



COMPLETE STUDY GUIDE · NARRATIVE · 28 CHAPTERS · 8 SESSIONS

Acts

The Spirit, the Church, and the Gospel to the Ends of the Earth

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me... to the uttermost parts of the earth.”

ACTS 1:8



Eight sessions

Leader's guide

Answer guide

Full text of Acts (WEB)

SIMPLE. ACCESSIBLE. TRANSFORMATIONAL.



CLEAR PATH BIBLE STUDIES

Acts

Complete Study Guide

The Spirit, the Church, and the Gospel to the Ends of the Earth

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- 1** Eight sessions with every discussion and reflection question from the online study, and room to write.
- 2** Reference pages: the timeline, Paul's journeys, the people, the work of the Holy Spirit, the themes, how the church grew, and all 28 chapters with their study questions.
- 3** Leader's guide with the group leader notes, a timed plan, and an answer guide for every discussion question.
- 4** The full text of Acts in the World English Bible, so nothing else is needed to do the study.

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The online study, free and with no sign-in: clearpathbiblestudies.com/studies/acts

ACTS

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START HERE

How to use this guide

A complete, eight-session walk through the Acts of the Apostles — built for small groups, Sunday school, and personal study. Read together, observe, interpret, and leave each session with one clear thing to live out.

EVERY SESSION FOLLOWS ONE RHYTHM

1

Read together

The session's passage,
read aloud together.
The text is in Part Four.

2

Observe

What happened?

3

Interpret

What does it mean?

4

Apply this week

How should I respond?

On your own

This guide gives you eight weekly sessions, each with a 5-day reading plan, questions, a memory verse, and one action.

- Write your answers. Thinking on paper is slower, and it lasts.
- Finish each session with the closing page: the one thing to live out, a prayer, and the memory verse from memory.

In a group

Each session fits a 60-minute meeting of 5–12 people: read together, discuss, and apply, with leader notes built in.

- The leader uses Part Three: leader notes, a timed plan, and an answer guide.
- Participants need Parts One, Two, and Four. Of Part Five, pages 197 and 201–210 are for everyone, and pages 198–200 are for leaders.

PRINTING FOR A GROUP

Participant pages (sessions and reference): pages 8–119. Leader's guide: pages 120–160. The text of Acts: pages 161–195. Part Five: pages 196–210.

My progress

☐ 1 The Spirit and the Birth of the Church

☐ 3 The Gospel Breaks Out

☐ 5 Sent to the Nations

☐ 7 Power, Farewell, and the Road to Jerusalem

☐ 2 A Bold and Costly Witness

☐ 4 The Gospel for All Nations

☐ 6 The Gospel Enters Europe

☐ 8 Witness to the Ends of the Earth

WHY STUDY ACTS?

The story we are still living in

Walk through all twenty-eight chapters of the early church's story — from the upper room in Jerusalem to a rented house in Rome. Observe what happened, interpret what it means, apply it to your life, and learn to teach it to others.

01 Meet the Holy Spirit

See how the Spirit empowers, guides, and emboldens the church — and still works today.

02 Know the early church

Learn how the first believers prayed, gave, suffered, and grew as one family.

03 Follow the gospel's spread

Trace Christianity from Jerusalem through Asia and Greece all the way to Rome.

04 Live it out today

Apply the courage, generosity, and mission of Acts to your own discipleship.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me... to the uttermost parts of the earth.”

ACTS 1:8 • WEB

ABOUT THE BOOK

The sequel to the Gospel

Acts is traditionally Luke's second volume — the bridge between the life of Jesus and the letters of the New Testament. It tells how a small band of disciples became a Spirit-empowered movement that turned the ancient world upside down.

Its central driving force is the Holy Spirit, who empowers ordinary believers to witness boldly, crosses every cultural barrier, and carries the gospel from Jerusalem to the heart of the empire.

AUTHOR	Traditionally Luke, a physician and companion of Paul
DATE WRITTEN	c. AD 62–90 (debated), after Luke's Gospel
SETTING	Jerusalem to Rome, c. AD 30–62, across the Roman Empire
AUDIENCE	Theophilus and the wider church — Jew and Gentile
PURPOSE	To record how the risen Christ, by His Spirit, built and spread His church
MAJOR THEMES	The Holy Spirit · Witness · The gospel for all nations · The church

THE LEARNING JOURNEY

Four movements from Jerusalem to Rome: 28 chapters, 8 sessions

The Church Begins Acts 1–7							The Church Expands Acts 8–12					Missionary Expansion Acts 13–20								Witness to Rome Acts 21–28							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Session 1							Session 2					Session 3								Session 4							

Acts 1–7 **The Church Begins**
Ascension, Pentecost, and the Spirit-filled witness of the apostles in Jerusalem.

Acts 8–12 **The Church Expands**
Persecution scatters believers; the gospel reaches Samaria, Saul, and the Gentiles.

Acts 13–20 **Missionary Expansion**
Paul's journeys carry the gospel across Asia Minor and into Europe.

Acts 21–28 **Witness to Rome**
Arrest, trials, storm, and shipwreck bring the gospel, unhindered, to the capital.

THE EIGHT SESSIONS

Your study plan

EITHER WAY

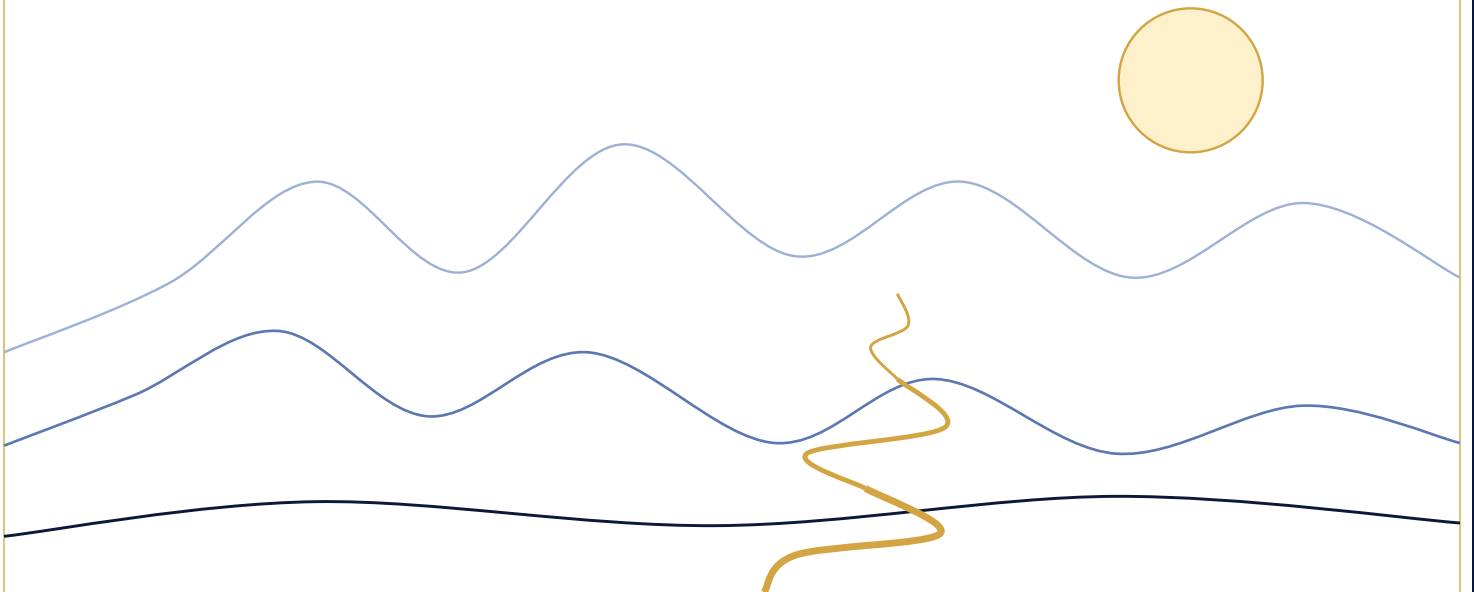
Eight sessions carry you through all 28 chapters of Acts — from the upper room in Jerusalem to a rented house in Rome.

	SESSION	READ ACTS	MEMORY VERSE	SESSION PAGE	LEADER PAGE	TEXT PAGE
1	The Spirit and the Birth of the Church Jesus ascends, the Spirit is poured out, and the church is born in power.	1–3	1:8	9	122	162
2	A Bold and Costly Witness The church grows in courage and generosity — and faces its first persecution and martyr.	4–7	4:31	14	126	165
3	The Gospel Breaks Out Persecution scatters the church, and the gospel leaps across barriers — even to its fiercest enemy.	8–9	8:4	19	131	170
4	The Gospel for All Nations God shows no partiality — the door of faith opens fully to the Gentiles.	10–12	10:34–35	24	136	172
5	Sent to the Nations The first missionary journey begins, and the church protects the gospel of grace.	13–15	15:11	29	141	176
6	The Gospel Enters Europe Following the Spirit's lead, Paul carries the gospel to a new continent and to unlikely people.	16–18	16:31	34	146	180
7	Power, Farewell, and the Road to Jerusalem The word prevails over idolatry, a leader pours himself out, and Paul sets his face toward suffering.	19–22	20:24	39	151	183
8	Witness to the Ends of the Earth Through trials, a storm, and shipwreck, God brings the gospel — and Paul — safely to Rome.	23–28	28:31	44	156	188

PART ONE

The Eight Sessions

Read, discuss, reflect, and close the session. One session a week carries you through all 28 chapters.



SESSION 1 OF 8

The Spirit and the Birth of the Church

Read Acts 1–3 · text on pages 162–165

1

Jesus ascends, the Spirit is poured out, and the church is born in power.

The church does not begin with a strategy but with a Person. The risen Jesus commissions His followers, ascends, and sends the Holy Spirit at Pentecost — turning waiting disciples into bold witnesses. Everything that follows in Acts flows from this Spirit-empowered beginning.

MEMORY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

ACTS 1:8 · WEB

THIS SESSION'S READING PLAN

☐ Day 1 **1** The Ascension and the wait for the Spirit. Notice Jesus' last command.

☐ Day 2 **2:1–21** Pentecost. Underline what the Spirit empowers them to do.

☐ Day 3 **2:22–47** Peter's sermon and the first church. What marks this community?

☐ Day 4 **3** Healing at the gate. Where does Peter point the credit?

☐ Day 5 **1:8** Sit with the memory verse. Pray it over your own circles.

DISCUSS

Discussion questions

READ TOGETHER

Read Acts 1:8 and 2:1–4 aloud together.

- 1** What stands out to you about how the church actually begins?

OBSERVE — WHAT HAPPENED?

- 2** What does Jesus tell the disciples to do before they do anything else (1:4–8)?

- 3** What signs accompany the Spirit's coming at Pentecost, and how does the crowd respond (2:1–12)?

- 4** What four practices mark the new community in 2:42–47?

INTERPRET — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

5 Why must the disciples wait for the Spirit before beginning the mission?

6 Peter says the lame man was healed 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth' (3:6). What is he teaching the crowd about where real power comes from?

7 What does the believers' radical sharing reveal about what the gospel does to a community?

8 Peter's sermon is really an argument from three Scriptures — Joel 2, Psalm 16, Psalm 110. Trace it with the group: what does each quotation prove about Jesus, and how do the three together move the crowd from 'what does this mean?' (2:12) to 'what shall we do?' (2:37)?

APPLY — THIS WEEK

- 9** Where are you tempted to run ahead of God rather than depend on His Spirit?

- 10** Acts 2:42 names teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. Which one does our group most need to grow in this season?

REFLECT

Three reflection questions

- 1** Where in your life are you trying to do God's work in your own strength rather than His?

- 2** Peter and John had 'no silver or gold' but gave what they had (3:6). What has God given you to offer others?

- 3** Who are the people in your 'Jerusalem' — the ones closest to you who need Christ?

LIVE IT

Close the session

ONE THING TO LIVE OUT

Name one person in your everyday life and pray for them by name every day this week, asking the Spirit for one natural opportunity to point them to Jesus.

A PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Lord, fill me with Your Spirit. Make me a dependent, prayerful witness wherever You place me this week.

M Without looking back, write Acts 1:8.

NOTES, AND QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE GROUP

Answers and leader notes are in the leader's guide, page 122.

SESSION 2 OF 8

A Bold and Costly Witness

Read Acts 4–7 · text on pages 165–170

2

The church grows in courage and generosity – and faces its first persecution and martyr.

As the church grows, so does opposition. Threatened by the authorities, the believers don't pray for safety but for boldness. They guard their integrity, organize to serve, and – in Stephen – learn that faithful witness can cost everything. Persecution does not stop the church; it refines and spreads it.

MEMORY VERSE

When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were gathered together. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

ACTS 4:31 · WEB

THIS SESSION'S READING PLAN

☐ Day 1 **4** Boldness before the council and the church's prayer.☐ Day 2 **5:1–16** Integrity and power. Why such seriousness about honesty?☐ Day 3 **5:17–42** 'We must obey God rather than men.' Note their joy in suffering.☐ Day 4 **6** Servants chosen so the word can spread. Meet Stephen.☐ Day 5 **7** Stephen's witness and death. Watch how he mirrors Jesus.

DISCUSS

Discussion questions

READ TOGETHER

Read Acts 4:18–31 aloud together.

- 1** What do the believers ask God for — and what do they not ask for?

OBSERVE — WHAT HAPPENED?

- 2** How do Peter and John respond when ordered to stop preaching (4:19–20)?

- 3** What happens to Ananias and Sapphira, and why does Luke include it (5:1–11)?

- 4** How does the church solve the problem of the neglected widows (6:1–7)?

- 5** How does Stephen respond to his accusers as he dies (7:54–60)?

INTERPRET — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

6 Why does the church pray for boldness rather than relief from persecution (4:29)?

7 What does the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira teach about honesty before God?

8 Stephen says God 'doesn't dwell in temples made with hands' (7:48). What is he trying to help them see?

9 When the church is threatened, it prays Psalm 2 back to God (4:24–30) — and asks for boldness, not safety. What does reading your circumstances through Scripture do that reading Scripture through your circumstances cannot?

10 Stephen's long history lesson builds to a single charge (7:51–53): 'you always resist the Holy Spirit.' Walk back through the speech — what pattern in each era leads to this charge?

APPLY — THIS WEEK

- 11** What would it look like for you to pray for boldness this week instead of comfort?

- 12** Stephen forgave the people stoning him (7:60). Is there someone you need to forgive for how they've treated your faith?

REFLECT

Three reflection questions

- 1** Where do you most feel the pressure to soften or hide your faith?

- 2** Is your private self as honest as your public self appears to be?

- 3** How does Stephen's prayer shape how you treat those who wrong you?

LIVE IT

Close the session

ONE THING TO LIVE OUT

Have one honest conversation this week where you don't soften or hide your faith — then thank God for the courage afterward, whatever the response.

A PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Father, give me boldness, not comfort. Make me honest before You and gracious toward those who oppose me.

M Without looking back, write Acts 4:31.

NOTES, AND QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE GROUP

Answers and leader notes are in the leader's guide, page 126.

SESSION 3 OF 8

The Gospel Breaks Out

Read Acts 8–9 • text on pages 170–172

3

Persecution scatters the church, and the gospel leaps across barriers — even to its fiercest enemy.

The very persecution meant to crush the church instead scatters it like seed. The gospel crosses into despised Samaria, reaches an Ethiopian official on a desert road, and then conquers Saul — the man hunting Christians — turning him into the apostle to the nations. No barrier and no person is beyond God's reach.

MEMORY VERSE

Therefore those who were scattered abroad went around preaching the word.

ACTS 8:4 • WEB

THIS SESSION'S READING PLAN

☐ Day 1 **8:1–25** Scattered to sow. The gospel enters Samaria.☐ Day 2 **8:26–40** Philip and the Ethiopian. Spirit-led, one-person evangelism.☐ Day 3 **9:1–19** Saul meets the risen Christ. Grace stops a persecutor.☐ Day 4 **9:20–31** Saul preaches; the church learns to trust him.☐ Day 5 **9:32–43** Peter heals Aeneas and raises Tabitha. The mission continues.

DISCUSS

Discussion questions

READ TOGETHER

Read Acts 9:1–19 aloud together.

- 1** What surprises you most about how Jesus deals with Saul — and how Ananias obeys?

OBSERVE — WHAT HAPPENED?

- 2** What good comes out of the persecution that scatters the church (8:1, 4)?

- 3** How does Philip respond to the Spirit's specific direction toward the Ethiopian (8:26–35)?

- 4** How does Jesus identify Himself to Saul on the road (9:4–5)?

- 5** What is Ananias asked to do, and why does he object (9:10–16)?

INTERPRET — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 6** Why is it significant that the gospel reaches Samaritans and an African official this early?

- 7** What does ‘why do you persecute me?’ reveal about how closely Jesus identifies with His church?

- 8** Why does God send an ordinary disciple, Ananias, rather than dealing with Saul alone?

- 9** Philip starts ‘from this Scripture’ — Isaiah 53 — and gets to Jesus (8:35). Practice it as a group: how would you walk someone from Isaiah 53 to the gospel in two minutes?

APPLY — THIS WEEK

- 10** Who is the 'Saul' in your life — someone you'd be shocked to see come to faith?

- 11** Would you obey if God sent you toward someone you feared, the way Ananias did?

REFLECT

Three reflection questions

- 1** How has disruption or hardship in your life ever ended up spreading something good?

- 2** Are you sensitive to the Spirit's nudge toward one specific person, as Philip was?

- 3** Is there a relationship where you've stopped praying because it seems hopeless?

LIVE IT

Close the session

ONE THING TO LIVE OUT

Begin praying daily, by name, for the one person you'd be most surprised to see follow Jesus — and keep praying past the point it feels pointless.

A PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Lord, no one is beyond Your reach — not even me. Make me willing to go where You send and to hope for the people I've given up on.

M Without looking back, write Acts 8:4.

NOTES, AND QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE GROUP

Answers and leader notes are in the leader's guide, page 131.

SESSION 4 OF 8

The Gospel for All Nations

Read Acts 10–12 • text on pages 172–175

4

God shows no partiality — the door of faith opens fully to the Gentiles.

