

CHAPTER 1: PREPARATION AND LAUNCH

Acts 1–2 — “If We Prepare and Launch Like They Did ...”

WHAT THEY FACED

The Ultimate Leadership Challenge was upon them. Their founder had just left. Their team was confused about timing and strategy. They had no resources, no facilities, and no organizational structure. Their enemies thought they were finished. The pressure was immense. Jesus had given them an impossible mission—reach the entire world—with no clear plan for how to accomplish it. The stakes could not have been higher. If they failed, Christianity would die with Jesus. If they succeeded, they would change history forever.

WHAT THEY DID: THE TWO-PHASE SUCCESS STRATEGY

PHASE 1: STRATEGIC PREPARATION (Acts 1:1–26)

Step 1: Vision Clarification (vv. 6–8). When the disciples asked about timing—“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom?”—Jesus redirected them from speculation to purpose and power. “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (v. 8). The vision formula was clear: local in Jerusalem, where they were; regional in Judea and Samaria, their nation; and global to the ends of the earth, everywhere else. As Maxwell’s Law of Navigation says, “Anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course” (The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, p. 17).

Step 2: Power Connection (vv. 4–5, 8a). Jesus instructed them, “Wait for the gift my Father promised ... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.” Their waiting strategy was not passive, for they prayed and organized. It was not permanent, for the waiting had a specific purpose. It was not optional, because Jesus commanded it. And it was not wasted, since they used the time to prepare. Maxwell writes, “You cannot give what you do not have” (The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth, p. 89).

Step 3: Unity Building (vv. 12–14). “They all joined together constantly in prayer” (v. 14). Their unity had four elements. It included all; every person participated, about 120 in total. They joined together; this was corporate, not merely individual prayer. They did so constantly; it was ongoing, not occasional. And it was prayer that formed their primary preparation activity. Those included were the eleven apostles, women disciples including Mary the mother of Jesus, Jesus’ brothers, and other faithful followers. As Maxwell’s Law of Significance

reminds us, “One is too small a number to achieve greatness” (The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork, p. 45).

Step 4: Leadership Development (vv. 15–26). Peter immediately addressed the leadership gap left by Judas’s betrayal. Their selection process stood on a biblical foundation in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The criteria were clear; the candidate had to be with them from the beginning. Their focus was on character and faithfulness rather than talent and fame. The decision involved the entire team, and the process invited divine guidance as they prayed for God’s choice. The result was that Matthias was chosen and “added to the eleven apostles” (v. 26). As Maxwell says, “Everything rises and falls on leadership” (The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, p. 1).

PHASE 2: EXPLOSIVE LAUNCH (Acts 2:1–47)

Step 1: Supernatural Empowerment (vv. 1–4). “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.” The empowerment experience engaged every sense. There was a sound like the blowing of a violent wind. There was a sight as tongues of fire came to rest on each of them. There was speech as they began to speak in other tongues. The multiplication principle was unmistakable. Instead of one person with supernatural power—Jesus—there were now 120 people supernaturally empowered. Maxwell’s Law of Empowerment states, “Only secure leaders give power to others” (The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, p. 189).

Step 2: Magnetic Attraction (vv. 5–13). “When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment” (v. 6). The crowd was massive, numbering in the thousands, and diverse, “from every nation under heaven” (v. 5). Their response mixed amazement with perplexity. The communication miracle was that each person heard the disciples speaking in their own native language about “the wonders of God” (v. 11). Languages represented included Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, and at least twelve other distinct groups. Maxwell notes in *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*, “Connecting is the ability to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases your influence with them” (p. 23).

Step 3: Crisis Leadership (vv. 14–36). When critics accused them of being drunk, Peter seized the moment for one of the greatest sermons in church history. His response strategy was deliberate. He addressed the criticism directly (vv. 14–15), provided biblical context (vv. 16–21), presented the gospel clearly (vv. 22–36), and called for an immediate decision (v. 36). The message focused on Jesus—His life, death, resurrection, and lordship. Maxwell’s Law of the Moment says,

“Great leaders recognize a crucial moment and know how to seize it” (Leadership Gold, p. 89).

Step 4: Massive Response (vv. 37–41). “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said, ‘What shall we do?’” (v. 37). Peter’s action plan was straightforward. Repent, changing your mind about Jesus. Be baptized, making a public declaration of faith. Receive the Holy Spirit, trusting God for personal empowerment. Accept the promise, which is for you and your children. The result was breathtaking: “About three thousand were added to their number that day” (v. 41).

Step 5: Sustainable Systems (vv. 42–47). They did not merely add 3,000 people. They integrated them immediately. Four pillars sustained their growth. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, absorbing truth and doctrine (v. 42a). They embraced fellowship and the breaking of bread, forming deep relational bonds (v. 42b). They committed to prayer, seeking God together (v. 42c). And they practiced generosity, holding their possessions loosely, sharing freely, and giving to anyone who had need (vv. 44–45). Maxwell writes, “To add growth, lead followers—to multiply, lead leaders” (The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, p. 251).

WHAT THEY GOT: UNPRECEDENTED RESULTS

The immediate results were astonishing. There were 3,000 new believers in a single day. There were zero dropouts recorded. New believers were completely integrated into church life. Supernatural signs and wonders multiplied (v. 43). And they enjoyed favor with all the people (v. 47a). The ongoing results showed sustained health. Daily growth continued as “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (v. 47b). They functioned as a unified community with no recorded divisions or factions. Their culture of generosity led many to sell possessions to help others. The atmosphere was joyful, marked by “glad and sincere hearts” (v. 46). The entire city took notice, and the church had favor with all the people.

MAXWELL’S LEADERSHIP LAWS IN ACTION

The Law of Legacy was evident as Jesus prepared successors who exceeded His immediate impact. The Law of Explosive Growth was on display as they multiplied leaders, not just followers, producing exponential growth. The Law of the Big Mo became a reality as Pentecost created unstoppable momentum that carried them through future challenges.

MODERN APPLICATION: THE PREPARATION-LAUNCH MODEL

Phase 1 is Preparation, the season before going public. Clarify your vision until everyone can repeat it. Build team unity through extended prayer and planning. Develop your leaders using character-based criteria. Wait for empowerment rather than rushing into activity.

Phase 2 is Launch, when God opens the door. Seize the moment as opportunities arise. Communicate clearly across cultural and generational barriers. Have systems ready to handle rapid growth. Focus on multiplication, not mere addition. Maxwell observes, "The secret to successful launching is successful preparation" (Leadership Gold, p. 156).

COMMON LAUNCH MISTAKES TO AVOID

Mistake 1 is launching without adequate preparation. The Acts 1–2 solution was ten days of intensive preparation before public launch. Mistake 2 is operating in human strength alone. The solution was that they waited for supernatural empowerment. Mistake 3 is having no systems for growth. The solution was four pillars ready to receive and disciple 3,000 new people. Mistake 4 is focusing on events instead of processes. The solution was daily growth through sustainable systems.