

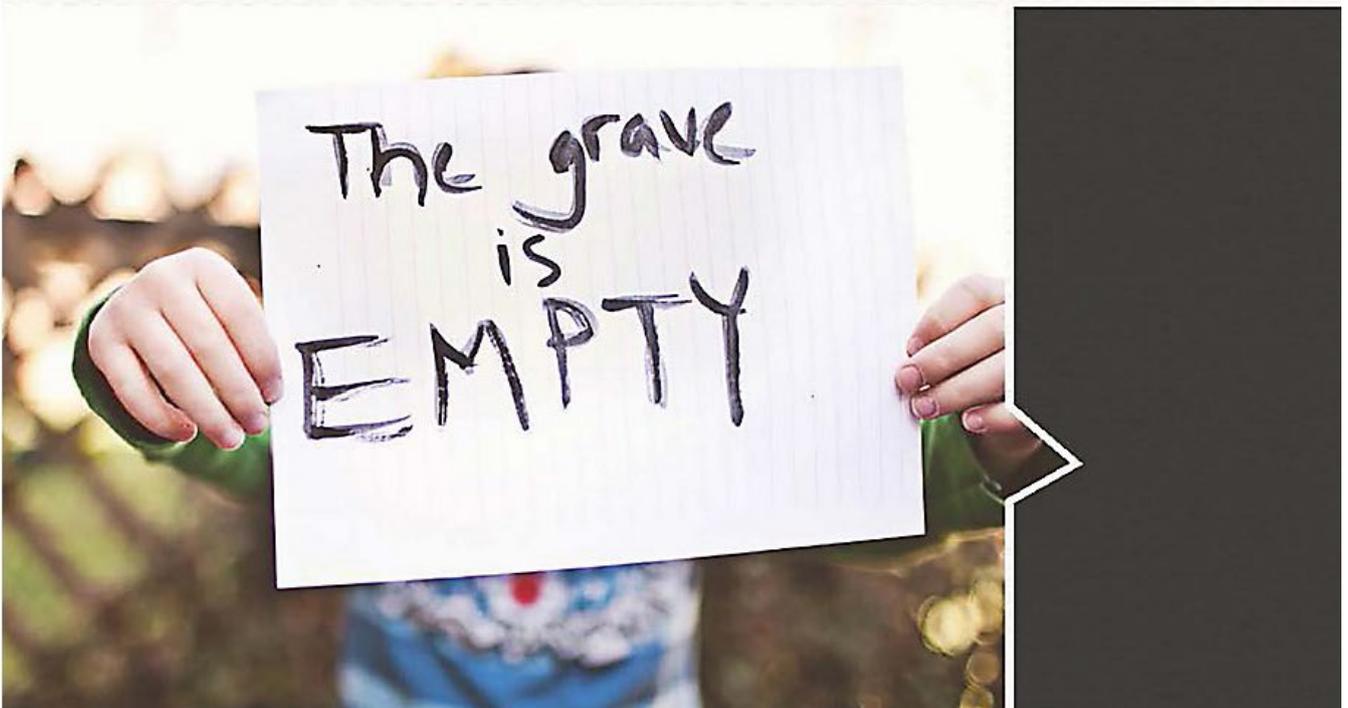
6-SESSION
BIBLE STUDY

BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE

Session 2 (Leader's Guide)

SMALL GROUPS

UNSTOPPABLE GOSPEL



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 LifeWay
Biblical Solutions for Life

SESSION 2

UNSTOPPABLE MESSAGE

Ice-breaker : Identify the main goal or message of the following organizations. You can also encourage group members to share companies or organizations they feel have done a good job of staying focused on their message for a long period of time.

1. Apple®
2. The United Nations
3. The Red Cross
4. The Environmental Protection Agency/ NEA

Bible Setting: After Jesus' ascension, the disciples followed His command to return to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. Gathered together on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon them with the sound of a violent rushing wind and the appearance of flames, like tongues of fire. The disciples began to speak in different languages, which the Jews gathered for Pentecost from the various nations could comprehend in their own languages (see Acts 2:1-6). The crowd was amazed, and Peter took this opportunity to tell them about Jesus and the good news of the gospel.

QUESTION #1: *What often gets you side-tracked during the day?*

THE POINT

Jesus died for our sins, rose again, and reigns as Lord.

Passage: Acts 2:22-24,32-33,36-38

Bible Meets Life

Do you know the original mission statement of Harvard University?



“Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and ... seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, let every one seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it of him (Prov. 2:3).”

Surprised? When the school was founded in 1636, the administration hired only Christian professors, the formation of Christian character was a top priority for students, and ministers were trained and equipped to share the gospel.

Today, Harvard maintains a legacy of academic excellence, but has lost its original mission—a phenomenon often described as “mission drift.” The university lost sight of its original purpose.¹

Unfortunately, mission drift happens in the church, as well. As we’ll see in Acts 2, there is a clear, unstoppable message that drives our mission. It’s up to us to stay the course.

Anchor:

Acts 2 contains the first sermon ever preached. After Jesus’ ascension, the disciples followed His command to return to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. Gathered together on the Day of Pentecost, Peter took the opportunity to tell them about Jesus and the good news of the gospel. The message of the church today is the same. And the message of Jesus is for everyone. We get messages from lots of different places—television, radio, social media. We can be tempted to communicate our own message and maybe sprinkle a little Jesus on it. But the central message for believers is Christ. And this message should come through every aspect of our lives.