Through Peter and the Roman centurion Cornelius, God makes unmistakably clear that the gospel is for every nation. The Spirit falls on Gentiles, a growing church in Antioch sees a great number believe (11:21), and even a king's persecution cannot stop the word from multiplying. The church's understanding of who belongs is permanently widened.

MEMORY VERSE

Truly I perceive that God doesn't show favoritism; but in every nation he who fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.

ACTS 10:34–35 • WEB

THIS SESSION'S READING PLAN

☐ Day 1 **10:1–33** Two visions converge. God arranges a divine appointment.

☐ Day 2 **10:34–48** The Spirit falls on Gentiles. Sit with verse 34.

☐ Day 3 **11:1–18** Peter defends grace for the Gentiles.

☐ Day 4 **11:19–30** The church at Antioch — generous and Spirit-filled.

☐ Day 5 **12** Chains, prayer, deliverance, and a humbled king.

DISCUSS

Discussion questions

READ TOGETHER

Read Acts 10:34–48 aloud together.

- 1** What changes in Peter’s understanding in this moment — and what confirms he’s right?

OBSERVE — WHAT HAPPENED?

- 2** How do the two visions — Cornelius’s and Peter’s — fit together (10:1–20)?

- 3** What does Peter realize about God and people (10:34–35)?

- 4** How does the Jerusalem church react when Peter explains himself (11:1–18)?

- 5** How does the church respond to Peter’s imprisonment, and how do they react when he’s freed (12:5, 12–16)?

INTERPRET — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 6** Why does the Spirit fall on the Gentiles before they are baptized — what is God showing (10:44–48; 11:17; 15:8)?

- 7** What does 11:19–26 show about the church at Antioch before the name ‘Christians’ appears?

- 8** What is Luke’s point in placing Herod’s death right next to the line ‘the word of God grew’ (12:23–24)?

- 9** The vision was about food, but Peter says God taught him about people (10:28). How does Peter connect the two in 10:34–35 and 11:17?

APPLY — THIS WEEK

- 10 What kind of person are you most tempted to treat as an unlikely candidate for the gospel?

- 11 The church prayed for Peter yet was stunned when he showed up (12:15). Where do you pray without really expecting God to act?

REFLECT

Three reflection questions

- 1 Whom have you quietly considered 'unclean' or outside God's reach?

- 2 What prejudice might God be challenging in your own heart this week?

- 3 Do you pray expecting God to answer — or just out of habit?

LIVE IT

Close the session

ONE THING TO LIVE OUT

Take one intentional step toward someone outside your usual circle — a conversation, an invitation, an act of kindness — treating them as someone God loves and welcomes.

A PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Father, remove the partiality in my heart. Give me Your love for every kind of person, and grow my faith to pray with real expectation.

M Without looking back, write Acts 10:34–35.

NOTES, AND QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE GROUP

Answers and leader notes are in the leader's guide, page 136.

SESSION 5 OF 8

Sent to the Nations

Read Acts 13–15 • text on pages 176–179

5

The first missionary journey begins, and the church protects the gospel of grace.

The Spirit sends Barnabas and Saul out from Antioch, and the gospel spreads through Cyprus and Asia Minor amid both belief and fierce opposition. When some insist Gentiles must keep the law to be saved, the Jerusalem Council settles it: salvation is by grace through faith. The mission expands, and the gospel's freedom is guarded.

MEMORY VERSE

But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are.

ACTS 15:11 • WEB

THIS SESSION'S READING PLAN☐ Day 1 **13:1–52** Sent out. Paul preaches Christ from Israel's story.☐ Day 2 **14:1–20** Worshiped, then stoned. Paul redirects all glory to God.☐ Day 3 **14:21–28** Strengthening the churches; appointing elders.☐ Day 4 **15:1–21** The Jerusalem Council defends grace.☐ Day 5 **15:22–41** The letter of freedom; a hard parting of partners.

DISCUSS

Discussion questions

READ TOGETHER

Read Acts 15:7–11 aloud together.

- 1** How would you put the council's conclusion about salvation in your own words?

OBSERVE — WHAT HAPPENED?

- 2** How are Barnabas and Saul sent out, and by whom (13:1–4)?

- 3** How do Paul and Barnabas respond to being worshiped as gods at Lystra (14:11–18)?

- 4** What happens to Paul at Lystra, and what does he do next (14:19–22)?

- 5** What question threatens to divide the church, and how is it resolved (15:1–20)?

INTERPRET — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

6 Why does it matter that the church sent Barnabas and Saul away on mission (13:1–4)?

7 Paul and Barnabas say we enter the kingdom ‘through many afflictions’ (14:22). How does that reframe suffering?

8 Why does Peter say Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by grace (15:10–11)?

9 Peter (Acts 2) and Paul (Acts 13) both rest the resurrection on Psalm 16:10 — ‘you will not allow your Holy One to see decay.’ Why is this psalm the apostles’ anchor text for the resurrection, and why can it not be about David himself (13:36–37)?

10 James says Peter’s report ‘agrees with the words of the prophets’ (15:14–15). What does James see in Amos 9:11–12 that agrees with what Peter, Paul and Barnabas reported, and how does the council hold testimony and Scripture together?

APPLY — THIS WEEK

- 11** Where might you be quietly adding requirements to the gospel — for yourself or others?

- 12** Paul and Barnabas later split sharply over John Mark (15:36–39). How does your group handle strong disagreement among committed believers?

REFLECT

Three reflection questions

- 1** Where are you trying to earn what God freely gives by grace?

- 2** How do you respond when following Jesus brings hardship rather than reward?

- 3** Is there a disagreement with another believer you need to handle with more grace?

LIVE IT

Close the session

ONE THING TO LIVE OUT

Identify one way you've been 'working for' God's acceptance, and deliberately rest in His grace instead — then extend that same grace to someone you've been hard on.

A PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Lord, thank You that I'm saved by grace, just like everyone else who trusts You. Free me from performing, and make me gracious with others.

M Without looking back, write Acts 15:11.

NOTES, AND QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE GROUP

Answers and leader notes are in the leader's guide, page 141.

SESSION 6 OF 8

The Gospel Enters Europe

Read Acts 16–18 · text on pages 180–183

6

Following the Spirit's lead, Paul carries the gospel to a new continent and to unlikely people.

The Spirit redirects Paul to Macedonia, and the gospel crosses into Europe. From a businesswoman and a jailer in Philippi, to philosophers in Athens, to a thriving church in Corinth, Paul shows that the gospel reaches every class and culture — and that God's people can sing even in a prison cell.

MEMORY VERSE

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.

ACTS 16:31 · WEB

THIS SESSION'S READING PLAN

☐ Day 1 **16:1–15** The Macedonian call; Lydia believes.☐ Day 2 **16:16–40** Prison, an earthquake, and midnight worship.☐ Day 3 **17:1–15** Thessalonica and the noble Bereans.☐ Day 4 **17:16–34** Paul reasons with philosophers in Athens.☐ Day 5 **18** Corinth: partnership, perseverance, and encouragement.

DISCUSS

Discussion questions

READ TOGETHER

Read Acts 16:22–34 aloud together.

- 1** What's remarkable about how Paul and Silas behave in that prison cell?

OBSERVE — WHAT HAPPENED?

- 2** How is Paul's route directed and redirected by the Spirit (16:6–10)?

- 3** Who are the three people Paul meets in Philippi (16:14, 16–18, 27–34)?

- 4** What makes the Bereans 'more noble' (17:11)?

- 5** How does Paul begin his message to the philosophers in Athens (17:22–23)?

INTERPRET — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

6 What does the Spirit's redirection teach about following God's guidance?

7 Why does Luke deliberately show such different people — a seller of purple, a slave girl, a jailer — together?

8 How does Paul connect with pagan thinkers in Athens without compromising the message?

9 Compare Paul in the synagogue (17:2–3) with Paul on the Areopagus (17:22–31). What changes — and what is identical? What does that teach the group about speaking to people who don't yet trust the Bible?

APPLY — THIS WEEK

10 Do you examine teaching against Scripture for yourself, like the Bereans?

11 Could you worship God in the middle of your current hardship, the way Paul and Silas did?

REFLECT

Three reflection questions

1 Where do you sense God may be closing one door to open another?

2 Whom might you be overlooking that God is ready to save?

3 What 'midnight' are you in right now — and can you still worship there?

LIVE IT

Close the session

ONE THING TO LIVE OUT

Pick one hard situation you're facing and respond to it this week with worship — a song, a psalm, or thanksgiving — alongside telling God what you need.

A PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Father, lead me where You want me. Give me eyes for the people I overlook and a song in the middle of hard places.

M Without looking back, write Acts 16:31.

NOTES, AND QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE GROUP

Answers and leader notes are in the leader's guide, page 146.

SESSION 7 OF 8

Power, Farewell, and the Road to Jerusalem

Read Acts 19–22 · text on pages 183–188

7

The word prevails over idolatry, a leader pours himself out, and Paul sets his face toward suffering.

In Ephesus the gospel triumphs over magic and idolatry as the word of the Lord prevails mightily. Paul models sacrificial, shepherd-hearted leadership in his farewell to the Ephesian elders — then, though friends and prophets warn of chains, resolves to go to Jerusalem, ready to suffer and even die for the name of the Lord Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE

But these things don't count; nor do I hold my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify to the Good News of the grace of God.

ACTS 20:24 · WEB

THIS SESSION'S READING PLAN

☐ Day 1 **19** The word prevails over magic and idolatry in Ephesus.

☐ Day 2 **20:1–16** Encouraging the churches; Eutychus restored.

☐ Day 3 **20:17–38** Paul's farewell charge to the Ephesian elders.

☐ Day 4 **21:1–16** Warnings heard; resolved for Jerusalem.

☐ Day 5 **21:17–22:30** Riot, arrest, and Paul's testimony before the crowd.

DISCUSS

Discussion questions

READ TOGETHER

Read Acts 20:22–24 and 20:36–38 aloud together.

- 1** What kind of leader does Paul reveal himself to be in this farewell?

OBSERVE — WHAT HAPPENED?

- 2** How does the gospel change the new believers' relationship to their old practices in Ephesus (19:18–20)?

- 3** What actually drives the riot in Ephesus (19:23–27)?

- 4** How does Paul describe his own ministry to the Ephesian elders (20:18–21, 33–35)?

- 5** How do Paul's friends try to stop him going to Jerusalem, and how does he answer (21:10–14)?

INTERPRET — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 6** What does the public burning of costly magic books reveal about genuine repentance (19:19)?

- 7** Paul calls the church ‘the assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood’ (20:28). What does that say about the church’s worth?

- 8** What does Paul’s resolve to suffer (21:13) reveal about how he understands God’s will?

- 9** Read Ezekiel 34:1–10 alongside Acts 20:28–31. What does Ezekiel’s indictment of self-feeding shepherds add to Paul’s warning — and what does ‘purchased with his own blood’ say about how much the flock is worth?

APPLY — THIS WEEK

- 10** What 'costly books' — habits, attachments, idols — might God be asking you to give up for good?

- 11** Where is following Jesus asking you to choose faithfulness over comfort or safety?

REFLECT

Three reflection questions

- 1** What attachment is God asking you to surrender fully — not just trim back?

- 2** Whom are you responsible to 'watch over,' and are you doing it sacrificially?

- 3** Is there a place where you're choosing safety over obedience?

LIVE IT

Close the session

ONE THING TO LIVE OUT

Identify one thing competing with Christ for your devotion and take a concrete step to let it go this week — delete it, give it away, or set a firm boundary.

A PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Lord, let me count my life as nothing next to finishing the race You've given me. Make me faithful even when it costs.

M Without looking back, write Acts 20:24.

NOTES, AND QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE GROUP

Answers and leader notes are in the leader's guide, page 151.

SESSION 8 OF 8

Witness to the Ends of the Earth

Read Acts 23–28 · text on pages 188–194



Through trials, a storm, and shipwreck, God brings the gospel — and Paul — safely to Rome.

Paul stands trial before governors and a king, and at every turn his defense becomes a witness to Christ. The Lord promises he will testify in Rome, and not even a deadly storm or shipwreck can stop it. Acts ends not with Paul's verdict but with the gospel proclaimed boldly and unhindered in the empire's capital — and the mission handed to us.

MEMORY VERSE

Preaching God's Kingdom, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, without hindrance.

ACTS 28:31 · WEB

THIS SESSION'S READING PLAN

☐ Day 1 **23** Plots and protection; the Lord says, 'Cheer up, Paul.'

☐ Day 2 **24–25** Trials before Felix and Festus; Paul appeals to Caesar.

☐ Day 3 **26** Before Agrippa: 'With a little persuasion are you trying to make me a Christian?'

☐ Day 4 **27** Storm and shipwreck; God preserves everyone.

☐ Day 5 **28** Rome at last — the gospel proclaimed unhindered.

DISCUSS

Discussion questions

READ TOGETHER

Read Acts 23:11 and 28:30–31 aloud together.

- 1** How does the promise in 23:11 shape the way you read everything that follows?

OBSERVE — WHAT HAPPENED?

- 2** What does the Lord tell Paul the night after the uproar (23:11)?

- 3** What is the heart of Paul's defense before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa (24:14–15; 26:22–23)?

- 4** How does Paul lead the terrified crew during the storm (27:21–26, 33–36)?

- 5** How does Luke describe Paul's final two years in Rome (28:30–31)?

INTERPRET — WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

6 Why does Paul keep turning his legal defense into an appeal to believe (26:27–29)?

7 Why does God preserve all 276 people aboard for Paul's sake (27:24, 37)?

8 Why might Luke end the book with the gospel reaching Rome rather than telling us Paul's verdict?

9 Paul's last quotation is Isaiah 6:9–10, words about hardened hearts. Why quote it, given some believed (28:24) and Paul welcomed all (28:30)?

10 Paul says he is 'saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen' (26:22–23). Could your group do it? Try it: which Old Testament passages would you use for the Messiah's suffering, resurrection, and light to the nations?

APPLY — THIS WEEK

- 11** Agrippa answers, 'With a little persuasion are you trying to make me a Christian?' (26:28). Where do you keep Christ at arm's length when He presses close?

- 12** Acts ends open-ended — the mission continues through us. What's your next step in being a witness where you live?

REFLECT

Three reflection questions

- 1** Where are you holding Christ at arm's length, keeping something back?

- 2** How does knowing God's purpose for you steady you when life feels out of control?

- 3** Acts ends with you: where is your 'ends of the earth' — the next place the gospel needs to go through your life?

LIVE IT

Close the session

ONE THING TO LIVE OUT

Write down one concrete way you'll keep being a witness now that the study is ending — a person, a place, or a next step — and share it with someone who will check in on you.

A PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Lord, You finished what You promised in Paul's life. Make me a bold, faithful witness, and use me to carry Your gospel a little farther.

M Without looking back, write Acts 28:31.

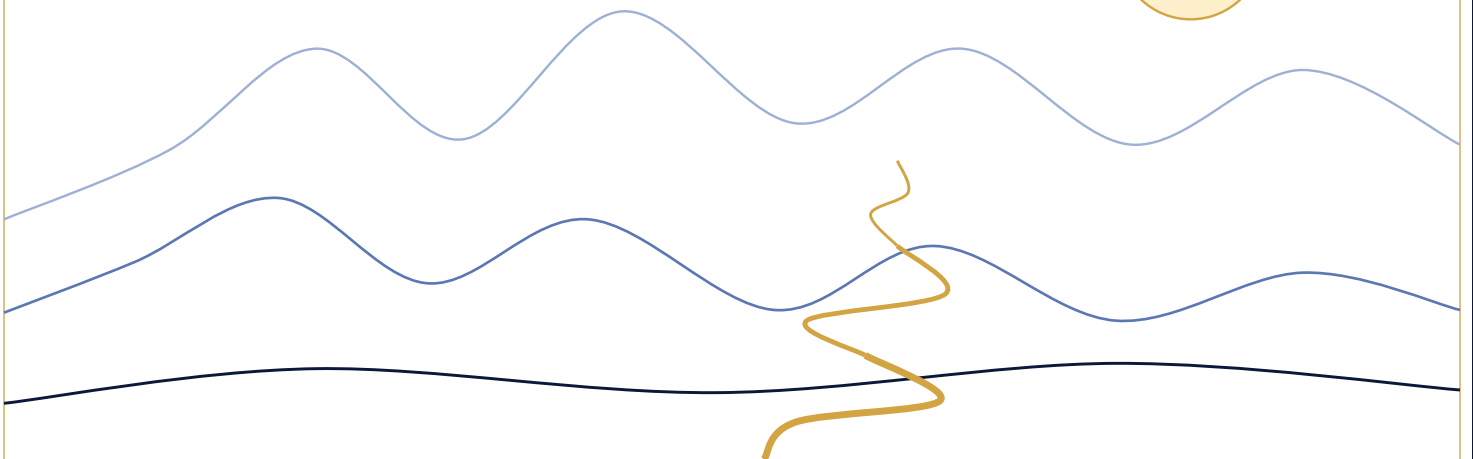
NOTES, AND QUESTIONS TO BRING TO THE GROUP

Answers and leader notes are in the leader's guide, page 156.

PART TWO

Reference

The timeline, Paul's journeys, the people of Acts, the work of the Holy Spirit, the themes, how the church grew, and every chapter with its study questions.



FROM THE ASCENSION TO ROME

The Timeline of Acts

Sixteen turning points in roughly thirty years of history.

c. AD 30

The Ascension

Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus commissions His followers as witnesses to the ends of the earth and ascends, with the promise that He will return.

Mount of Olives · Acts 1

c. AD 30

Pentecost

The Holy Spirit is poured out on the believers. Peter preaches, and about three thousand are baptized — the birth of the church.

Jerusalem · Acts 2

c. AD 30–33

Peter's Jerusalem Ministry

Through healings, bold preaching, and witness before the Sanhedrin, Peter leads the rapidly growing Jerusalem church.

Jerusalem · Acts 3

c. AD 34

Stephen's Martyrdom

Stephen's bold witness ends in his stoning — the church's first martyr — triggering the persecution that scatters believers.

Jerusalem · Acts 7

c. AD 34–35

Philip in Samaria

Scattered by persecution, Philip preaches in Samaria and leads an Ethiopian official to faith, pushing the gospel beyond Judea.

