



Explosive Impact • explosive impact • matthew 16:16-18 • 09/16/2018

## Main Point

The church was born as an explosive movement, and it is still moving. By God's grace we can be part of such a movement!

## Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What images, ideas, or concepts come to mind when you hear the word “movement”?**

**What conclusions can you draw about something described as a movement?**

**In what ways was the early church born out of a movement?**

Among the ways Webster defines movement is “a series of organized activities working toward an objective.” Phrases or words such as “tactical or strategic,” “process,” and “change” also describe the term in various renderings of definitions. Whether these depictions apply to any particular local church would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis. But, there can be no question that they reflect the beginning of the church. Let's examine the Bible's record of the beginnings of the church movement.

## Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 16:16-18.

Jesus had just asked the apostles who they believed Him to be when Peter offered his answer as spokesman for the group. This was not the beginning of the church movement—Jesus was still laying the foundations for

the movement—but He did set out a two-fold objective for the movement: building His church and confronting hell. The very mention that these forces will not overpower the church suggests that they will try, and that the church and these forces will be in conflict.

**What evidence do you see that Jesus understood this to be a spiritual movement?**

The foundational truth behind the coming movement—that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of the living God!”—did not come from human intellect but was revealed by the “Father in heaven.”

**What significance do you see in the fact Jesus referred to it as “My church”?**

The church is not subject to our own preferences and desires, since it’s not “our” church, but His!

**The word translated “church” means a gathering or assembly. What insight does this give you regarding the church movement?**

| have a volunteer read Acts 1:6-8.

**How would you articulate Jesus’ strategy for the church movement expressed in these verses?**

**How comprehensively has His strategy been implemented? What is the power behind the strategy?**

**What is the significance that the Holy Spirit’s power will “come on you”?**

These are the last words recorded in Scripture that Jesus spoke to the apostles—His final instructions before His ascension into heaven to resume His rightful place at the Father’s side. Like the proverbial ripples on a pond, Jesus instructed His followers to begin where they were and move out from there in ever widening circles. Emphasize that just as it is not “our” church that is to be built, it likewise is not our own power or ability that will accomplish it, but that of the Holy Spirit.

Few people would suggest that “the ends of the earth” have been reached with the Christian witness of the church movement. An August 2016 report of the International Mission Board reflects that nearly 58% of the world’s population lives in an unreached portion of the world, meaning that less than 2% of the population is evangelical Christian and there is thus little to no access to the gospel message. Clearly, the church must continue moving if its objective and strategy are to be met.

| Have a volunteer read Acts 2:22-24, 32-33.

These verses come from Peter’s proclamation on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon God’s people in a mighty way and the church movement began in earnest, some 50 days after the crucifixion or 47 days after the resurrection.

**How do these words of Peter reflect the process for the church movement?**

**What does the fact that Peter was a fisherman and not a preacher and that this was not a church service tell us about the church movement process?**

| Have a volunteer read Acts 2:36-41.

**What change would you expect the church movement to have? What change has it had in your life? What evidence of change do you see in these verses?**

What an explosive impact the launch of the church movement had! First there were the sounds of rushing wind and the flames of fire that accompanied the coming of the Spirit onto the believers that Pentecost morning. Then there was the explosion of numerical growth as well. Between Jesus' ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the band of believers numbered "about 120" (Acts 1:15). Suddenly, after the arrival of the Spirit and the brief testimony of Peter, "that day about 3,000 people were added to them." Think about it—the number of new believers added to the church that day was 25 times the number of believers when the day began. Now that's growth! Now that's a movement!

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What part are you playing in the movement of the church today?**

**Of the objective, strategy, process, and change of the movement of the church today, which area(s) do you most closely associate? Which area(s) the least?**

**What will be necessary for you to be part of the church movement going forward? Explain.**

## Pray

Thank God that He devised a plan for the growth of His people—His church. Ask Him to align members of your group, both individually and corporately, with Him so that, together as a body of believers, you might fulfill your part in changing the world for His glory.

## Commentary

| Matthew 16:13-20

16:13 Two cities in ancient Israel were named Caesarea. Caesarea Maritima was located on the coast of the Sea of Galilee. Caesarea Philippi was an inland city located approximately 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. This was the site of worship for a nature god known as Pan and the home of a temple dedicated to

Augustus Caesar. That Jesus' identity as Messiah was announced here demonstrates that Jesus' kingdom is superior to Caesar's and that He is likewise superior to all idols and mythical gods. On the meaning of Son of Man, see note at 8:20.

16:14 Many of Jesus' contemporaries recognized His prophetic role. Herod suspected He was John the Baptist resurrected (14:2). Some of Jesus' miracles were similar to those of Elijah (cp. 1Ki 17:9-16 and Mt 14:13-21; 1Ki 17:17-24 and Mt 9:18-19,23-26), leading people to believe He was the fulfillment of Elijah's promised return (Mal 4:5). Like Jeremiah, Jesus was a much-rejected preacher of judgment.

16:16 On the titles Messiah and Son of the living God, see notes at 1:1 and 3:17. Although Matthew called Jesus Messiah earlier (1:1,16), this is the first time the disciples called Him this. Peter used the title "living God" to contrast Yahweh with lifeless pagan deities, such as the false god Pan who was represented in a nearby pagan temple.

16:17-18 Simon understood Jesus' identity due to divine revelation (11:25-27), which is why Jesus nicknamed him Peter. Although Matthew previously referred to Simon as Peter, this is the first time in the Gospel that Jesus did so. Jesus identified Peter as the rock on which His church would be founded. Peter and the other apostles' proclamation of Jesus' messiahship laid the foundation for the church (Eph 2:19-20; Rev 21:14). I will build demonstrates that Jesus is ultimately responsible for the growth and expansion of the church. The word church was the word used in the OT to describe sacred Jewish assemblies. Jesus' use of the word implies that His followers constitute the new Israel, the true people of God who submit to His kingly reign.