Reflection Questions:

- 1. In what ways do your day-to-day actions communicate the true message of your life?*
- 2. If someone new walked into your group, what do you think they would see as the message of your group?*

What does the Bible say?

Acts 2:22-24

²² “Men of Israel, listen to these words: This Jesus the Nazarene was a man pointed out to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through Him, just as you yourselves know. ²³ Though He was delivered up according to God’s determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him. ²⁴ God raised Him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.”

You may ask: What’s your initial reaction to these verses?

Peter spoke of “God’s determined plan,” yet “lawless people” killed Him. In other words, God was in control, but the men involved were held responsible for their deeds. Peter stated these two truths together, unflinchingly and without apology.

As for human responsibility, we can never grasp the meaning of the cross until we understand the depth of our sin and how it separates us from God. Along with the lawless men who crucified Jesus, we all are responsible for Jesus’ death. Once we see ourselves as sinners in need of salvation, we can understand why there had to be a cross—why the cross is vital to our message.



But Jesus didn’t merely die; He rose again. If Jesus had sacrificed His life for us and then remained dead, His would be a poignant story about a martyr. But Jesus is unique in all of history. He is the only person who ever lived, died, and returned to life—never to die again. His death and resurrection are the heartbeat of the gospel message.

QUESTION #2: *What can we learn from Peter’s approach to sharing the gospel?*

Acts 2:32-33,36

³² “God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this. ³³ Therefore, since He has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, He has poured out what you both see and hear.”

³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!”

In A.D. 186, Polycarp, a church leader in Smyrna, stood before the Roman authorities and faced a decision. He could proclaim Caesar as lord and live, or he could refuse and die a martyr. For Polycarp, there was no other lord but Jesus. The proconsul weighed Polycarp’s fate and urged him, “Swear, and I will release thee—reproach Christ.”

But Polycarp held fast: “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, who hath saved me?” With that confession, Polycarp was burned alive and pierced with a sword. He died for professing his belief that Jesus alone is Lord.² When the Romans called Caesar kurios, or “Lord,” they were using that term in its highest sense: to signify divinity. They were acknowledging the emperor as their god, since the title denoted absolute sovereignty.

Recap Question: What can we learn from Peter’s approach to sharing the gospel?

Help group members actively engage the Scripture text and then interpret and apply what they can learn personally from Peter through the lens of this passage.

Optional follow-up: What are the essentials of the gospel message?

Peter used the same term at the climax of his sermon in Acts 2:36 to describe the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ: **“Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!”** In this sense, Lord is a majestic title, used to show God’s

sovereignty and divine power. The word points to the Deity of Jesus; Peter was declaring Jesus is God.

Jesus “has been exalted to the right hand of God.” With the Father, He sits in the most authoritative, sovereign position in the universe. It’s because Jesus holds this most exalted position that He had the authority to pour out the Holy Spirit along with the signs and wonders people witnessed that day.

Use the space below to record words, phrases, or images that come to mind when you think of the word “Lord.”

Jesus is Lord and Messiah, therefore:

- He is worthy of our worship. He’s not only worthy of our respect, but also of our worship. He is the One before whom every knee one day will bow (see Phil. 2:10-11).
- He is worthy of our obedience. Because Jesus is Lord and Messiah, He deserves to be sovereign in our lives. He has the absolute right to tell us what to do and expect our complete obedience.

Note: The following question does not appear in the group member book. Use it in your group discussion as time allows.

QUESTION 6: How did you initially respond when you first heard the gospel?

This question invites members of the group to share their personal testimonies of how they first responded to the good news of the gospel. Answers will vary based on experience. Encourage group members to be honest.

Optional follow-up: In what ways might your initial reaction to the gospel better prepare and equip you to share with others who have never heard?

What are some practical steps you take to approach Jesus as Lord in your own life?

Anchor:

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"If Jesus were born one thousand times in Bethlehem and not in me, then I would still be lost."

—Corrie Ten Boom

LIVE IT OUT

How will the unstoppable message of the gospel influence your life this week? Consider the following options:

- Praise Him. Jesus is worthy of our worship; therefore, set aside a time this week to praise Him in a way that is meaningful to you.
- Share. The message of salvation is for all Christians to share. Pray for opportunities to share the message of Jesus in your everyday conversations. Plan to tell someone this week about the difference Jesus has made in your life.
- Invite others. As you worship Jesus and share the truth of the gospel this week, invite others to join you. Find someone who needs a spiritually mature example and encourage him or her to join with you in following Jesus.

Let's avoid the dangers of "mission drift," both in our lives and in our churches. Let's not forget that the message of Jesus Christ and His salvation is the reason for everything we do.

Thoughts

Challenge: The message of Jesus Christ and His salvation is the reason for everything we do. To help you maintain your focus this week, consider keeping a list of the times you recognize you are experiencing "mission drift." Re-

examining this list later will give you better perspective of the things that most easily get you off track.

Pray: Ask for prayer requests and ask group members to pray for the different requests as intercessors. As the leader, conclude by praising God for the simplicity of the gospel message. Ask for opportunities to share that message throughout the coming week, and ask for the courage to take advantage of those opportunities when they come. [Gregg Matte (2015). Unstoppable Gospel - Bible Study Book. LifeWay Christian Resources. Retrieved from <https://read.lifeway.com>]