Samaria & Gaza road · Acts 8

c. AD 34–36

Saul's Conversion

The risen Christ confronts the persecutor Saul, who becomes Christ's chosen witness to the Gentiles (9:15).

Damascus road · Acts 9

c. AD 40

Cornelius & the Gentiles

Peter enters a Gentile home, the Holy Spirit falls on Cornelius's household, and Peter has them baptized.

Caesarea · Acts 10

c. AD 42–44

The Church at Antioch

A growing church arises in Antioch, where a great number believed (11:21) and disciples are first called Christians; it becomes the base for mission.

Antioch · Acts 11

c. AD 46–48

First Missionary Journey

The Spirit sends Barnabas and Paul from Antioch through Cyprus and Asia Minor, planting the first mission churches.
Cyprus & Pisidia · Acts 13

c. AD 49

The Jerusalem Council

The church affirms that Gentiles need not keep the law of Moses, and that Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by grace.
Jerusalem · Acts 15

c. AD 49–52

Second Missionary Journey

Following a vision, Paul carries the gospel into Europe — Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth.
Macedonia & Greece · Acts 16

c. AD 53–57

Third Missionary Journey

Paul ministers powerfully in Ephesus for years, and the word of the Lord prevails over magic and idolatry across Asia.
Ephesus & Asia · Acts 19

c. AD 57

Arrest in Jerusalem

Falsely accused of defiling the temple, Paul is seized by a mob and taken into Roman custody.
Jerusalem · Acts 21

c. AD 57–59

Caesarea Imprisonment

Paul is held two years, testifies before Felix and Festus, appeals to Caesar, then speaks before King Agrippa.
Caesarea · Acts 24

c. AD 59–60

Voyage to Rome

Through storm and shipwreck, God preserves Paul and all 276 aboard, bringing him safely toward Rome.
The Mediterranean · Acts 27

c. AD 60–62

Roman Imprisonment

Under house arrest, Paul proclaims the kingdom of God boldly and without hindrance — the gospel reaches the empire's heart.
Rome · Acts 28

PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

The Journey Center

Three journeys from Antioch and a prisoner's voyage carried the gospel toward Rome. Each journey follows below: its route, cities, key events, converts, and lessons.

C. AD 46–48 • ACTS 13–14

First Journey

Commissioned by the Antioch church, Barnabas and Paul take the gospel through Cyprus and into the cities of Pisidia and Lycaonia, planting churches and appointing elders.



Numbers show the order of travel • stylized schematic, not to geographic scale

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| 1. Antioch (Syria) | 5. Iconium |
| 2. Cyprus (Salamis, Paphos) | 6. Lystra |
| 3. Perga | 7. Derbe |
| 4. Pisidian Antioch | |

MAJOR EVENTS

- Elymas the sorcerer blinded; Sergius Paulus believes (Cyprus)
- Paul's synagogue sermon in Pisidian Antioch
- Mistaken for gods at Lystra; Paul stoned
- Elders appointed in each new church

KEY CONVERTS

- Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul
- Disciples in Asia Minor

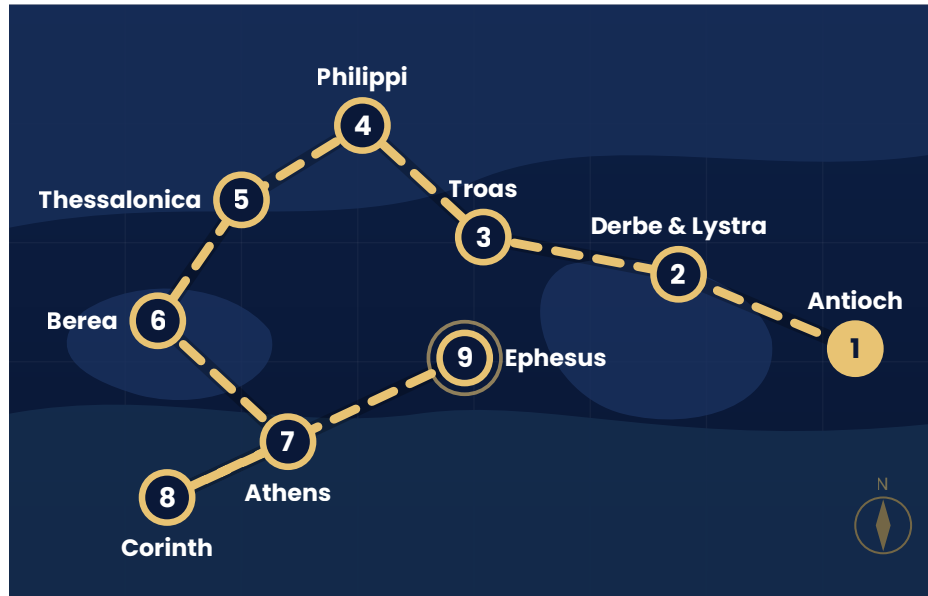
LESSONS LEARNED

- The church sends out the leaders it has for the sake of the mission.
- Expect both belief and fierce opposition.
- Leave behind sustainable, locally led churches.

C. AD 49–52 · ACTS 15:36–18:22

Second Journey

After a vision of a man of Macedonia, Paul carries the gospel into Europe for the first time — through Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth — with Silas and Timothy.



Numbers show the order of travel · stylized schematic, not to geographic scale

- | | |
|-------------------|------------|
| 1. Antioch | 6. Berea |
| 2. Derbe & Lystra | 7. Athens |
| 3. Troas | 8. Corinth |
| 4. Philippi | 9. Ephesus |
| 5. Thessalonica | |

MAJOR EVENTS

- The Macedonian vision redirects the mission to Europe
- Lydia and the Philippian jailer converted
- Midnight worship and earthquake in the Philippi jail
- The Areopagus address in Athens
- Eighteen months establishing the Corinth church

KEY CONVERTS

- Lydia, the seller of purple
- The Philippian jailer and household
- Dionysius and Damaris in Athens
- Crispus and many Corinthians

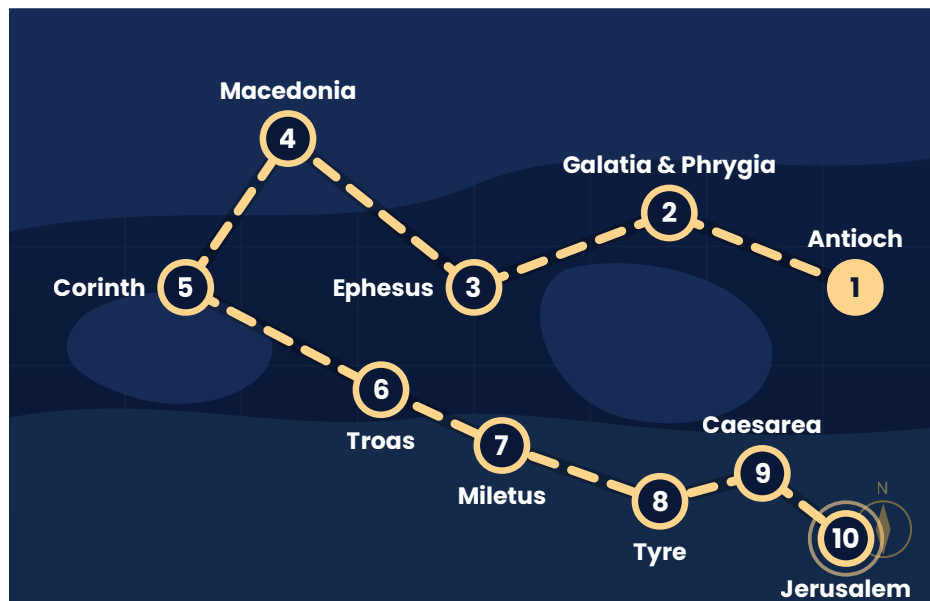
LESSONS LEARNED

- Follow the Spirit's leading, even through closed doors.
- The gospel reaches every social class.
- Persevere where God says He has many people.

C. AD 53–57 · ACTS 18:23–21:16

Third Journey

Paul strengthens the Galatian and Phrygian churches, then ministers for over two years in Ephesus, where the word of the Lord prevails mightily over magic and idolatry across all Asia.



Numbers show the order of travel · stylized schematic, not to geographic scale

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| 1. Antioch | 6. Troas |
| 2. Galatia & Phrygia | 7. Miletus |
| 3. Ephesus | 8. Tyre |
| 4. Macedonia | 9. Caesarea |
| 5. Greece (Corinth) | 10. Jerusalem |

MAJOR EVENTS

- Two years of daily teaching in the school of Tyrannus
- Books of magic burned in public in Ephesus
- The riot of the silversmiths over Artemis
- Eutychus raised at Troas
- Farewell charge to the Ephesian elders at Miletus

KEY CONVERTS

- Ephesian disciples who received the Spirit
- Many across the province of Asia

LESSONS LEARNED

- Sustained teaching can reach a whole region.
- True repentance costs something tangible.
- Shepherd-leaders must guard the flock and finish well.

C. AD 59–60 · ACTS 27–28

Journey to Rome

As a prisoner appealing to Caesar, Paul sails for Rome. Through a violent storm and shipwreck on Malta, God preserves all aboard, and Paul finally proclaims the kingdom of God in the empire's capital.



Numbers show the order of travel · stylized schematic, not to geographic scale

1. Caesarea
2. Sidon
3. Myra
4. Fair Havens (Crete)

5. Malta
6. Syracuse
7. Puteoli
8. Rome

MAJOR EVENTS

- Paul's ignored warning about the dangerous voyage
- Many days in a violent storm; the angel's promise
- Shipwreck on Malta; all 276 saved
- The viper does Paul no harm; healings on Malta
- Two years of bold, unhindered preaching in Rome

KEY CONVERTS

- None recorded; Paul healed many islanders, who honored the travelers (28:8-10)
- Some of the Roman Jewish leaders

LESSONS LEARNED

- God keeps His promises through the worst storms.
- Faith makes us calm leaders in a crisis.
- The gospel cannot be chained — it reaches the ends of the earth.

THE PEOPLE OF ACTS

Character Explorer

Fourteen men and women God used to build His church.

Peter

Apostle · Leader of the early church · Acts 1–12

A Galilean fisherman whom Jesus called and renamed, Peter becomes the bold spokesman of the early church. Restored after his denial of Jesus, he preaches at Pentecost, leads the Jerusalem church, and brings the gospel to Cornelius's household, where the Holy Spirit falls on them (10:44–48).

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 2:14–41 (Pentecost sermon) · Acts 3:1–10 (healing at the gate) · Acts 10 (Cornelius) · Acts 12:1–19 (freed from prison)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Preached the first gospel sermon at Pentecost
- Led the Jerusalem church
- Opened the door of faith to the Gentiles
- Defended Gentile inclusion at the Jerusalem Council

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Failure is not final — grace restores and recommissions.
- Spirit-empowered boldness replaces fear.
- Obedience may mean crossing the boundaries we were taught to keep.

MODERN APPLICATION

Peter shows that a restored, ordinary person filled with the Spirit can lead with courage and remain teachable enough to follow God beyond their comfort zone.

John

Apostle · Partner in ministry · Acts 3–8

One of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, John appears alongside Peter in the early chapters of Acts — at the temple healing, before the Sanhedrin, and on mission to Samaria. He embodies quiet, faithful partnership.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 3:1–11 (healing with Peter) · Acts 4:1–22 (before the council) · Acts 8:14–25 (mission to Samaria)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Partnered with Peter in the temple healing and witness
- Stood boldly before the Sanhedrin
- Came with Peter, prayed, and laid hands on the Samaritan believers, who received the Holy Spirit (8:14–17)

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Faithful partnership strengthens witness.
- Not every leader needs the spotlight to be vital.
- Boldness can be quiet as well as loud.

MODERN APPLICATION

John reminds us that steady, supportive companions in ministry are essential — the church advances through partnership, not solo heroics.

Stephen

One of the Seven · First martyr · Acts 6–7

One of the seven chosen to serve the church's widows, Stephen was full of faith and power. His Spirit-filled witness and sweeping survey of Israel's history provoked the authorities, and he became the first Christian martyr, praying forgiveness for his killers.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 6:8–15 (wonders and arrest) · Acts 7:1–53 (the great speech) · Acts 7:54–60 (martyrdom)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Served the overlooked widows of the church
- Delivered a landmark defense of the faith
- Became the first to die for the name of Jesus

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Practical service and bold witness belong together.
- A heavenly perspective steadies us under pressure.
- We can forgive even those who harm us most.

MODERN APPLICATION

Stephen models a faith that serves humbly, speaks truthfully, and forgives freely — even when it costs everything.

Philip

One of the Seven · Evangelist · Acts 6, 8

Also among the seven, Philip becomes a pioneering evangelist. Scattered by persecution, he preaches Christ in Samaria with great joy, then, led by the Spirit, explains the gospel to an Ethiopian official on a desert road.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 8:4–13 (Samaria) · Acts 8:26–40 (the Ethiopian eunuch) · Acts 21:8–9 (the evangelist with four daughters)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Carried the gospel into Samaria
- Led an Ethiopian official to faith
- Modeled Spirit-led personal evangelism

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- The Spirit often leads us to one specific person.
- Scripture is a natural starting point for sharing Christ.
- Disruption can become an opportunity for mission.

MODERN APPLICATION

Philip shows how readiness to follow the Spirit's nudge — toward a crowd or a single seeker — opens doors for the gospel.

Barnabas

Encourager · Missionary · Acts 4, 9, 11–15

Nicknamed 'son of encouragement,' Barnabas sells a field for the church, vouches for the newly converted Saul, and is sent to nurture the church at Antioch. He mentors Paul into ministry and later wants to take John Mark again, and he and Paul part over it (15:37–39).

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 4:36–37 (generosity) · Acts 9:26–27 (vouching for Saul) · Acts 11:22–26 (Antioch) · Acts 15:36–39 (the dispute over John Mark)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Modeled generous giving
- Bridged Saul into the apostolic community
- Helped build the church at Antioch
- Mentored emerging leaders

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Encouragement is a ministry that multiplies others.
- Generous giving and encouragement serve the whole church (4:36; 11:23).

MODERN APPLICATION

Barnabas teaches that investing in people — especially the doubted and the failed — may be your most lasting contribution to the kingdom.

Paul

Apostle to the Gentiles · Acts 9–28

Once a zealous persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus is transformed by an encounter with the risen Christ and becomes the tireless apostle to the Gentiles. Through three missionary journeys and a voyage to Rome, he plants churches, endures suffering, and proclaims justification by faith.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 9:1–19 (conversion) · Acts 13–14 (first journey) · Acts 16–20 (second & third journeys) · Acts 26 (defense before Agrippa)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Carried the gospel across the Roman world
- Planted and strengthened numerous churches
- Defended salvation by grace through faith
- Took the gospel all the way to Rome

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- No one is beyond the reach of God's grace.
- Suffering is part of faithful mission.
- A clear gospel of grace is worth defending.

MODERN APPLICATION

Paul embodies a life utterly redirected by grace and spent for the mission — proof that God can turn an opponent into His most fruitful servant.

James

Leader of the Jerusalem church · Acts 12, 15, 21

This James, not the one killed in 12:2, is named in Acts 12:17, 15:13 and 21:18. At the Jerusalem Council he offers the decisive, Scripture-grounded verdict that protects Gentile freedom while preserving unity.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 12:17 (referenced as leader) · Acts 15:13–21 (the council verdict) · Acts 21:18–25 (counsel to Paul)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Provided steady leadership in Jerusalem
- Shaped the council's grace-protecting decision
- Worked to keep Jewish and Gentile believers united

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Wise leadership listens before it decides.
- Scripture grounds sound doctrine.
- Unity is worth careful, humble effort.

MODERN APPLICATION

James models the measured, Scripture-anchored leadership that holds a diverse community together around the gospel.

Cornelius

Roman centurion · Gentile who received the Spirit through Peter · Acts 10

A devout, God-fearing Roman officer in Caesarea, Cornelius prays and gives generously. Through a vision he sends for Peter, who brings the gospel to his household, and the Holy Spirit falls on them (10:44–48).

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 10:1–8 (the vision) · Acts 10:24–48 (Peter's visit and the Spirit)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Opened the way for Gentile inclusion
- Modeled devout seeking before full understanding
- Gathered his household to hear the gospel

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- A prayerful seeker still needs Peter's message (10:4; 11:14).
- The gospel is for every nation.
- Faith naturally gathers others to hear.

MODERN APPLICATION

Cornelius shows that God reaches prayerful seekers and that no ethnic or social boundary can keep someone from the gospel.

Lydia

Merchant · First recorded convert in Europe · Acts 16

A dealer in purple cloth and a worshiper of God in Philippi, Lydia is the first recorded convert in Europe. The Lord opens her heart to Paul's message, and her home becomes a base for the new church.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 16:13–15 (conversion) · Acts 16:40 (her home as a gathering place)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- First recorded believer in Europe
- Opened her home and resources to the mission
- Anchored the early Philippian church

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- God opens hearts to receive the word.
- Hospitality is a powerful ministry.
- Business and faith can serve the gospel together.

MODERN APPLICATION

Lydia demonstrates how a professional believer can use her home and means to welcome and support a new church.

Silas

Prophet · Missionary companion · Acts 15–18

A leader in the Jerusalem church chosen to carry the council's letter, Silas becomes Paul's partner on the second journey. He shares Paul's imprisonment in Philippi and sings hymns at midnight before the jailer's conversion.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 15:22–32 (delivering the letter) · Acts 16:19–25 (imprisoned, singing) · Acts 17:1–15 (Thessalonica and Berea)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Helped communicate the council's decision
- Partnered with Paul across the second journey
- Modeled worship in suffering

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Joy in suffering testifies to the watching world.
- Faithful companionship sustains mission.
- Trusted messengers strengthen the wider church.

MODERN APPLICATION

Silas exemplifies the dependable co-laborer whose steadfastness and worship strengthen both the mission and the missionary.

Timothy

Young disciple · Paul's protégé · Acts 16–20

A young disciple from Lystra with a believing Jewish mother, Timothy joins Paul on the second journey and becomes a trusted representative, carrying on Paul's ministry.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 16:1–3 (joining Paul) · Acts 17:14–15 (left at Berea, told to join Paul) · Acts 19:22 (sent to Macedonia)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Served as Paul's trusted delegate
- Carried ministry to multiple churches
- Modeled faithful generational discipleship

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- God uses the young and inexperienced.
- A godly heritage shapes faithful leaders.
- Discipleship passes the mission to the next generation.