16:19 The keys are a symbol of authority. The rabbis used the words bind and loose to denote decisions about what was or was not permitted. Note that Peter will permit or prohibit only what had already been permitted or prohibited in heaven. Peter was an agent of divine revelation.

16:20 Jesus' contemporaries, even His disciples, were slow to understand the nature of His messiahship.

## Acts 1:6-8

1:6-7. The disciples' question revived their political goals, an ideal they could never quite stifle. Throughout the Gospels they wanted Jesus to throw off the iron hand of Rome, tell the nation He was their Messiah, and set up the kingdom. Surely now that He had risen from the dead and instructed his troops, it was time for the rebellion to begin. The Lord's answer offers a warning Christians have not heeded very well for almost two thousand years: It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority (v. 7). The fact of that return is absolute. The time was not revealed to Jesus' own disciples at the time of the ascension, and it will never be known by any human until the Lord comes again, regardless of what someone may claim.

We can't criticize the disciples too much, however, because the Old Testament links Spirit baptism with the coming kingdom (see Isa. 32:15-20; Ezek. 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-3:1). The Lord did not deny the kingdom is coming but only warned the disciples that God's schedule is none of their business.

1:8. Some have suggested that this key verse of our book may contain a threefold table of contents: "Jerusalem," Acts 2:42-8:3; "Judea" and "Samaria," Acts 8:4-12:24; ends of the earth, Acts 12:25-28:31. We cannot know if Luke had that kind of division in mind, but the book unfolds in a fascinating manner somewhat along that pattern. Notice that the call to witness is not limited to any select group of people, since it spreads from the apostles to the 120 believers and on throughout the pages of Acts. Nor can we restrict it only to service in our own churches or to some kind of "professional ministry." Every believer should be a "world Christian," able to function for the Savior from the other side of the street to the other side of the world.

## | acts 2:22-41

2:22. During Jesus' time on earth, His ministry was guaranteed by threefold evidence—miracles, wonders, and signs—precisely the marks of an apostle, which Paul identified in 2 Corinthians 12:12. Interestingly, first-century Jews didn't deny Jesus' miracles; that seems to be a theological characteristic of more modern times. Jesus' mighty acts pointed to divine power behind His life and ministry, thereby certifying that He was the Messiah.

2:23. Frequently, the New Testament links predestination and free will, the two elements of a divine paradox. God handed over Jesus for crucifixion, but wicked men put Him to death. So often people ask, "Does God choose us for salvation, or do we choose to believe the gospel?" Human reason searches for philosophical solutions, but the only biblical answer is a simple yes. Somehow in God's eternal plan, these two seemingly parallel roads come together.

2:24-28. Peter's sermon progresses well; in typical New Testament form, he comes right to the point: resurrection. Verses 25-35 in this chapter contain four evidences of the resurrection: David's tomb, the witnesses, that very Day of Pentecost, and the ascension witnessed by the eleven disciples. God may have handed Jesus over for crucifixion, but He also raised Him from the dead. As strange as it might seem to the human mind, the Messiah's death was God's will.

2:29-30. Not only was David's psalm a messianic prophecy, but the application of the psalm to Jesus is also linked with the fact that the Messiah came in David's line. David may have considered himself a shepherd and a king, but Peter tells us he was also a prophet. We see here a major key to understanding Scripture: Christ is the unifying link between the Old and New Testaments. Luke had already concluded his first report to Theophilus on precisely this point (Luke 24:45-48).

2:31-32. Not only did David understand Jesus' coming, he also foretold His resurrection. Standing in the crowd that day were many local residents who were familiar with the events that had transpired in Jerusalem less than two months earlier. Just in case their memories had lapsed, Peter raised again the broad banner of those courageous early Christians: "we are all witnesses of the fact."

2:33-36. Peter wanted to proclaim the whole gospel, so he could not stop at the crucifixion and resurrection. In these verses he moves on to the exaltation and the coming of the Holy Spirit, bringing his listeners right up to the moment. Another quote from the Psalms (110:1) surely must have stabbed their collective attention. The humble carpenter of Nazareth was not only the Messiah, but now He lives in heaven and has caused all the Pentecostal commotion that evoked this sermon in the first place. Showing an enormous confidence in his God and his message, Peter used a phrase appearing only here in the New Testament ("all Israel") and hammered home his final point: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

2:37. The combination of God's Scripture and God's Spirit working through God's servant had the intended effect. From their initial question "What does this mean?" (2:12) the people now progressed to specific response—"Brothers, what shall we do?" Had some people listening to Peter that day also screamed for blood in Pilate's hall? While the word "conviction" does not appear in our verse, this clearly reflects that heart attitude. The New Testament uses this word to describe the work of the Holy Spirit by which we see ourselves as we are in God's sight.

2:38-39. Peter hesitated not a moment for the answer to their question, calling for repentance and baptism and offering forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Repentance is not a new theme in the New Testament, having appeared in the ministry of John the Baptist (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) and in the preaching of Jesus (Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3). The context shows "baptism" here refers to water, not the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit then became the seal of salvation.

2:40-41. Luke hastens to tell us we do not have the entire sermon recorded in his book. Peter spoke many other words and pleaded with his hearers who responded. That day God added three thousand people to the small number of believers already serving as Christ's witnesses. But wait. Don't miss the importance of what Luke does not say. This time there was no sound, no flame, and no foreign language. These people received the Holy Spirit because that's what Peter promised in Jesus' name. Pentecost was a one-time event, with only a mild echo or two appearing elsewhere during the first century.

## Reading Assignment for next week

Acts 4:32-37; Acts 5:1-11