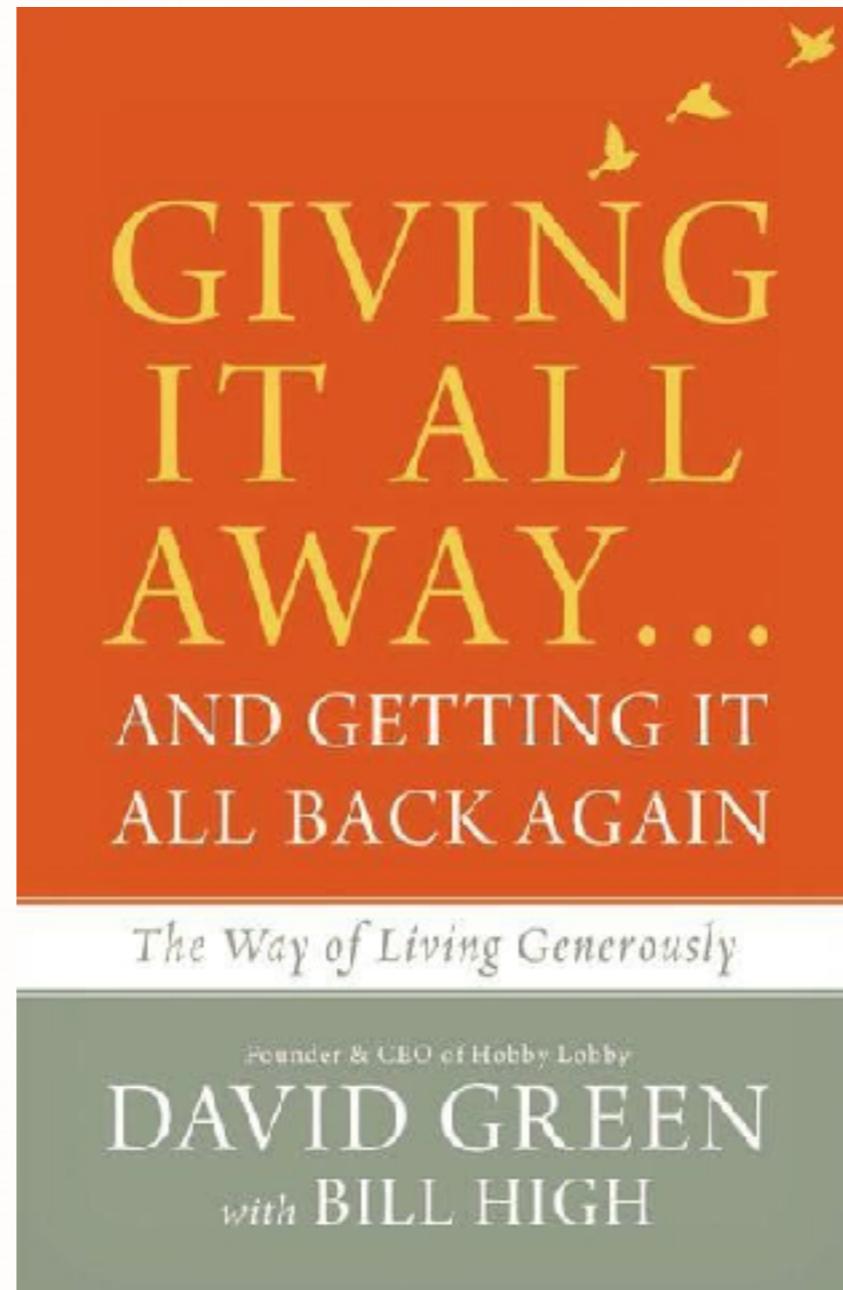
- Luke says that “the word of God increased and multiplied” by bringing the storyline back to Saul and Barnabas (12:25).
- They have fulfilled their commitment to bring financial aid to the church in Judea.
- After returning, they go about everyday life in this Gentile church, and eventually, the Holy Spirit calls them out again for a special purpose (13:2).

SAUL AND BARNABAS

- By fasting for, praying over, and sending out the apostles with the Gospel, the Antioch church reveals how mission-minded it is (13:3).
- The primary Gospel agent in Acts transitions from Peter to Paul, signaling the Good News is now officially in “phase three” of the plan (Acts 1:8).
- The Gospel has left Jerusalem, traveled to Judea and Samaria, and is now on its way to the ends of the earth by the incredible power of God.