MODERN APPLICATION

Timothy shows how mentoring the young multiplies the mission — the faith handed down becomes faith carried forward.

Aquila

Tentmaker · Ministry host · Acts 18

A Jewish tentmaker exiled from Rome, Aquila and his wife Priscilla host Paul, work alongside him, and help disciple Apollos. They host Paul in Corinth (18:3) and stay in Ephesus.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 18:1–3 (meeting Paul) · Acts 18:18–19 (traveling with Paul) · Acts 18:24–26 (teaching Apollos)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Hosted and supported Paul's ministry
- Helped instruct Apollos
- Modeled marriage as a ministry partnership

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Ordinary trades can fund and house ministry.
- Marriage can be a shared mission.
- Hospitality builds the church.

MODERN APPLICATION

Aquila shows how a working couple can make their home and craft a launching pad for the gospel.

Apollos

Eloquent teacher · Acts 18

An eloquent Alexandrian Jew, mighty in the Scriptures, Apollos preaches accurately about Jesus though knowing only John's baptism. Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and explained the way of God more fully, and he becomes a powerful help to the believers.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 18:24–28 (taught more accurately; ministry in Achaia)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Powerfully refuted opponents from Scripture
- Strengthened believers in Achaia
- Modeled teachable humility despite great gifting

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Even gifted teachers keep learning.
- Humility receives correction graciously.
- Scripture and the Spirit refine our gifts.

MODERN APPLICATION

Apollos reminds the talented that humility and a willingness to be taught turn raw gifting into lasting fruitfulness.

Priscilla

Teacher · Ministry partner · Acts 18

Wife of Aquila and an able teacher, Priscilla helps explain the way of God more accurately to Apollos and partners fully with Paul in ministry.

KEY PASSAGES

Acts 18:2–3 (with Paul) · Acts 18:18 (traveling) · Acts 18:26 (teaching Apollos)

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Helped disciple the eloquent Apollos
- Partnered in hosting and teaching
- Explained the way of God with Aquila to Apollos

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

- Couples can serve together in teaching and discipling (18:26).
- Sound understanding can be shared in conversation.
- Ministry flourishes in partnership.

MODERN APPLICATION

Priscilla and Aquila show a couple serving together in discipling (18:26).

THE SPIRIT AT WORK THROUGHOUT ACTS

Holy Spirit Explorer

Acts is the story of what the Spirit does through the church. The entries are grouped by the kind of work: empowering, guiding, teaching, and sending.

EMPOWERMENT

-
- 1:8** **The promise of power**
 Jesus promises that the Spirit will empower His followers to be witnesses to the ends of the earth.
The mission begins with a promise, not a program.
-
- 2:1–4** **The outpouring at Pentecost**
 The Spirit fills the believers amid wind, fire, and other languages.
The Spirit's coming launches the church's mission.
-
- 4:31** **Filled to speak boldly**
 After the church prays, the place is shaken and all are filled with the Spirit to speak the word with boldness.
The Spirit answers prayer with courage.
-
- 6:3–5** **Chosen for service**
 The seven, including Stephen, are chosen because they are full of the Spirit and wisdom.
Practical service is Spirit-empowered ministry.
-
- 7:55** **Sustaining the martyr**
 Full of the Spirit, Stephen sees the glory of God and Jesus standing at His right hand as he dies.
The Spirit steadies believers in suffering.
-
- 10:44–45** **The Spirit falls on Gentiles**
 As Peter speaks, the Holy Spirit falls on all who hear — confirming the Gentiles' inclusion.
The Spirit's coming confirmed to Peter and the church that Gentiles belong (10:45; 11:17; 15:8).
-
- 19:6** **The Spirit on the Ephesians**
 When Paul lays hands on the Ephesian disciples, the Holy Spirit comes upon them.
Luke records the Spirit coming on these disciples with tongues and prophecy (19:6).

GUIDANCE

-
- 8:29** **Go to the chariot**
 The Spirit directs Philip to join the Ethiopian official's chariot for a divine appointment.
In this scene the Spirit directs Philip to one person.
-
- 8:39** **Philip carried away**
 After the baptism, the Spirit of the Lord catches Philip away to continue preaching elsewhere.
The Spirit moves the mission forward.

10:19–20**Go with them, doubting nothing**

The Spirit tells Peter to go with Cornelius's men, overcoming his hesitation about Gentiles.
The Spirit pushes us past our prejudices.

15:28**It seemed good to the Spirit**

The Jerusalem Council frames its decision as the joint discernment of the Spirit and the church.
The Spirit guides the church's decisions.

16:6–7**Forbidden and redirected**

The Spirit forbids speaking the word in Asia, and the Spirit of Jesus does not allow Bithynia, steering the mission toward Macedonia.
Luke reports the Spirit closing some doors and opening one (16:6–10).

20:28**Overseers made by the Spirit**

Paul reminds the elders that the Holy Spirit has made them overseers to shepherd the church.
The Spirit appoints and equips leaders.

TEACHING

2:17–18**Poured out on all flesh**

Peter explains Pentecost as the fulfillment of Joel — the Spirit given to sons, daughters, young, and old.
The Spirit is for every kind of person.

21:11**The Spirit foretells suffering**

Through Agabus, the Spirit reveals the binding awaiting Paul in Jerusalem.
The Spirit prepares us for what lies ahead.

MISSION

13:2–4**Set apart for the work**

While the church worships and fasts, the Spirit says, 'Separate Barnabas and Saul for me,' sending them on mission.
The Spirit calls and sends missionaries.

TRACE A THREAD THROUGH THE BOOK

Themes

Fifteen of the great themes of Acts. Each shows how it weaves through the narrative and names key chapters where it appears.

01 Prayer

Acts 1, Acts 2, Acts 3, Acts 4, Acts 6, Acts 10, Acts 12, Acts 13, Acts 16, Acts 20, Acts 28

The early church is born and sustained in prayer — in upper rooms, prisons, and partings.

WHERE IT APPEARS: Waiting for Power · The Spirit Comes · Healing at the Gate · Boldness Before the Council · Servants and the Spread of the Word · God Shows No Partiality · Chains and Deliverance · Sent Out from Antioch · Doors Open in Macedonia · A Shepherd's Farewell · To the Ends of the Earth

03 Church Growth

Acts 2, Acts 4, Acts 5, Acts 6, Acts 9, Acts 11, Acts 12, Acts 16, Acts 19

Luke repeatedly notes the word increasing and the disciples multiplying.

WHERE IT APPEARS: The Spirit Comes · Boldness Before the Council · Purity and Power · Servants and the Spread of the Word · The Conversion of Saul · The Church at Antioch · Chains and Deliverance · Doors Open in Macedonia · Power in Ephesus

05 Leadership

Acts 1, Acts 6, Acts 14, Acts 15, Acts 20

The church appoints servants, elders, and overseers to shepherd the growing flock.

WHERE IT APPEARS: Waiting for Power · Servants and the Spread of the Word · Through Suffering into the Kingdom · The Jerusalem Council · A Shepherd's Farewell

07 Obedience

Acts 4, Acts 5, Acts 9, Acts 10, Acts 16, Acts 21

Believers obey God rather than men, following the Spirit's lead at any cost.

WHERE IT APPEARS: Boldness Before the Council · Purity and Power · The Conversion of Saul · God Shows No Partiality · Doors Open in Macedonia · Resolved for Jerusalem

02 Evangelism

Acts 2, Acts 3, Acts 4, Acts 8, Acts 10, Acts 13, Acts 17, Acts 26, Acts 28

From Pentecost to Rome, bold proclamation of Christ drives the entire narrative.

WHERE IT APPEARS: The Spirit Comes · Healing at the Gate · Boldness Before the Council · Scattered to Sow · God Shows No Partiality · Sent Out from Antioch · Reasoning in the Marketplace · Before King Agrippa · To the Ends of the Earth

04 Discipleship

Acts 9, Acts 11, Acts 16, Acts 18, Acts 20

Leaders invest in others — Barnabas in Saul, Paul in Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila in Apollos.

WHERE IT APPEARS: The Conversion of Saul · The Church at Antioch · Doors Open in Macedonia · Establishing the Church in Corinth · A Shepherd's Farewell

06 Faith

Acts 3, Acts 11, Acts 13, Acts 15, Acts 16, Acts 26

Salvation comes by grace through faith — for Jew and Gentile alike.

WHERE IT APPEARS: Healing at the Gate · The Church at Antioch · Sent Out from Antioch · The Jerusalem Council · Doors Open in Macedonia · Before King Agrippa

08 Missions

Acts 1, Acts 8, Acts 13, Acts 16, Acts 19, Acts 28

The gospel advances in widening circles from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

WHERE IT APPEARS: Waiting for Power · Scattered to Sow · Sent Out from Antioch · Doors Open in Macedonia · Power in Ephesus · To the Ends of the Earth

09 Persecution

Acts 4, Acts 5, Acts 7, Acts 8, Acts 12, Acts 14, Acts 16, Acts 21

Opposition scatters and refines the church, yet only spreads the word further.

WHERE IT APPEARS: Boldness Before the Council · Purity and Power · Stephen's Witness and Death · Scattered to Sow · Chains and Deliverance · Through Suffering into the Kingdom · Doors Open in Macedonia · Resolved for Jerusalem

11 Courage

Acts 4, Acts 5, Acts 7, Acts 21, Acts 26, Acts 27

Filled with the Spirit, ordinary believers speak and act with remarkable boldness.

WHERE IT APPEARS: Boldness Before the Council · Purity and Power · Stephen's Witness and Death · Resolved for Jerusalem · Before King Agrippa · Storm and Shipwreck

13 Fellowship

Acts 2, Acts 4, Acts 11

Believers share life, meals, and possessions as one family.

WHERE IT APPEARS: The Spirit Comes · Boldness Before the Council · The Church at Antioch

15 Holy Spirit

Acts 1, Acts 2, Acts 4, Acts 8, Acts 10, Acts 13, Acts 15, Acts 16

The Spirit who carries Christ's witness — empowering, guiding, teaching, and sending.

WHERE IT APPEARS: Waiting for Power · The Spirit Comes · Boldness Before the Council · Scattered to Sow · God Shows No Partiality · Sent Out from Antioch · The Jerusalem Council · Doors Open in Macedonia

10 Unity

Acts 2, Acts 4, Acts 6, Acts 11, Acts 15

Across cultures and disputes, the church works to stay one in Christ.

WHERE IT APPEARS: The Spirit Comes · Boldness Before the Council · Servants and the Spread of the Word · The Church at Antioch · The Jerusalem Council

12 Worship

Acts 2, Acts 3, Acts 13, Acts 16

The church gathers to praise — even at midnight in a prison cell.

WHERE IT APPEARS: The Spirit Comes · Healing at the Gate · Sent Out from Antioch · Doors Open in Macedonia

14 Spiritual Gifts

Acts 2, Acts 6, Acts 8, Acts 11, Acts 19, Acts 21

Acts records prophecy, tongues, healing, and wisdom among believers filled with the Spirit.

WHERE IT APPEARS: The Spirit Comes · Servants and the Spread of the Word · Scattered to Sow · The Church at Antioch · Power in Ephesus · Resolved for Jerusalem

FROM 120 TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Early Church Growth

In about thirty years a small gathering in an upper room became a movement spanning the Roman Empire. Here is how the gospel multiplied and spread.

BELIEVERS RECORDED IN ACTS

1:15	120 · Upper-room believers About 120 gathered in prayer before Pentecost.
2:41	3k · After Pentecost About 3,000 added in a single day.
4:4	5k · After the gate healing The number of men grew to about 5,000.
6:7	grew · Word spreading Disciples multiplied greatly; many priests believed.
9:31	grew · Peace and multiplication The church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria multiplied.
21:20	many thousands · Report to Paul James and the elders speak of how many thousands of Jewish believers there are (21:20).

Counts are the figures Luke records. Other passages say only that the number grew (6:7; 9:31) or speak of how many thousands (21:20). They mark a movement multiplying far beyond what any single number can capture.

GEOGRAPHIC EXPANSION

1–7	Jerusalem The church is born and rooted in the holy city.
8–12	Judea & Samaria Persecution scatters believers; the gospel crosses to Samaritans and Gentiles.
13–20	Asia Minor & Greece Paul's journeys plant churches across the Roman provinces.
21–28	To Rome — the empire's heart The gospel reaches the empire's capital, unhindered.

GOSPEL TURNING POINTS

-
- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 2 | Pentecost
The Spirit births the church. |
| 8 | The Scattering
Persecution spreads the gospel beyond Jerusalem. |
| 10 | Cornelius
The gospel opens to the Gentiles. |
| 13 | Antioch Sending
Organized mission to the nations begins. |
| 15 | Jerusalem Council
Gentiles welcomed by grace. |
| 16 | Into Europe
The gospel crosses into a new continent. |
-

THE 28 CHAPTERS · A VERSE-BY-VERSE JOURNEY

The Library

Each chapter follows the same path — Observe, Interpret, Apply, Disciple — with key events, people, places, themes, and verses.

1 Waiting for Power

Acts 1 · text on page 162

The risen Christ commissions His followers and ascends; the church waits in prayer for the promised Spirit.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Luke opens his second volume by reconnecting to the Gospel: Jesus, after His suffering, presents Himself alive over forty days and speaks of the kingdom of God. He commands the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Father's promise, then ascends as two men in white clothing promise His return. The believers — about 120, including the women and Jesus' brothers — devote themselves to prayer, and Matthias is chosen to replace Judas among the Twelve.

KEY EVENTS

- Jesus' forty days of resurrection appearances
- Jesus' promise: power from the Spirit and witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth
- The Ascension on the Mount of Olives
- The upper-room prayer gathering of about 120
- Matthias chosen to replace Judas

KEY PEOPLE

- Jesus
- The eleven apostles
- Mary the mother of Jesus
- Matthias
- Justus (Barsabbas)
- Peter

KEY THEMES

- Holy Spirit
- Witness
- Prayer
- Waiting on God
- Restoration of leadership

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem
- Mount of Olives
- The upper room

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Acts continues Luke's account, addressed to Theophilus, bridging Jesus' earthly ministry and the church's mission. The days of waiting before Pentecost place the believers between promise and fulfillment — a posture of expectant dependence rather than activity.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What does Jesus tell the disciples to do while they wait, and why?
2. How is the geographic scope of the mission described in verse 8?
3. What do the disciples ask Jesus, and how does He redirect their question?
4. How does the group respond after Jesus ascends?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why must the disciples receive the Spirit before they begin the mission?
2. What does the promise of Jesus' return, given by the two men in white, add to the disciples' commission?
3. What does the careful selection of Matthias reveal about the early church's view of apostolic leadership?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Where is God calling you to wait in dependence rather than rush ahead?
2. What would it look like to treat prayer as preparation for mission in your own life?
3. Who are the Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth in your sphere of witness?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you explain why the church's mission begins with the Holy Spirit, not human effort?
2. How could you model expectant, united prayer for someone you are discipling?

KEY VERSES

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. **Acts 1:8**

PRAYER FOCUS

Ask God to make you a dependent, prayerful witness — waiting for His power before acting in His name.

2 The Spirit Comes

Acts 2 · text on page 163

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit is poured out, the church is born, and the gospel is heard in many languages.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

On Pentecost the Spirit fills the believers with a sound like wind and tongues of fire, and they speak in other languages. Devout Jews from every nation hear the wonders of God in their own tongue. Peter stands and preaches: this is Joel's promised outpouring, and Jesus — crucified yet raised and exalted — is both Lord and Christ. Cut to the heart, about three thousand are baptized. The new community devotes itself to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer, sharing all things in common.

KEY EVENTS

- The outpouring of the Holy Spirit
- Speaking in other tongues understood by the crowd
- Peter's sermon citing Joel and the Psalms
- Three thousand baptized in one day
- The summary of early church life and shared possessions

KEY PEOPLE

- Peter
- The apostles
- The Pentecost crowd from many nations

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem

KEY THEMES

- Holy Spirit
- Evangelism
- Repentance
- Fellowship
- Fulfillment of prophecy

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Pentecost (the Feast of Weeks) found devout Jews from every nation under the sky dwelling in Jerusalem (2:5), providing an international audience. Hearing the mighty works of God in many languages shows the message reaching Jews from many nations (2:5–11).

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What physical signs accompany the Spirit's coming?
2. How does Peter explain what the crowd is witnessing?
3. What does Peter call the crowd to do in response?
4. What four practices mark the new community in verses 42–47?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Peter anchor his sermon in Old Testament prophecy?
2. What is the relationship between the Spirit's coming and the church's mission to the nations?
3. What does the believers' radical sharing reveal about the gospel's effect on community?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How does your church reflect the four devotions of Acts 2:42?
2. What would Spirit-empowered boldness look like in your everyday conversations?
3. How freely do you hold your possessions for the sake of others?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you summarize the gospel as Peter did — Jesus crucified, raised, exalted, calling for repentance?
2. How can you help a new believer plug into teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer?

KEY VERSES

Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” **Acts 2:38**

They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer. **Acts 2:42**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for a fresh filling of the Spirit and boldness to proclaim Christ to the people around you.

3 Healing at the Gate

Acts 3 · text on page 164

In Jesus' name a lame man walks, and Peter calls Israel to repentance and restoration.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Peter and John go to the temple at the hour of prayer. A man lame from birth begs at the Beautiful Gate; Peter, having no silver or gold, heals him in the name of Jesus Christ, and the man walks and leaps, praising God. The astonished crowd gathers, and Peter preaches a second sermon: the God of their fathers glorified Jesus, whom they handed over and killed but God raised. He calls them to repent so their sins may be wiped out and times of refreshing may come.

