



LC STUDY GUIDE
“Strong to the Finish” Series
 The Passage: Acts 1:1-11
 May 9-22

Intro: We begin our new series, “Strong to the Finish” and consider the series title on a few levels. First, we hope to finish our LC meeting year strong. Further (and a bit sobering), we hope that we can look back at our lives and be inspired to “finish the race well.” And finally, we want to see what we can learn from the person and work of Jesus about what it means to be “strong to the finish.”

Our Central Idea tonight is to see two things: 1) the risen and ascended Jesus is not the end of the story but the greatest segue to the continuing work of God, and 2) this story includes all who believe and follow the risen Jesus.

Acts 1:1-11

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

O – Spend a few minutes silently reading the passage again to yourself. What do you find interesting in the first three verses?

I – Verse 3 - Why do you think it was so necessary for Jesus to continue convincing the disciples that he was bodily resurrected? Why do you think it was necessary for Jesus to be with them for forty days?

(It would be understandable for the doubts to creep in giving the unprecedented event of a bodily resurrection. There were no categories for such an experience. Jesus in His understanding continues to help them understand what is happening in their midst.

“Forty days” is both a month and ten days and also carries the symbolic meaning of a “time with God.” We see this in the numerous Old Testament examples and in such moments like Jesus’ temptation in the desert.)

I – Verse 4 – It was an extremely dangerous climate in Jerusalem to be a Christ-follower. When Jesus tells them to remain there until the gift the Father promised, Jesus is asking them to continue with their posture of faith. Then in verse 5, Jesus mentions the difference between John’s baptism and the Spirit’s. What do you read into the distinctions and their meaning?

(“Baptized with the Holy Spirit” means that the baptized is now a new creation. And we see this as the disciples’ turning point in Acts 2.)

O – What can we see from the question the disciples ask Jesus in verse 6 and what do we see in Jesus’ response?

I – Why do you think it was necessary for Jesus to ascend into heaven as opposed to roaming the earth and appearing to all people across the generations?

(Historical Christology, which is the theological discipline focused exclusively on the person and work of Jesus, teaches that to properly understand the Trinity, Jesus must ascend so that God in Spirit can minister to the world and through individuals and His church. Further, to best understand the second person of the Trinity, we must see that Jesus came to fulfill a mission and once it was completed He returned and took His seat at the Father’s side. Lastly, a “Ghost Jesus” roaming the world would contradict the nature of faith. It always takes faith to believe in the grace and salvation of God.)

A – Spiritually speaking, we find ourselves in a similar position as the disciples gazing up into the heavens and being asked by the angels “what are you looking for?”—implying that we get moving. In Acts 1 and 2, we can see what the disciples did next. What are the steps and actions we can take as we allow the Spirit to work through us to further God’s kingdom? Consider the big and the small and consider our personal everyday moments and the community, culture-changing moments.

- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?)
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.