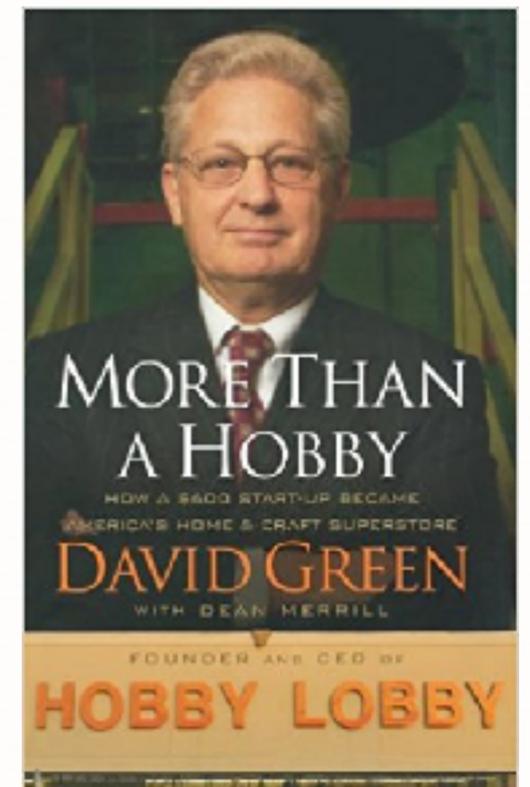
**BIBLICAL
PERSPECTIVE
ON GIVING**

GIVING IT ALL AWAY



RADICAL WAY OF LIVING

- He has told the story of Hobby Lobby in his earlier book how the business started in their garage.
- The family was making picture frames.
- “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all our might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).
- Parents taught him “radical generosity.”
- Mother gave him a “heavenly perspective.”



IT'S ALL GOD'S

- One night, David Green was praying about the hardship the company was going through, and he sensed God saying, "This company belongs to me. Don't touch it. It's mine."
- He realized that his worry about Hobby Lobby was largely due to the fact that there was too much human effort.
- He went back into the house, took out a piece of paper and wrote: "I own Hobby Lobby. Signed God."

IT'S ALL GOD'S

- They decided to close their stores at 8:00 PM instead of 9:00 PM or later.
- They are only open 66 hours for 6 days a week.
- He did this because he remembered the human toll that the normal retail schedule has on employees and families (getting kids to bed).
- Even more radical was their decision to close on Sunday as a concern for their employees.

IT'S ALL GOD'S

- They also wanted to raise pay rates but were hesitant because of corporate debt.
- Nevertheless they raised the rate to \$10/hour when the federal minimum wage was \$7.75/hour.
- The next year, they tacked on another dollar. The next year, they did it again. The next year, they did it again.
- Each jump added \$10 million to the payroll.

IT'S ALL GOD'S

- They also work to apply the Golden Rule.
- If a supplier short-ships something, they will point out that they ordered 100 Christmas ornaments but only received 92.
- But they also will let them know if they accidentally ship 106. When he called vendor to tell him that there wasn't a shortage but a "longage," he was shocked and said "Nobody has ever done this before."

IT'S ALL GOD'S

- They have a sign in their interview rooms that is a NOTICE TO VENDORS.
- It is their policy that employees will not receive any gifts of any value from vendors.
- Everyone at Hobby Lobby will pay their share of lunches. Any gift will be returned to the sender.
- This is to prevent the problem of favors and kickbacks.

GIVING IT ALL AWAY

- From the first dollar he earned picking cotton as a grade-schooler, he was taught to give God 10 percent.
- Acts 20:35 - "It is more blessed to give than receive."
- Proverbs 3:9 - "Honor the Lord with your substance, and with the first fruits of your increase."
- Business leaders could understand personal giving but could not understand why a corporation should be giving away its hard-earned profits.

JOY OF GIVING

- When we give to God, we allow God to “open the floodgates of heaven” (Malachi 3:10)
- Unfortunately, many Christians see the opposite.
- What about the excuse that ministries might not use the money wisely?
- Use the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability or Charity Navigator to check out ministries.

JOY OF GIVING

- Studies reveals that in the 1930s, church members gave 3.2 percent of their incomes.
- That was during the Great Depression.
- Today, with our high earning levels, the percentage of giving is only 2.6 percent.
- It is time for us to rethink our giving habits.

HOW TO GIVE?

- Set your criteria - Think of a scale of 1 to 10.
 - He places evangelism at a 10. Training Christians to lead people to Christ is a 9.
- Set your giving amount - Their target is to give away roughly half of their earnings each year.
 - The other half of the profits go toward growing the business (new stores, infrastructure).

HOW TO GIVE?

- Set fire for the future - They are determined not to let the fire of generosity die out at Hobby Lobby.
 - This is part of the legacy they want to leave.
Inspire others to take up the mantle of generosity.
- Give directly or indirectly? - Gates Foundation vs. Hobby Lobby.
 - They have opted for a “hands on” philosophy.

DISCUSSION

- Have you heard the phrase “God owns it all”? What do you think that idea?
- What is your personal philosophy of giving?
- How do you decide which organizations and ministries to support?
- Has this message challenged you to want to give more to God’s work?