KEY EVENTS

- Healing of the man lame from birth
- The crowd's amazement at Solomon's Portico
- Peter's temple sermon
- The call to repentance and the promise of restoration

KEY PEOPLE

- Peter
- John
- The man lame from birth

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem temple
- The Beautiful Gate
- Solomon's Portico

KEY THEMES

- Healing
- The name of Jesus
- Repentance
- Faith
- Restoration

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The temple remained the center of Jewish worship; the apostles continued to gather there. The healing publicly demonstrates the authority of Jesus' name and sets up confrontation with the authorities in chapter 4.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What does Peter offer the lame man instead of money?
2. To what does Peter attribute the healing?
3. What does Peter say of those who gave Jesus up (3:13–17), and of God?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Peter insist the power is not his own?
2. What do 'times of refreshing' and the restoration of all things signify?
3. How does Peter balance confronting guilt with offering hope?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. What do you have that God can use to bless others, even when you lack resources?
2. How do you respond when God works through you — do you deflect glory to Him?
3. Where do you need to repent so that 'times of refreshing' might come?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you point someone to the power of Jesus' name rather than to a method or program?
2. How can you frame repentance as good news rather than mere condemnation?

KEY VERSES

But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have, that I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!" Acts 3:6

PRAYER FOCUS

Ask God to use what little you have for His glory, and to lead others to refreshing repentance.

4 Boldness Before the Council

Acts 4 · text on page 165

Persecution begins, yet the apostles proclaim Christ boldly and the church prays for more courage.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The priests and Sadducees, disturbed by the preaching of resurrection, arrest Peter and John, though the number of the men grows to about five thousand. Before the Sanhedrin, Peter, filled with the Spirit, declares that salvation is found in no other name than Jesus. Unable to deny the healing, the council threatens them and lets them go. The believers gather and pray — not for safety but for boldness — and the place is shaken as they are filled afresh with the Spirit. They share everything; Barnabas is introduced.

KEY EVENTS

- Arrest of Peter and John
- Peter's defense before the Sanhedrin
- The 'no other name' declaration
- The council's threats and release
- The church's prayer for boldness and a fresh filling
- Barnabas's generosity introduced

KEY PEOPLE

- Peter
- John
- Annas and Caiaphas
- The Sanhedrin
- Barnabas

KEY THEMES

- Persecution
- Boldness
- Salvation in Christ alone
- Prayer
- Unity

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem
- The Sanhedrin council

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Sadducees denied resurrection, so the apostles' message directly threatened their theology and authority. This is the church's first organized opposition — a pattern that will intensify throughout Acts.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What charge concerns the authorities most?
2. What does Peter claim about salvation and the name of Jesus?
3. What does the church specifically ask for in its prayer?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why do the rulers note that Peter and John 'had been with Jesus'?
2. Why does the church pray for boldness rather than relief from persecution?
3. What does the renewed shaking and filling signify after Pentecost?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. When have you softened the message of Christ to avoid conflict?
2. What would it look like to pray for boldness instead of comfort under pressure?
3. How does belonging to a generous community strengthen your witness?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you help someone respond to opposition with courage rather than fear?
2. How can you teach that Jesus is the exclusive yet freely offered way of salvation?

KEY VERSES

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that is given among men, by which we must be saved! **Acts 4:12**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for boldness to speak Christ's name plainly, whatever the cost.

5 Purity and Power

Acts 5 • text on page 166

God guards the holiness of His church and continues its mission despite imprisonment.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Ananias and Sapphira lie about their gift and fall dead, and great fear comes on the church. The apostles perform many signs; people lay the sick in the streets hoping Peter's shadow might fall on them. Jealous, the high priest imprisons the apostles, but an angel frees them to keep preaching. Re-arrested, they answer that they must obey God rather than men. Gamaliel counsels restraint, and the apostles are flogged but rejoice to suffer for the name, continuing to teach daily.

KEY EVENTS

- The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira
- Many signs and wonders by the apostles
- Apostles imprisoned and freed by an angel
- 'We must obey God rather than men'
- Gamaliel's counsel
- Apostles flogged and rejoicing

KEY PEOPLE

- Ananias and Sapphira
- Peter
- The apostles
- Gamaliel
- The high priest

KEY THEMES

- Integrity
- Holiness
- Persecution
- Obedience to God
- Joy in suffering

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem
- Solomon's Portico
- The prison
- The Sanhedrin

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Peter says Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and to God (5:3–4), and great fear came on the whole assembly (5:11). Gamaliel was a respected Pharisee and teacher of Paul.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK • STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 • WHAT HAPPENED? • OBSERVE

1. What is the actual sin of Ananias and Sapphira?
2. How do the apostles respond when freed and re-arrested?
3. What reasoning does Gamaliel give the council?

STEP 02 • WHAT DOES IT MEAN? • INTERPRET

1. Why does God deal so severely with deception in the early church?
2. What does 'we must obey God rather than men' establish for the church?
3. Why do the apostles rejoice at being dishonored?

STEP 03 • HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? • APPLY

1. Where are you tempted to project a more generous or spiritual image than is true?
2. When have human authority and God's command conflicted for you?
3. Can you rejoice when following Christ costs you something?

STEP 04 • HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? • DISCIPLE

1. How would you teach the seriousness of honesty before God?
2. How can you prepare a younger believer to suffer joyfully for Jesus' name?

KEY VERSES

But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.” **Acts 5:29**

PRAYER FOCUS

Ask God for an undivided heart and the joy to obey Him above every other voice.

6 Servants and the Spread of the Word

Acts 6 · text on page 167

The church organizes for service so the word can spread, and Stephen rises as a Spirit-filled witness.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

As the church grows, Greek-speaking widows are overlooked in the daily distribution. The apostles appoint seven men full of the Spirit and wisdom — including Stephen and Philip — to serve tables, so they can devote themselves to prayer and the word. The word of God spreads and the disciples multiply, even among priests. Stephen, full of faith and power, does great wonders, but opponents stir up false witnesses and seize him, accusing him of speaking against the temple and the law.

KEY EVENTS

- Complaint over neglected Hellenist widows
- Appointment of the seven
- The word of God spreading; priests believing
- Stephen's wonders and growing opposition
- False accusations against Stephen

KEY PEOPLE

- The Twelve
- Stephen
- Philip
- The seven servants

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem

KEY THEMES

- Servant leadership
- Church order
- Unity across cultures
- The word spreading
- Spirit-filled service

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews; the tension reflects real cultural diversity in the early church. The seven are often seen as the first deacons, freeing the apostles for ministry of the word.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What problem arises as the church grows, and how is it solved?
2. What qualifications are required of the seven?
3. How is Stephen described before his arrest?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why do the apostles refuse to neglect prayer and the word for administration?
2. How does delegating service actually accelerate the word's spread?
3. Why does Stephen's faithfulness provoke such fierce opposition?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. What practical needs in your community are being overlooked?
2. Are leaders in your life freed to focus on prayer and the word?
3. Where might God be calling you to serve so others can teach?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you help someone discover their role in serving the body?
2. How can you affirm that practical service is genuine, Spirit-filled ministry?

KEY VERSES

The word of God increased and the number of the disciples greatly multiplied in Jerusalem. A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. **Acts 6:7**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for a servant's heart and for leaders devoted to prayer and the word.

7 Stephen's Witness and Death

Acts 7 · text on page 168

Stephen retells Israel's story, indicts resistance to the Spirit, and becomes the church's first martyr.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Stephen answers the council with a sweeping survey of Israel's history — Abraham, Joseph, Moses, the tabernacle and temple — showing that God's presence is never confined to a building and that these leaders echo their fathers' resistance. He charges them with resisting the Holy Spirit and betraying the Righteous One. Enraged, they stone him. Stephen, full of the Spirit, sees Jesus standing at God's right hand, prays for his killers' forgiveness, and dies. The witnesses lay their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul, who consents to his death.

KEY EVENTS

- Stephen's speech surveying Israel's history
- The charge of resisting the Holy Spirit
- Stephen's vision of the Son of Man
- Stephen's stoning and prayer of forgiveness
- Saul's first appearance, consenting to the death

KEY PEOPLE

- Stephen
- The Sanhedrin
- Saul (Paul)

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem
- Outside the city

KEY THEMES

- Martyrdom
- Faithful witness
- Forgiveness
- God's presence beyond the temple
- Resisting the Spirit

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Stephen's speech reframes the temple-centered faith, anticipating the gospel's movement beyond Jerusalem. His death echoes Jesus' own — entrusting his spirit and forgiving his enemies — and marks the trigger for the church's scattering.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does Stephen trace God's work before and beyond the temple?
2. What climactic accusation does Stephen level at the council?
3. What does Stephen see and pray as he dies?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Stephen emphasize that God 'doesn't dwell in temples made with hands'?
2. How does Stephen's death mirror the death of Jesus?
3. Why does Luke note Saul's presence here?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Where might you be confining God to a place, tradition, or form?
2. Could you forgive those who harm you for your faith, as Stephen did?
3. How does a heavenly perspective steady you under pressure?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you use Israel's story to point someone to Jesus?
2. How can you prepare believers to witness faithfully even at great cost?

KEY VERSES

They stoned Stephen as he called out, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, don’t hold this sin against them!” **Acts 7:59–60**

PRAYER FOCUS

Ask God for a faithful, forgiving witness that points others to the exalted Christ.

8 Scattered to Sow

Acts 8 · text on page 170

Persecution scatters the church, and the gospel breaks out into Samaria and to an Ethiopian official.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

After Stephen's death a great persecution drives believers out of Jerusalem — and they preach wherever they go. Philip proclaims Christ in Samaria with signs and joy; Peter and John come, pray, and lay hands on them, and they receive the Holy Spirit (8:14–17). Simon the sorcerer tries to buy the Spirit's power and is rebuked. Then the Spirit sends Philip to a desert road, where he meets an Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah, explains the suffering servant as Jesus, and baptizes him. Philip is carried away, continuing to preach.

KEY EVENTS

- Great persecution scatters the church
- Philip's mission in Samaria
- Peter and John pray and lay hands on the Samaritans, and they receive the Holy Spirit
- Simon Magus rebuked
- Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch
- Baptism on the desert road

KEY PEOPLE

- Philip
- Simon the sorcerer
- Peter
- John
- The Ethiopian eunuch

KEY THEMES

- Mission expansion
- The gospel crossing barriers
- Holy Spirit
- Scripture and Christ
- Baptism

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem
- Samaria
- The Gaza road
- Ethiopia (by extension)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Samaria represents the second ring of Acts 1:8. Samaritans were despised by Jews, so their inclusion is a major boundary crossed. The Ethiopian eunuch, a man of great authority under Candace (8:27), is a foreigner of high rank.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What unexpected result comes from the persecution?
2. How does Philip respond to the Spirit's specific direction?
3. What passage is the eunuch reading, and how does Philip use it?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. How does Samaria's inclusion advance the mission of Acts 1:8?
2. What does Simon's offer reveal about misunderstanding God's power?
3. Why does Luke highlight an Ethiopian official's conversion?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How might God use your scattering or disruption to spread the gospel?
2. Are you sensitive to the Spirit's prompting to speak to a specific person?
3. How can Scripture be your starting point in sharing Christ?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you explain Isaiah 53 as pointing to Jesus?
2. How can you be ready, like Philip, to seize a single God-given conversation?

KEY VERSES

Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached to him about Jesus. **Acts 8:35**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for sensitivity to the Spirit and readiness to explain Christ from Scripture.

9 The Conversion of Saul

Acts 9 · text on page 171

The church's chief persecutor is confronted by the risen Christ and commissioned to the nations.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Saul, breathing threats, sets out for Damascus to arrest believers. A blinding light stops him and the risen Jesus asks, 'Why do you persecute me?' Blinded, Saul fasts three days until Ananias, sent by the Lord, lays hands on him; he is healed, filled with the Spirit, and baptized. Saul immediately preaches that Jesus is the Son of God, astonishing everyone. Threatened, he escapes Damascus in a basket. Meanwhile Peter heals Aeneas and raises Tabitha (Dorcas) in Lydda and Joppa.

KEY EVENTS

- Saul's encounter with the risen Christ
- Saul blinded for three days
- Ananias sent to restore Saul's sight; Saul baptized
- Saul preaching Christ in Damascus
- Escape over the wall in a basket
- Peter heals Aeneas and raises Tabitha

KEY PEOPLE

- Saul (Paul)
- Ananias of Damascus
- Barnabas
- Peter
- Aeneas
- Tabitha (Dorcas)

KEY THEMES

- Conversion
- Grace
- Calling
- Transformation
- Healing

KEY LOCATIONS

- Damascus
- Jerusalem
- Lydda
- Joppa

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Saul's conversion (c. AD 34–36) is so pivotal Luke records it three times. The persecutor becomes the apostle to the Gentiles, illustrating that no one is beyond God's reach.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does Jesus identify Himself with His persecuted people?
2. What is Ananias asked to do, and how does he respond?
3. How does Saul's behavior change immediately after his conversion?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. What does 'why do you persecute me?' reveal about Christ and His church?
2. Why is it significant that an ordinary disciple, Ananias, is sent to Saul?
3. How does Saul's transformation testify to the power of grace?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Is there anyone you've written off as beyond God's reach?
2. Would you obey if God sent you to a 'Saul' you feared?
3. How has an encounter with Christ redirected your life?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How can you tell a testimony of transformation to encourage doubters?
2. How would you welcome and verify a dramatic new convert wisely, as the church did with Saul?

KEY VERSES

He fell on the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” **Acts 9:4**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for the ‘unreachable’ people in your life and for courage to obey God’s surprising assignments.

10 God Shows No Partiality

Acts 10 · text on page 172

Through Peter and Cornelius, God opens the gospel and the Spirit to the Gentiles.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Cornelius, a devout Roman centurion, is told by an angel to send for Peter. Meanwhile Peter sees a vision of a sheet of unclean animals and a voice saying, 'What God has cleansed, you must not call unclean.' The Spirit directs him to go with Cornelius's men. In the Gentile household Peter declares that God shows no partiality and preaches Christ. As he speaks, the Holy Spirit falls on all who hear, and they are baptized — the gospel has crossed to the Gentiles.

KEY EVENTS

- Cornelius's vision and summons
- Peter's vision of the sheet
- Peter entering a Gentile home
- Peter's sermon: God shows no partiality
- The Spirit poured out on Gentiles
- Gentile believers baptized

KEY PEOPLE

- Cornelius
- Peter
- The household of Cornelius

KEY LOCATIONS

- Caesarea
- Joppa

KEY THEMES

- Gentile inclusion
- Impartiality of God
- Holy Spirit
- Breaking barriers
- Mission

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Caesarea was the Roman provincial capital. Peter says it was "unlawful" for a Jew to visit a Gentile (10:28); Peter's entry into Cornelius's home is a watershed that reorients the church's understanding of who belongs.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How do the visions of Cornelius and Peter converge?
2. What does Peter realize about God's view of people?
3. What confirms that the Gentiles have truly received the gospel?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. What does the sheet vision teach beyond food laws?
2. What is the significance of the Spirit falling on these Gentile hearers before they are baptized (10:44–48)?
3. How does this event redefine the boundaries of God's people?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. What prejudices might God be challenging in your heart?
2. Whom have you considered 'unclean' or outside God's reach?
3. How willing are you to step outside your comfort to reach others?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you teach that the gospel is for every people and culture?
2. How can you help a group examine and surrender its biases?

KEY VERSES

Peter opened his mouth and said, "Truly I perceive that God doesn't show favoritism; but in every nation he who fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." **Acts 10:34–35**

PRAYER FOCUS

Ask God to remove partiality from your heart and to widen your vision of who belongs.

11 The Church at Antioch

Acts 11 · text on page 174

Peter defends Gentile inclusion, and a growing church in Antioch sees a great number believe (11:21).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Back in Jerusalem, Peter is criticized for eating with Gentiles. He recounts the whole story step by step, and the believers conclude that God has granted repentance to the Gentiles too. Meanwhile, scattered believers preach to Greek speakers in Antioch, and a great number turns to the Lord. Barnabas is sent, rejoices, and fetches Saul; together they teach there a year. In Antioch the disciples are first called Christians, and they send relief to Judea during a coming famine.

KEY EVENTS

- Peter's defense of Gentile inclusion in Jerusalem
- The gospel preached in Antioch
- Barnabas sent and bringing Saul
- Disciples first called 'Christians'
- Famine relief sent to Judea

KEY PEOPLE

- Peter
- Barnabas
- Saul
- Agabus the prophet

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem
- Antioch
- Judea

KEY THEMES

- Gentile mission
- Unity
- Generosity
- Discipleship
- Identity in Christ

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Antioch in Syria was the empire's third-largest city and becomes the launchpad for Paul's missionary journeys. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch (11:26).

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does Peter answer his critics?
2. How does the Jerusalem church respond to the report?
3. Why is Barnabas sent to Antioch, and what does he do?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Peter retell the whole story rather than simply assert his authority?
2. What does the new name 'Christians' signify about this community?
3. Why does Luke highlight the famine relief from Antioch to Judea?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How do you respond when challenged about including 'outsiders'?
2. Who could you invest in the way Barnabas invested in Saul?
3. How does your faith show up in generosity toward distant believers?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you mentor a newer leader into ministry, as Barnabas did with Saul?
2. How can you help a church celebrate God's work across cultural lines?

KEY VERSES

For a whole year they were gathered together with the assembly, and taught many people. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. **Acts 11:26**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for a generous, united church that crosses lines and raises up new leaders.

12 Chains and Deliverance

Acts 12 · text on page 175

God delivers Peter from prison and judges a proud king, while the word keeps spreading.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Herod kills James the brother of John and imprisons Peter. The church prays earnestly. An angel wakes Peter, his chains fall, and he walks free past the guards; the praying believers can scarcely believe it. Herod, accepting the people's praise as a god, is struck down and dies. Luke notes the contrast: the word of God increased and multiplied. Barnabas and Saul, their service done, take John Mark with them (12:25).

KEY EVENTS

- Martyrdom of James
- Peter imprisoned by Herod
- The church's earnest prayer
- Peter freed by an angel
- Herod's death
- The word of God multiplying

KEY PEOPLE

- Herod Agrippa I
- James (brother of John)
- Peter
- Rhoda
- Barnabas
- Saul
- John Mark

KEY THEMES

- Prayer
- Deliverance
- God's sovereignty
- Judgment on pride
- The word advancing

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem
- Caesarea

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

King Herod persecuted the church and, seeing it pleased the Jews, seized Peter also (12:1–3). The chapter contrasts human power, which God topples, with His word, which cannot be chained.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does the church respond to Peter's imprisonment?
2. How do the believers react when Peter actually appears?
3. Why is Herod struck down?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does God deliver Peter but allow James to be martyred?
2. What does the believers' surprise reveal about prayer and faith?
3. What is Luke's point in contrasting Herod's death with the word's growth?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Do you pray earnestly while still being surprised when God answers?
2. How do you hold trust in God when He delivers some and not others?
3. Where are you tempted to take glory that belongs to God (12:23)?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you encourage someone grieving the loss of a believer, as the church faced when James was killed?
2. How can you cultivate persistent, expectant prayer in a group?

KEY VERSES

But the word of God grew and multiplied. **Acts 12:24**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray with expectancy, trusting God's sovereignty over both deliverance and hardship.

13 Sent Out from Antioch

Acts 13 · text on page 176

The Spirit launches the first missionary journey; Paul preaches Christ from Israel's story.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

As the Antioch church worships and fasts, the Spirit sets apart Barnabas and Saul. They sail to Cyprus, where the proconsul Sergius Paulus believes and the sorcerer Elymas is struck blind. Saul, also called Paul (13:9), and Barnabas reach Pisidian Antioch. In the synagogue Paul preaches a sweeping sermon: God's promises through Israel's history are fulfilled in Jesus, who was raised and brings forgiveness and justification. Many believe; when some of the Jews oppose them, Paul turns to the Gentiles, and the word spreads through the region.

KEY EVENTS

- The Spirit commissions Barnabas and Saul
- Mission on Cyprus; Elymas blinded; Sergius Paulus believes
- Saul now called Paul
- Paul's synagogue sermon in Pisidian Antioch
- Turning to the Gentiles
- Persecution and departure

KEY PEOPLE

- Barnabas
- Paul
- John Mark
- Sergius Paulus
- Elymas the sorcerer

KEY THEMES

- Missions
- Calling and sending
- Justification by faith
- Gentile mission
- Opposition

KEY LOCATIONS

- Antioch
- Cyprus
- Perga
- Pisidian Antioch

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This begins the first missionary journey (c. AD 46–48). Paul's sermon parallels Stephen's historical survey but climaxes in justification through Christ — a theme central to Paul's letters.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How are Barnabas and Saul commissioned?
2. How does Paul connect Israel's history to Jesus?
3. How do Paul and Barnabas respond to rejection?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. What is the significance of the church sending its best leaders away?
2. Why does Paul anchor justification in the resurrection?
3. How should we read 'to the Gentiles' (13:46) in light of 14:1?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Is your church willing to send its best for the sake of mission?
2. How does the resurrection ground your assurance of forgiveness?
3. How do you respond when your message is rejected?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you trace the gospel through the Old Testament for a learner?
2. How can you cultivate a sending culture in your community?

KEY VERSES

Be it known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man is proclaimed to you remission of sins; and by him everyone who believes is justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. **Acts 13:38–39**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for a sending heart and confidence in justification through the risen Christ.

14 Through Suffering into the Kingdom

Acts 14 · text on page 177

Paul and Barnabas preach, are mistaken for gods, suffer stoning, and strengthen the new churches.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Iconium many believe, but a plot drives them out. At Lystra Paul heals a lame man, and the crowd tries to worship them as gods; Paul redirects their praise to the living God. Then Jews from Antioch incite the crowd, and Paul is stoned and left for dead — yet he rises and continues. The two retrace their steps, appointing elders and encouraging the disciples that ‘through many afflictions we must enter into God’s Kingdom.’ They report to Antioch all that God had done.

KEY EVENTS

- Ministry and division at Iconium
- Healing of the lame man at Lystra
- The crowd attempting worship; Paul’s redirection
- Paul stoned and left for dead
- Appointing elders in each church
- Report back to Antioch

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Barnabas
- The lame man of Lystra

KEY LOCATIONS

- Iconium
- Lystra
- Derbe
- Antioch

KEY THEMES

- Perseverance
- Suffering
- True worship
- Church planting
- Elder leadership

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The crowd’s attempt to worship Barnabas and Paul as Jupiter and Mercury (14:12) shows the pagan context. Paul and Barnabas appoint elders in each church (14:23), leaving locally led churches behind.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How do Paul and Barnabas respond to being treated as gods?
2. What happens to Paul at Lystra, and what does he do next?
3. What do they do as they revisit the churches?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why is it vital that the missionaries refuse worship?
2. What does ‘through many afflictions’ teach about the Christian life?
3. Why does appointing elders matter for the churches’ future?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How do you deflect undue praise toward God?
2. How does expecting hardship change how you follow Christ?
3. How are you helping establish lasting leadership, not just excitement?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you prepare new believers for suffering without discouraging them?
2. How can you raise up local leaders rather than fostering dependence on yourself?

KEY VERSES

Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many afflictions we must enter into God’s Kingdom. **Acts 14:22**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for perseverance through hardship and for godly leaders in every church.

15 The Jerusalem Council

Acts 15 · text on page 178

The church decides Gentiles are saved by grace, without circumcision, and protects freedom.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Some insist Gentile believers must be circumcised to be saved. The apostles and elders gather in Jerusalem to consider the matter. Peter recalls how God gave the Spirit to Gentiles, saved by grace just as Jews are. Paul and Barnabas report God's signs among the Gentiles. James proposes a verdict from Scripture: do not burden the Gentiles, but ask them to abstain from four things (15:20). A letter is sent, bringing joy. Later, Paul and Barnabas part ways over John Mark.

KEY EVENTS

- The circumcision controversy
- Peter's testimony of salvation by grace
- Paul and Barnabas's report
- James's proposal and the council's decision
- The letter to the Gentile churches
- Paul and Barnabas separate over John Mark

KEY PEOPLE

- Peter
- Paul
- Barnabas
- James
- Judas Barsabbas
- Silas
- John Mark

KEY THEMES

- Grace
- Salvation by faith
- Unity
- Doctrine
- Conflict resolution

KEY LOCATIONS

- Antioch
- Jerusalem

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Jerusalem Council (c. AD 49) is a turning point that protects the gospel of grace for Jews and Gentiles alike. It models how the church discerns doctrine through Scripture, testimony, and shared leadership.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What question threatens to divide the church?
2. How do Peter and James each support the decision?
3. What does the council ask of the Gentile believers, and why?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Peter say Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by grace?
2. How does the council answer the circumcision demand, and what does it ask of the Gentile believers instead?
3. What does the Paul–Barnabas split teach about disagreement among godly leaders?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Where might you be adding requirements to the gospel of grace?
2. How do you handle differences for the sake of unity?
3. How do you work through sharp disagreements with fellow believers?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you explain that we are saved by grace through faith, not works?
2. How can you model gracious conflict resolution to those you lead?

KEY VERSES

But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are. **Acts 15:11**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for clarity on grace and for unity that protects both truth and love.

16 Doors Open in Macedonia

Acts 16 · text on page 180

The Spirit redirects Paul to Europe, where unlikely people and a midnight song display the gospel's power.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Paul takes Timothy and, after the Spirit forbids other routes, follows a vision of a man of Macedonia. In Philippi, Lydia, a seller of purple, believes and opens her home. After Paul casts a spirit from a slave girl, he and Silas are beaten and jailed. At midnight they sing hymns; an earthquake opens the doors, but they stay — and the jailer and his household believe and are baptized. As Roman citizens, Paul and Silas insist that the magistrates come and bring them out (16:37) before leaving.

KEY EVENTS

- Timothy joins Paul
- The Macedonian vision
- Lydia's conversion in Philippi
- The slave girl delivered
- Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned
- Midnight worship and the earthquake
- The Philippian jailer's conversion

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Silas
- Timothy
- Lydia
- The Philippian jailer
- The slave girl

KEY LOCATIONS

- Lystra
- Troas
- Philippi
- Macedonia

KEY THEMES

- Guidance
- Conversion
- Joy in suffering
- Worship
- The gospel for all classes

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This is the gospel's first recorded entry into Europe. The three people Paul meets in Philippi — a seller of purple, a slave girl, and a jailer — show the gospel reaching every social stratum.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How is Paul's route directed and redirected?
2. Who are the three people impacted in Philippi, and how do they differ?
3. How do Paul and Silas respond to unjust imprisonment?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. What does the Spirit's redirection teach about following God's leading?
2. Why does Luke highlight such different people together?
3. What does midnight worship reveal about the source of Christian joy?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How do you respond when God closes a door you expected to walk through?
2. Whom might you overlook that God is ready to save?
3. Can you worship in the middle of hardship?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you help someone discern God's guidance?

2. How can you teach that the gospel levels every social distinction?

KEY VERSES

They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” **Acts 16:31**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for open doors, sensitivity to God’s leading, and joy that sings in hard places.

17 Reasoning in the Marketplace

Acts 17 · text on page 181

Paul engages synagogue and philosophers alike, proclaiming the unknown God now revealed in Jesus.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Thessalonica Paul reasons from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ; some believe, but a riot erupts. The Bereans are more noble, examining the Scriptures daily. In Athens, distressed by idols, Paul addresses the Areopagus: the God who made the world does not live in temples; He calls all to repent, for He has fixed a day of judgment and proved it by raising Jesus. Some mock, some delay, but some believe.

KEY EVENTS

- Preaching and uproar in Thessalonica
- The noble Bereans examining Scripture
- Paul distressed by idols in Athens
- The Areopagus address on the ‘unknown god’
- Mixed response: mocking, delay, and belief

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Silas
- Timothy
- The Bereans
- Dionysius
- Damaris

KEY THEMES

- Apologetics
- Engaging culture
- Scripture
- Repentance
- Resurrection and judgment

KEY LOCATIONS

- Thessalonica
- Berea
- Athens

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Athens was the intellectual center of the ancient world. Paul’s Areopagus speech models contextualized witness — quoting their poets while calling them to the one true God.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What makes the Bereans ‘more noble’?
2. How does Paul begin his message to the Athenians?
3. What are the varied responses to Paul’s preaching?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Luke commend the Bereans’ Scripture-checking?
2. How does Paul connect with pagan thinkers without compromising the message?
3. Why does Paul climax with resurrection and judgment?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Do you test teaching against Scripture like the Bereans?
2. How can you build bridges to people of very different beliefs?
3. How do you respond when some accept and others reject your witness?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you teach someone to engage skeptics thoughtfully and graciously?
2. How can you cultivate a habit of examining Scripture daily?

KEY VERSES

Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. **Acts 17:11**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for wisdom to engage different audiences and a heart that searches the Scriptures.

18 Establishing the Church in Corinth

Acts 18 · text on page 182

Paul settles in Corinth with new partners, encouraged by the Lord to keep speaking.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Corinth Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla and works with them as tentmakers, reasoning in the synagogue. When opposition mounts, the Lord tells Paul in a vision not to be afraid but to keep speaking, for He has many people in the city; Paul stays eighteen months. When Paul is brought before Gallio, the charges are dismissed. Paul then returns through Ephesus toward Antioch, ending the second journey. Apollos, an eloquent teacher, is more accurately instructed by Priscilla and Aquila.

KEY EVENTS

- Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla
- Tentmaking and synagogue ministry
- The Lord's vision of encouragement
- Eighteen months in Corinth
- Before the proconsul Gallio
- Apollos taught more accurately

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Aquila
- Priscilla
- Gallio
- Apollos
- Crispus

KEY THEMES

- Partnership
- Perseverance
- Encouragement
- Work and ministry
- Teaching

KEY LOCATIONS

- Corinth
- Ephesus
- Antioch

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Corinth was a wealthy port city. Paul's tentmaking shows ministry sustained by work, and Priscilla and Aquila model a husband-wife team who disciple even gifted teachers.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does Paul support himself in Corinth?
2. What does the Lord tell Paul in the vision, and what is the result?
3. How do Priscilla and Aquila help Apollos?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does God assure Paul that He has 'many people in this city'?
2. What does Paul's tentmaking teach about the dignity of work?
3. What does Apollos's correction model about humility and learning?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Where do you need God's encouragement to keep going?
2. How can your everyday work become a platform for ministry?
3. Are you teachable, even when you are already gifted?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you come alongside a gifted person to refine their understanding gently?
2. How can you partner with others in ministry rather than working alone?

KEY VERSES

The Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Don’t be afraid, but speak and don’t be silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many people in this city.” **Acts 18:9–10**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for endurance, godly partnerships, and a teachable heart.

19 Power in Ephesus

Acts 19 · text on page 183

The gospel triumphs over magic and idolatry as the word of the Lord prevails mightily in Ephesus.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Ephesus Paul teaches disciples who receive the Spirit, then reasons daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years so that all Asia hears the word. God works extraordinary miracles; would-be exorcists are overpowered, and many who practiced magic burn their costly books. The word of the Lord grows mightily. A silversmith named Demetrius, fearing for the idol trade, incites a riot for Artemis, filling the theater with confusion until the town clerk disperses the crowd.

KEY EVENTS

- Disciples receive the Spirit
- Two years of daily teaching in the school of Tyrannus
- Extraordinary miracles and the failed exorcists
- Burning of magic books
- The riot of the silversmiths over Artemis

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Demetrius the silversmith
- The Ephesian disciples
- The town clerk

KEY LOCATIONS

- Ephesus
- Asia

KEY THEMES

- Power of the gospel
- Repentance from idolatry
- Spiritual warfare
- The word prevailing
- Opposition

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ephesus was home to the temple of Artemis (19:27). The public burning of valuable books and the economic threat to idol-makers show the gospel's costly, transforming power.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does Paul's teaching strategy reach everyone who lived in Asia (19:10)?
2. What do those who practiced magical arts do with their books?
3. What actually motivates the riot in Ephesus?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. What does the burning of the books reveal about genuine repentance?
2. Why does Luke note the cost of the burned books?
3. How does Demetrius's speech tie the loss of trade to the honor of Artemis?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. What 'magic books' or attachments might God be asking you to surrender?
2. How does true repentance cost you something tangible?
3. Where does the gospel threaten the idols of your culture?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you help someone make a clean break with sinful practices?
2. How can you teach that following Christ may carry social or financial cost?

KEY VERSES

So the word of the Lord was growing and becoming mighty. **Acts 19:20**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for repentance that costs something and for the word to prevail over every idol.

20 A Shepherd's Farewell

Acts 20 · text on page 184

Paul pours himself out for the churches and charges the Ephesian elders to guard the flock.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Paul travels through Macedonia and Greece, encouraging believers. At Troas he preaches late; Eutychus falls from a window and dies, but Paul restores him to life. Hurrying toward Jerusalem, Paul meets the Ephesian elders at Miletus. He recounts his faithful ministry, warns of fierce 'wolves' to come, and charges them to shepherd 'the assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood' (20:28). They weep and pray together, grieved that they will see his face no more.

KEY EVENTS

- Travels and encouragement through Macedonia and Greece
- Eutychus raised at Troas
- The farewell to the Ephesian elders at Miletus
- Warning against wolves and false teachers
- The charge to shepherd the flock

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Eutychus
- The Ephesian elders

KEY LOCATIONS

- Macedonia
- Greece
- Troas
- Miletus

KEY THEMES

- Pastoral leadership
- Faithfulness
- Sacrificial ministry
- Guarding the flock
- Farewell

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This is Paul's only recorded speech to Christian leaders, a model of pastoral ministry. Paul models transparency about his conduct and hands responsibility to local elders.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does Paul describe his own ministry among them?
2. What dangers does Paul warn the elders about?
3. What is the elders' emotional response to Paul's farewell?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. What does 'the assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood' say about the church's worth?
2. Why does Paul emphasize his integrity and example?
3. What does this farewell teach about finishing well?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How can you pour yourself out in service without holding back?
2. Who are you responsible to watch over and protect?
3. What 'wolves' threaten the people you care for?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you charge a new leader to guard those in their care?
2. How can your life and example back up what you teach?

KEY VERSES

Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood. **Acts 20:28**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for faithful, sacrificial leaders who guard the flock and finish well.

21 Resolved for Jerusalem

Acts 21 · text on page 186

Though warned of chains, Paul presses toward Jerusalem, ready to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

On the way to Jerusalem, believers and the prophet Agabus warn Paul of the chains awaiting him, but he is resolved, ready even to die for Jesus' name. In Jerusalem he meets James, and at the elders' request he joins four men in a purification vow, so that all will know he walks keeping the law (21:23–24). Jews from Asia stir up a mob, falsely accusing Paul of defiling the temple. The crowd seizes him and tries to kill him until Roman soldiers intervene. Paul, in chains, asks to address the crowd.

KEY EVENTS

- Repeated warnings about Jerusalem
- Agabus's prophecy of binding
- Paul's resolve to suffer
- Meeting with James; the purification vow
- Riot in the temple
- Roman soldiers rescue Paul

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Agabus
- James
- Philip's daughters
- The Roman commander

KEY THEMES

- Surrender
- Suffering for Christ
- Courage
- Counsel from elders
- God's providence

KEY LOCATIONS

- Caesarea
- Jerusalem
- The temple

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Paul's resolve to go to Jerusalem, even to die there, is stated in 21:13. The false charge of defiling the temple sets in motion his long imprisonment and journey to Rome.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How do Paul's friends try to dissuade him, and how does he answer?
2. What reason do James and the elders give for the vow?
3. What sparks the riot in the temple?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. What does Paul's resolve reveal about his understanding of God's will?
2. How does Paul respond to the counsel of James and the elders?
3. How does God use even a violent mob to advance Paul's mission?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Are you willing to follow God's call even when it leads to hardship?
2. How can you defer to others' consciences without compromising the gospel?
3. How do you discern between godly caution and fearful avoidance?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you encourage someone facing suffering for obedience?
2. How can you model both conviction and humility in tense settings?

KEY VERSES

For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. **Acts 21:13**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for surrendered courage to follow God wherever He leads, whatever the cost.

22 Paul Tells His Story

Acts 22 · text on page 187

Paul gives his testimony, turning his defense into a witness to Christ and the Gentile mission.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Paul addresses the crowd in Hebrew, recounting his life: a zealous persecutor, his dramatic conversion on the Damascus road, and his commissioning to the Gentiles. The crowd listens until he mentions being sent to the Gentiles, then erupts in fury. As the soldiers prepare to flog him, Paul reveals he is a Roman citizen by birth, which halts the punishment and unsettles the commander, who had purchased his own citizenship.

KEY EVENTS

- Paul's defense speech in Hebrew
- His testimony of conversion retold
- His commission to the Gentiles
- The crowd's renewed rage
- Paul claims Roman citizenship to stop the flogging

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Ananias of Damascus (recounted)
- The Roman commander
- The Jerusalem crowd

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem
- Damascus (recounted)

KEY THEMES

- Testimony
- Conversion
- Gentile mission
- Wisdom under pressure
- Citizenship and rights

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Paul's personal testimony becomes his chief tool of witness. His Roman citizenship — a legal status he uses strategically — repeatedly shapes the unfolding events.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does Paul frame his past and his conversion?
2. What word triggers the crowd's fury?
3. How does Paul use his Roman citizenship?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Paul lead with his personal story rather than abstract argument?
2. Why is the mention of the Gentiles so inflammatory?
3. How does Paul wisely use legal rights without abandoning his mission?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How could your personal story become a bridge to share Christ?
2. Where does following Jesus put you at odds with your community's assumptions?
3. How can you act wisely under pressure without compromising?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you help someone craft and tell their testimony?
2. How can you teach discernment about when to assert and when to yield rights?

KEY VERSES

For you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. **Acts 22:15**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray that your story would become a clear testimony to the grace of Christ.

23 Plots and Protection

Acts 23 · text on page 188

Amid conspiracy, the Lord stands by Paul and promises he will testify in Rome.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Before the Sanhedrin, Paul divides the Pharisees and Sadducees over the resurrection, and the meeting dissolves in uproar. That night the Lord stands by him: ‘Cheer up, Paul, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must testify also at Rome.’ More than forty men vow to kill Paul, but his nephew uncovers the plot. The commander sends Paul under heavy guard to Governor Felix in Caesarea, with a letter explaining the case.

KEY EVENTS

- Paul before the divided Sanhedrin
- Dispute over the resurrection
- The Lord’s nighttime encouragement
- The plot of forty conspirators
- Paul’s nephew exposes the plot
- Transfer to Caesarea under guard

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Ananias the high priest
- Paul’s nephew
- Claudius Lysias
- Felix

KEY LOCATIONS

- Jerusalem
- Caesarea

KEY THEMES

- God’s protection
- Providence
- Resurrection hope
- Courage
- Divine purpose

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Sadducees denied resurrection while Pharisees affirmed it; Paul leverages this genuine theological divide. The Lord’s promise of Rome assures the reader that God’s purpose, not human plots, will prevail.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does Paul create division in the council?
2. What does the Lord tell Paul that night?
3. How is the plot against Paul foiled?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why is the resurrection central to Paul’s defense and hope?
2. How does the Lord’s promise reframe Paul’s dangerous circumstances?
3. How does God use ordinary means — a nephew, a Roman guard — to fulfill His plan?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How does assurance of God’s purpose steady you in danger or uncertainty?
2. Where might God be using ‘ordinary’ people to protect or guide you?
3. How does resurrection hope anchor your courage?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you encourage someone overwhelmed by opposition with God’s promises?
2. How can you help others see God’s providence at work in their circumstances?

KEY VERSES

The following night, the Lord stood by him and said, “Cheer up, Paul, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must testify also at Rome.” **Acts 23:11**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for confidence that God's purposes for you cannot be thwarted.

24 On Trial Before Felix

Acts 24 · text on page 189

Paul defends his hope in the resurrection while a procrastinating governor keeps him bound.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The high priest brings an orator, Tertullus, to accuse Paul of stirring riots and profaning the temple. Paul answers that he worships the God of his fathers and holds a hope of the resurrection of both the just and the unjust, keeping a clear conscience. Felix, well informed about the Way, defers a decision. He later listens to Paul speak of righteousness, self-control, and judgment — and grows alarmed — yet keeps Paul imprisoned two years, hoping for money and, at the end, to gain favor with the Jews.

KEY EVENTS

- The accusations of Tertullus
- Paul's defense centered on resurrection hope
- Felix's deferral
- Paul's message on righteousness, self-control, and judgment
- Two years of imprisonment under Felix

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Felix
- Drusilla
- Tertullus
- Ananias

KEY LOCATIONS

- Caesarea

KEY THEMES

- Conscience
- Resurrection hope
- Righteousness and judgment
- Procrastination
- Integrity

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Felix was a corrupt Roman governor. The scene contrasts Paul's clear conscience and bold message with Felix's fear, greed, and refusal to act on what he heard.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What is the heart of Paul's defense?
2. What three topics does Paul raise that alarm Felix?
3. Why does Felix keep Paul imprisoned?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Paul keep returning to the resurrection?
2. What does Felix's reaction reveal about a conscience under conviction?
3. What is the danger of Felix's 'when it is convenient for me'?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Can you maintain a clear conscience before God and people?
2. Are there convictions you keep postponing acting on?
3. How boldly do you speak of righteousness, self-control, and judgment?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you lovingly confront someone delaying a decision for Christ?
2. How can you help someone live with a clear conscience?

KEY VERSES

In this I also practice always having a conscience void of offense toward God and men. **Acts 24:16**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for a clear conscience and boldness to speak truth that calls for a response.

25 I Appeal to Caesar

Acts 25 · text on page 190

Paul appeals to Caesar, securing his path to Rome.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Festus succeeds Felix, and the Jewish leaders press for Paul to be tried in Jerusalem, plotting an ambush. Paul, standing before Festus's judgment seat, says no one can give him up to his accusers and appeals to Caesar, and Festus grants it. When King Agrippa visits, Festus explains he has nothing definite to write to the emperor. Agrippa wishes to hear Paul himself, and the stage is set for Paul's address before the king.

KEY EVENTS

- Festus replaces Felix
- The plot to ambush Paul on the way to Jerusalem
- Paul's appeal to Caesar
- Festus's perplexity over the charges
- Agrippa's desire to hear Paul

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Festus
- King Agrippa
- Bernice

KEY LOCATIONS

- Caesarea
- Jerusalem

KEY THEMES

- Providence
- Justice
- Appeal to Caesar
- God's plan
- Witness to rulers

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Paul appeals to Caesar (25:11–12). His appeal, though a legal maneuver, fulfills the Lord's promise that he would testify in Rome.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. Why do the Jewish leaders want Paul moved to Jerusalem?
2. How does Paul answer Festus's offer to be judged in Jerusalem?
3. Why does Festus seek Agrippa's help?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. How does Paul's appeal serve God's larger purpose?
2. What does Festus's confusion reveal about the charges against Paul?
3. How does God use the Roman legal system to advance the gospel?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How can you use the rights and systems available to you for God's purposes?
2. Do you trust that God is steering even your setbacks toward His ends?
3. How do you discern when to stand on your rights?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you help someone see God's hand in their unjust circumstances?
2. How can you teach wisdom in navigating institutions for the gospel's sake?

KEY VERSES

For if I have done wrong and have committed anything worthy of death, I don't refuse to die; ... I appeal to Caesar! **Acts 25:11**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for trust that God directs your path even through bureaucracy and injustice.

26 Before King Agrippa

Acts 26 · text on page 191

Paul testifies before King Agrippa, urging even his judge to believe in Christ.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Before Agrippa, Paul gives his fullest testimony: his upbringing, his persecution of believers, his Damascus-road encounter, and his commission to open eyes and turn people from darkness to light. He insists he says nothing beyond the prophets and Moses — that the Christ would suffer and rise. Festus calls him mad; Paul appeals to Agrippa's knowledge of the prophets. Agrippa answers, 'With a little persuasion are you trying to make me a Christian?' (26:28) After withdrawing, the king, the governor and Bernice agree Paul does nothing worthy of death or of bonds (26:31), but his appeal to Caesar stands.

KEY EVENTS

- Paul's full defense before Agrippa
- His commission to the Gentiles retold
- Festus's interruption: 'Paul, you are crazy!'
- Paul's appeal to Agrippa
- Agrippa answers, 'With a little persuasion are you trying to make me a Christian?' (26:28)
- After withdrawing, the king, the governor and Bernice agree Paul does nothing worthy of death or of bonds

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- King Agrippa
- Festus
- Bernice

KEY LOCATIONS

- Caesarea

KEY THEMES

- Testimony
- Mission to the Gentiles
- Evangelism
- Conviction
- Innocence

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Paul's defense becomes an evangelistic appeal, fulfilling his calling to testify before kings. Agrippa's reply (26:28) and Paul's answer (26:29) show Paul's desire that all who hear him would come to faith.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How does Paul describe the goal of his mission?
2. How do Festus and Agrippa each respond?
3. What verdict do the leaders reach about Paul's guilt?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Paul turn his legal defense into an appeal to believe?
2. What does Paul's reply in 26:29 show about his desire for Agrippa and all who hear him?
3. How does Paul show that the gospel fulfills the prophets?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. Do you look for ways to turn ordinary moments into gospel invitations?
2. Where are you keeping Christ at arm's length?
3. How can you witness boldly yet respectfully to those in authority?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you help someone move from keeping Christ at arm's length to wholehearted faith?

2. How can you model gracious boldness before influential people?

KEY VERSES

To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me. **Acts 26:18**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for boldness to invite anyone to Christ — and for those who keep Christ at arm's length.

27 Storm and Shipwreck

Acts 27 · text on page 192

Through a deadly storm, God preserves Paul and all aboard, and Paul leads with calm faith.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Paul sails for Rome as a prisoner under the centurion Julius. Against Paul's warning, the ship presses on and is caught in a violent storm for many days, all hope of rescue gone. Paul receives an angelic promise that all 276 aboard will survive though the ship is lost, and he urges them to take courage and eat. The ship runs aground and breaks apart, but everyone reaches land safely, just as God promised.

KEY EVENTS

- The voyage begins under guard
- Paul's ignored warning
- The violent storm and loss of hope
- The angel's promise of survival
- Paul encouraging the crew to eat
- Shipwreck and the safe rescue of all 276

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Julius the centurion
- Traditionally Luke ('we')
- The ship's crew

KEY LOCATIONS

- Sidon
- Fair Havens
- Crete
- The Adriatic Sea

KEY THEMES

- God's faithfulness
- Calm leadership
- Providence
- Faith amid crisis
- Encouragement

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The detailed 'we' account shows the perils of ancient sea travel. Paul, though a prisoner, becomes the steadying leader, trusting God's promise amid chaos.

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. What warning does Paul give, and how is it received?
2. What promise does Paul share during the storm?
3. How does Paul lead the frightened crew?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. How does Paul's faith shape his leadership in crisis?
2. Why does God preserve everyone for Paul's sake?
3. What does this account teach about God's faithfulness to His word?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How do you respond when life feels out of control?
2. Can you be a calm, faith-filled presence for others in a storm?
3. How firmly do you hold God's promises when circumstances say otherwise?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you steady someone in the middle of a personal 'storm'?
2. How can you model trust in God's word when outcomes look bleak?

KEY VERSES

Therefore, sirs, cheer up! For I believe God, that it will be just as it has been spoken to me. **Acts 27:25**

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for steady faith in storms and grace to encourage others through them.

28 To the Ends of the Earth

Acts 28 · text on page 193

The gospel reaches Rome; Paul proclaims the kingdom of God boldly and unhindered.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Shipwrecked on Malta, Paul is unharmed by a viper and heals the sick, and the islanders show kindness. Sailing on, Paul finally reaches Rome, where believers come to meet him and he is encouraged. Allowed to live under guard, he calls the Jewish leaders together, explains that he is bound for the hope of Israel, and reasons about Jesus from the Law and Prophets. Some believe, some refuse. For two years Paul welcomes all who come, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

KEY EVENTS

- Safe arrival on Malta
- The viper and the healings
- Arrival in Rome and welcome by believers
- Paul's testimony to the Jewish leaders in Rome
- Two years of bold, unhindered proclamation

KEY PEOPLE

- Paul
- Publius of Malta
- The Roman believers
- The Roman Jewish leaders

KEY LOCATIONS

- Malta
- Puteoli
- Rome

KEY THEMES

- The gospel reaching Rome
- Boldness
- The kingdom of God
- Mission accomplished and ongoing
- Hope

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Acts ends not with Paul's fate but with Paul in Rome, preaching God's Kingdom without hindrance (28:30–31). The close invites every generation to continue the witness 'to the uttermost parts of the earth' (1:8).

THE CLEAR PATH FRAMEWORK · STUDY QUESTIONS

Read the chapter in Part Four, then work through these four movements alone or with a group. There are no wrong answers — only honest engagement with the text.

STEP 01 · WHAT HAPPENED? · OBSERVE

1. How do the Maltese respond to Paul, and why?
2. How is Paul received as he nears Rome?
3. How does Luke describe Paul's final two years?

STEP 02 · WHAT DOES IT MEAN? · INTERPRET

1. Why does Luke end with the gospel in Rome rather than Paul's verdict?
2. What does 'with all boldness, without hindrance' signal about the gospel's unstoppable advance?
3. How does the ending invite the reader into the ongoing mission?

STEP 03 · HOW SHOULD I RESPOND? · APPLY

1. How can you proclaim Christ boldly wherever you are 'confined'?
2. What 'ends of the earth' is God calling you toward?
3. How does the unfinished ending of Acts shape your sense of mission?

STEP 04 · HOW CAN I TEACH OTHERS? · DISCIPLE

1. How would you cast vision for someone to take up the ongoing mission of Acts?
2. How can you model bold, hospitable witness in your own setting?

KEY VERSES

Preaching God's Kingdom, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, without hindrance. **Acts 28:31**

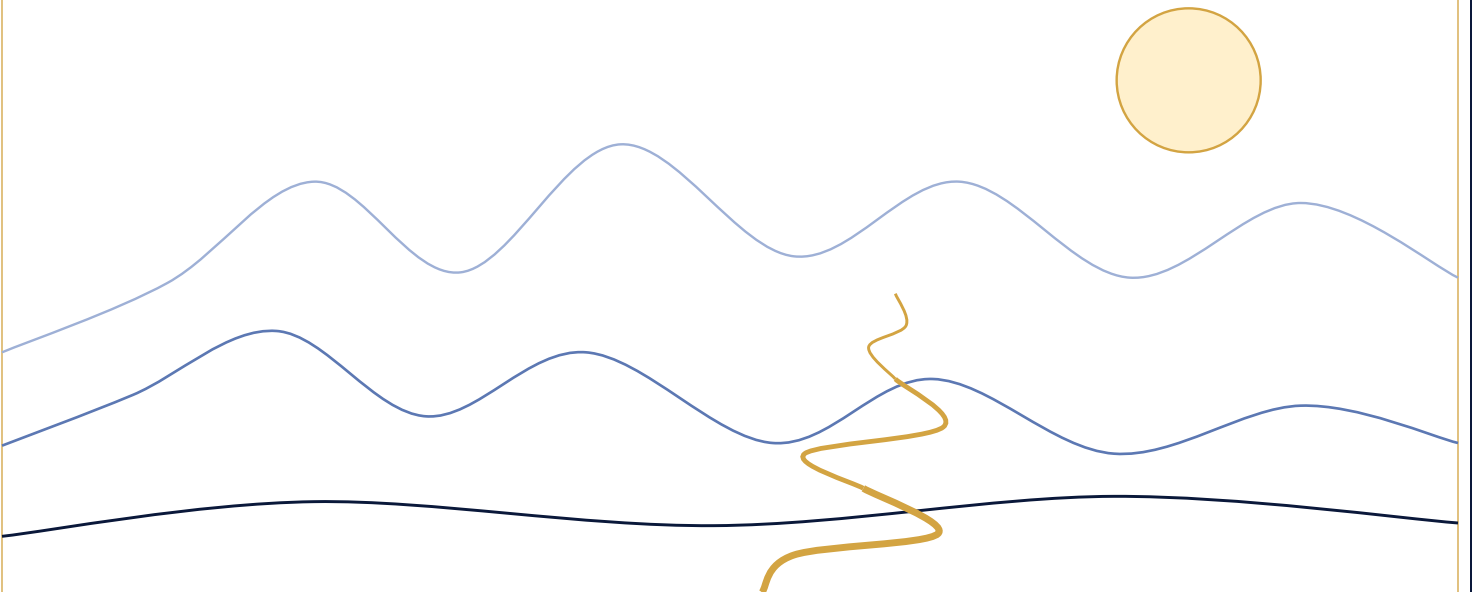
PRAYER FOCUS

Pray for boldness to keep advancing the gospel until it reaches every corner of the earth.

PART THREE

Leader's Guide and Answer Guide

Group leader notes, a timed plan, and an answer guide for every session.



LEADER'S GUIDE

Leading this study

You do not need to be a Bible teacher to lead this study. You need to have read the passage, to ask the questions, and to leave room for people to answer them.

Before you meet

- Read the session's chapters twice, once straight through and once slowly.
- Read that session's leader page, including the notes on the setting.
- Decide which questions matter most for your group. You will rarely finish all of them, and that is fine.
- Pray for the people who will be in the room, by name.

In the room

- Read Scripture aloud before discussing it. Let the text speak first.
- Ask the question, then wait. Silence usually means people are thinking.
- When an answer drifts, ask, "Where do you see that in the passage?"
- Keep to the time plan loosely. Protect the closing minutes for reflection and prayer.

How to read a leader page

Group leader notes	How to open the session and the historical notes, as the online study gives them.
Timed plan	A suggested use of the hour, drawn to scale. These timings are the guide's own suggestion: the online study gives only a five-minute gather.
Answer guide	What the passage supports for each discussion question, with verse references, and a follow-up question to use if the group stalls.
Reflection notes	Reflection questions are personal and have no answer to check. Each has a short note on what it is for and how to lead it.

USING THE ANSWER GUIDE

The answer guide is there so you can lead with confidence. It is not a script to read aloud. Let the group do the finding; use the guide to confirm, to fill a gap, or to bring the conversation back to the text. Questions marked **PERSONAL** have no single right answer. For those, the guide gives what the passage offers and what a good answer tends to include.

LEADER'S GUIDE · SESSION 1 OF 8

The Spirit and the Birth of the Church

Acts 1–3 · 60 minutes · 5–12 people · participant pages 9–13 · memory verse Acts 1:8

Read this before you gather — no seminary required.

GROUP LEADER NOTES

Pentecost was the Feast of Weeks, and devout Jews from every nation under the sky were dwelling in Jerusalem (2:5) — which is why so many languages are present (2:5–11). Some readers see a reversal of Babel here; the text says each person heard in his own language (2:6). Don't let the group get stuck debating the mechanics of tongues; keep the focus on the result — ordinary people boldly proclaiming Christ. If someone asks why the church 'had all things in common' (2:44), note the text says they held things in common and gave as any had need (2:44–45). Traditions differ on how 'for the forgiveness of sins' (2:38) relates to baptism, as its means, its sign, or its occasion; 3:19 and 10:43 tie forgiveness to repenting and believing without naming baptism, while 22:16 links baptism to washing away sins.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

Peter's Pentecost sermon is built on three Old Testament texts: the Spirit poured out on all flesh is Joel 2:28–32 (Acts 2:17–21); the Holy One who will not see decay is Psalm 16:8–11 (2:25–28); and 'Sit by my right hand' is Psalm 110:1 (2:34–35). Judas's replacement rests on Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 (1:20), and Peter's temple sermon points to the prophet like Moses of Deuteronomy 18:15–19 (3:22–23) and the blessing of Abraham's offspring in Genesis 22:18 (3:25).

GATHER (5 MIN)

Ask everyone to share one place — near or far — where they wish more people knew Jesus. Keep it to a sentence each; you'll return to it at the end.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Return to the opening question. Pray by name for the places people mentioned, asking God to make your group Spirit-empowered witnesses there.

A TIMED PLAN drawn to scale · minutes

5	6	10	18	13	8
Gather	Read together	Observe	Interpret	Apply	Close in prayer

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 2:23, 2:36 AND 3:13–15

In these sermons Peter tells the crowd in Jerusalem that they crucified and killed Jesus (2:23, 2:36; 3:13–15). Peter and his hearers are Jews, and he speaks as one of them: he says "brothers" and that they acted "in ignorance" (3:17). Read these as a call to repent, not as a verdict on Jewish people then or now, and do not let the group use them that way. The same goes for 4:10, 5:30 and 7:51–52 in Session 2.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 3:16 AND THE HEALINGS

Peter credits Jesus' name, not the man's faith. Never treat illness, or healing that has not come, as a sign of weak faith.

ANSWER GUIDE

Discussion questions

1 **READ TOGETHER** What stands out to you about how the church actually begins? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. Some will notice that the promise comes before the task: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (1:8). Others will notice what happened when the day came. The believers were “all with one accord in one place” (2:1), and they were “all filled with the Holy Spirit” (2:4). Let people say what caught their attention before anything is explained.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 1:8 and 2:1–4 again. What comes first, and what follows it?

2 **OBSERVE** What does Jesus tell the disciples to do before they do anything else (1:4–8)?

Jesus tells them to wait. He says, “Don’t depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father” (1:4). The next verse names the promise: “you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (1:5). Verse 8 gives the purpose, that they would receive power and be witnesses to Him. Faithful traditions understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit differently, and the group can see the order of events without settling that: the waiting comes first.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 1:4 and 1:8. What is the command, and what reason follows it?

3 **OBSERVE** What signs accompany the Spirit’s coming at Pentecost, and how does the crowd respond (2:1–12)?

The text describes “a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind” (2:2) that filled the house. “Tongues like fire appeared and were distributed to them” (2:3), and they “began to speak with other languages” (2:4). The crowd came together and “were bewildered, because everyone heard them speaking in his own language” (2:6). Some asked “What does this mean?” (2:12), and others, mocking, said they were “filled with new wine” (2:13). Churches read the gift of tongues differently today, and the verses here say plainly that the listeners heard their own languages.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Find the two reactions in 2:12 and 2:13. How do the two groups in the crowd respond to the same event?

4 **OBSERVE** What four practices mark the new community in 2:42–47?

Verse 42 says they “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer” (2:42). That gives four practices: teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. Verse 46 shows them in daily life, “continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple” (2:46) and breaking bread at home. Faithful traditions understand the breaking of bread differently, some as a shared meal and some as communion, and the group can name the four without choosing.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 2:42 and 2:46. Which of the four practices does 2:46 show in daily life?

5 INTERPRET Why must the disciples wait for the Spirit before beginning the mission?

Jesus gives the reason in 1:8: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” The witnessing follows the power. Just before this, the disciples asked about the kingdom, and He answered, “It isn’t for you to know times or seasons” (1:7). While they waited, they “continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication” (1:14). When the Spirit came, Peter stood up with the eleven and spoke to the crowd (2:14).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Find the word “when” in 1:8. What has to happen before they become witnesses?

6 INTERPRET Peter says the lame man was healed ‘In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth’ (3:6). What is he teaching the crowd about where real power comes from?

Peter begins with what he has to give: “I have no silver or gold, but what I have, that I give you” (3:6). He then commands the man to get up and walk. When the crowd stares, he asks why they look at him and John “as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk” (3:12). He says God “has glorified his Servant Jesus” (3:13) and that “his name has made this man strong” (3:16).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 3:12 and 3:16. Where does Peter say the man’s strength came from?

7 INTERPRET What does the believers’ radical sharing reveal about what the gospel does to a community?

Verse 44 says “All who believed were together, and had all things in common” (2:44). They “sold their possessions and goods” (2:45) and “distributed them to all, according as anyone had need.” The text shows a community held together, giving according to need, and taking its food “with gladness and singleness of heart” (2:46). Faithful traditions differ on whether this sharing is a pattern for every church or a response to that moment, and the text itself says only that it was done according to need.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 2:44–47. Who received what was given, and how did the believers feel about it?

8 INTERPRET Peter’s sermon is really an argument from three Scriptures — Joel 2, Psalm 16, Psalm 110. Trace it with the group: what does each quotation prove about Jesus, and how do the three together move the crowd from ‘what does this mean?’ (2:12) to ‘what shall we do?’ (2:37)?

The first quotation answers the crowd’s question, since Peter says “this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel” (2:16), and the words promise “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (2:17) and end with “whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (2:21). The second says God will not “allow your Holy One to see decay” (2:27). Peter points out that David “died and was buried” (2:29), so the words speak of the Christ rising (2:31), and he adds “This Jesus God raised up” (2:32). The

third says “Sit by my right hand” (2:34), and since David “didn’t ascend into the heavens,” it fits Jesus, who was “exalted by the right hand of God” (2:33). Together they lead to “God has made him both Lord and Christ” (2:36), and the people are “cut to the heart” (2:37) and ask “what shall we do?”

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 2:12, then 2:36–37. What changed in the crowd between those verses?

9 APPLY Where are you tempted to run ahead of God rather than depend on His Spirit?

PERSONAL

There is no single right answer. Jesus commanded the disciples to wait: “Don’t depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father” (1:4). While they waited they “continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication” (1:14). Good answers name a real situation, such as a plan already moving or a decision half made, and say what waiting or asking might look like there. No one needs to share more than they choose.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 1:4 and 1:14. What did the disciples do while they waited?

10 APPLY Acts 2:42 names teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. Which one does our group most need to grow in this season? PERSONAL

There is no single right answer. Verse 42 lists the four together: they “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer” (2:42). Good answers look honestly at how the group meets now and name the practice that gets the least room. Verse 46 shows two of them in ordinary life, the time together in the temple and the breaking of bread at home. The group can name one without ranking the others.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 2:42 again. Which of the four did we spend time on at our last meeting?

NOTES

Reflection questions

1 Where in your life are you trying to do God’s work in your own strength rather than His?

This question gives people room to name one area where they have been leaning on their own strength. The promise in 1:8 is that power comes with the Holy Spirit. Let people say as much or as little as they like, and consider going first with a small, honest example.

2 Peter and John had ‘no silver or gold’ but gave what they had (3:6). What has God given you to offer others?

Peter had no silver or gold and gave what he had (3:6). Invite people to name something modest, such as time, a listening ear, or a skill. The aim is to help each person see that they have something to offer, so avoid any pressure to produce a large answer.

3 Who are the people in your ‘Jerusalem’ — the ones closest to you who need Christ?

In 1:8 the witness begins in Jerusalem, the nearest place. Invite people to think of the people closest to them, and make clear that no names need to be spoken aloud. A first name or a simple description is enough for the group to pray with.

LEADER'S GUIDE · SESSION 2 OF 8

A Bold and Costly Witness

Acts 4–7 · 60 minutes · 5–12 people · participant pages 14–18 · memory verse Acts 4:31

Read this before you gather — no seminary required.

GROUP LEADER NOTES

The Sadducees ran the temple and denied resurrection, so the apostles' message was both a theological and a political threat (4:1–2). The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira can unsettle people — Peter says Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and to God (5:3–4), and great fear came on the whole assembly (5:11). The sin was the lie, not the amount they kept (5:4). Stephen's long speech (chapter 7) retells Israel's story to show that God's presence was never confined to the temple — this sets up the gospel going beyond Jerusalem. Watch the clock; you don't need to work through all of chapter 7 verse by verse. Stephen, Peter and the first believers are themselves Jews, so the charge in 7:51 is not a verdict on Jewish people (compare 3:17 and 7:60). The first appearance of Saul (7:58) is worth flagging — the church's fiercest enemy is standing right there.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

The rejected stone of Acts 4:11 is Psalm 118:22, and the church prays its persecution through Psalm 2:1–2 (4:25–26). Stephen's defense in chapter 7 is a survey of the whole story — Abraham, Joseph, Moses, the exodus, the tabernacle — quoting Deuteronomy 18:15 (7:37), Amos 5:25–27 (7:42–43), and Isaiah 66:1–2 (7:49–50). HISTORICAL NOTE: The Sanhedrin before whom the apostles stand was the same council that condemned Jesus — the council of rulers, elders, and scribes, with Annas and Caiaphas present (4:5–6), for whom preaching resurrection (4:2) was both theologically offensive and politically dangerous.

GATHER (5 MIN)

Ask: when have you stayed quiet about your faith because it felt risky? No need to confess deeply — just acknowledge how real the pressure is.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Pray for believers around the world facing real persecution today, and ask God for courage in your own smaller costs of following Him.

A TIMED PLAN drawn to scale · minutes

5	6	11	19	12	7
Gather	Read together	Observe	Interpret	Apply	Close in prayer

ANSWER GUIDE

Discussion questions

1 **READ TOGETHER** What do the believers ask God for — and what do they not ask for?

The prayer asks the Lord to “look at their threats” (4:29) and to “grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness.” It speaks of God’s hand to heal and adds a further request, that “signs and wonders may be done” (4:30) “through the name of your holy Servant Jesus.” The prayer contains no request that the threats be removed. The answer in 4:31 is that “the place was shaken” and they “spoke the word of God with boldness.”

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 4:29–30 and list each request. Is there one that asks for the threats to stop?

2 **OBSERVE** How do Peter and John respond when ordered to stop preaching (4:19–20)?

Peter and John answer by telling the council to judge for themselves: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves” (4:19). They had been commanded “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (4:18). Their reason is “we can’t help telling the things which we saw and heard” (4:20). The council could find “no way to punish them” (4:21) because everyone glorified God for the healing.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 4:18 and 4:20. What were they ordered to do, and what reason do they give?

3 **OBSERVE** What happens to Ananias and Sapphira, and why does Luke include it (5:1–11)?

Ananias and his wife Sapphira “sold a possession” (5:1) and “kept back part of the price” (5:2), and she knew of it. Peter said to Ananias, “You haven’t lied to men, but to God” (5:4), and Ananias “fell down and died” (5:5). About three hours later Sapphira came in and died after Peter spoke to her (5:7–10). Then “Great fear came on the whole assembly” (5:11). The passage does not say why the account is told, so the group can say what it shows: the weight of lying to the Spirit (5:3) and how the church responded.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 5:3 and 5:9. What does Peter say they did against the Spirit?

4 **OBSERVE** How does the church solve the problem of the neglected widows (6:1–7)?

A complaint arose because “their widows were neglected in the daily service” (6:1). The twelve gathered the disciples and said, “It is not appropriate for us to forsake the word of God and serve tables” (6:2). They asked the group to select “seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom” (6:3), while they would continue “in prayer and in the ministry of the word” (6:4). The whole group was pleased and chose seven, Stephen among them (6:5), and after prayer they “laid their hands on them” (6:6), an act on which traditions differ. The result is in 6:7: “The word of God increased.”

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 6:2–4. What does each side take responsibility for?

5 OBSERVE How does Stephen respond to his accusers as he dies (7:54–60)?

Stephen, “full of the Holy Spirit” (7:55), looked up and “saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” His hearers “stopped their ears” (7:57) and rushed at him, and the witnesses placed their garments at the feet of “a young man named Saul” (7:58). As they stoned him, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” (7:59). Then he “kneeled down” (7:60) and cried, “Lord, don’t hold this sin against them!”, and “fell asleep.”

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 7:59–60. Whom does Stephen speak to, and what does he ask for?

6 INTERPRET Why does the church pray for boldness rather than relief from persecution (4:29)?

The prayer begins with who God is: “you are God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (4:24). It then names the opposition as something already spoken of, with the nations raging “against the Lord, and against his Christ” (4:26) and “Herod and Pontius Pilate” (4:27) gathered against Jesus. All of it happened “to do whatever your hand and your council foreordained to happen” (4:28), and traditions differ on how God’s purpose and human choices fit together. After that they turn to the threats and ask for boldness (4:29). The text gives no stated reason.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 4:24–28. Whose purpose do they say was carried out in the cross?

7 INTERPRET What does the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira teach about honesty before God?

Peter’s questions in 5:4 treat the money and the lie separately: “While you kept it, didn’t it remain your own? After it was sold, wasn’t it in your power?” The sin he names is the lie. In 5:3 Peter speaks of a heart filled “to lie to the Holy Spirit,” and in 5:9 the couple had “agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord.” So the passage shows that a lie told to the church was told to God. The text does not say what became of them beyond their deaths, and the group does not need to answer that.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 5:4 again. What does Peter say about the land and the money before he names the lie?

8 INTERPRET Stephen says God ‘doesn’t dwell in temples made with hands’ (7:48). What is he trying to help them see?

Stephen says “the Most High doesn’t dwell in temples made with hands” (7:48). He is answering the charge about “this holy place and the law” (6:13), and the speech shows God present in many places. The God of glory “appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia” (7:2), was with Joseph in Egypt (7:9), and spoke to Moses at the bush: “the place where you stand is holy ground” (7:33). Of the house Solomon built (7:47), God says “heaven is my throne, and the earth a footstool for my feet” (7:49).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Find where God appears in 7:2 and 7:30–33. Was either place a temple?

- 9 INTERPRET** When the church is threatened, it prays Psalm 2 back to God (4:24–30) — and asks for boldness, not safety. What does reading your circumstances through Scripture do that reading Scripture through your circumstances cannot?

After naming God as Creator (4:24), the believers bring in words of David: “Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot a vain thing?” (4:25). They then name Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel as “gathered together against your holy servant, Jesus” (4:27). They say all of it fell within what God “foreordained” (4:28). Only after that do they turn to the council’s threats and ask for boldness (4:29). The group can talk about what changes when Scripture sets the frame before the problem is described.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 4:25–29. At what point in the prayer do they mention the council’s threats?

- 10 INTERPRET** Stephen’s long history lesson builds to a single charge (7:51–53): ‘you always resist the Holy Spirit.’ Walk back through the speech — what pattern in each era leads to this charge?

Stephen states the charge: “you always resist the Holy Spirit” (7:51). The speech gives a pattern of refusal. The patriarchs, “moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt” (7:9). Of Moses, one of the Israelites asked, “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?” (7:27), and later “our fathers wouldn’t be obedient, but rejected him” (7:39). He ends with “As your fathers did, so you do” and asks about the prophets in 7:52.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 7:35 and 7:39. How did the fathers treat the man God sent to them?

- 11 APPLY** What would it look like for you to pray for boldness this week instead of comfort?

PERSONAL

There is no single right answer. The believers prayed together for boldness: “grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness” (4:29). Verse 13 records how the council saw it in Peter and John: “They recognized that they had been with Jesus” (4:13). Boldness may look quiet in a person’s own setting, and people can decide what to name. No one needs to describe a specific situation unless they want to.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 4:29–31. What did they ask for, and what did they receive?

- 12 APPLY** Stephen forgave the people stoning him (7:60). Is there someone you need to forgive for how they’ve treated your faith? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. The question uses the word forgave, and the verse gives a prayer: “Lord, don’t hold this sin against them!” (7:60). The text does not describe how Stephen came to that place. Some people carry hurt that is old and some carry hurt that is fresh. Each person can name it aloud or hold it in silent prayer, and no one needs to say more than they choose.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 7:59–60. Whom does Stephen address, and what does he ask?

NOTES

Reflection questions

- 1** **Where do you most feel the pressure to soften or hide your faith?**
This question gives people room to name a place where they soften or hide their faith. Remind them that the believers in 4:29 asked for boldness together, so the group can pray with them. Let each person decide how much to share.
- 2** **Is your private self as honest as your public self appears to be?**
The question looks at the gap between the public self and the private self. The account in 5:1–11 is serious, so keep the tone steady and calm. Invite quiet reflection, and let the group know no one has to disclose anything.
- 3** **How does Stephen's prayer shape how you treat those who wrong you?**
This is a heavy question for some people. Stephen's prayer in 7:60 is a picture of one moment, and the group is not asked to match it today. Offer silence as a good response, and let people say only what they wish.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 4:12

Peter says there is "salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that is given among men, by which we must be saved" (4:12). Some in your group will hold this firmly, some will struggle with it, and some will be thinking of people they love who do not follow Jesus. Read it in its setting, an answer to the council's question "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" (4:7). Let the group say what the verse says without pressing anyone to settle it in the room, and offer a private word to anyone for whom it is painful.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 7:60

When the group talks about Stephen forgiving those who stoned him, be clear that forgiving someone never means staying near a person who is hurting you or keeping abuse quiet. If anyone is being harmed, getting safe comes first; the help lines at the back of this guide can help.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 5:1–11 AND 7:54–60

Never use 5:1–11 to explain anyone's illness or death today. 7:54–60 describes a stoning; read it calmly and let anyone step out.

LEADER'S GUIDE · SESSION 3 OF 8

The Gospel Breaks Out

Acts 8–9 · 60 minutes · 5–12 people · participant pages 19–23 · memory verse Acts 8:4

Read this before you gather — no seminary required.

GROUP LEADER NOTES

Samaritans and Jews despised one another, so Philip preaching there (8:5) is a major boundary crossed — the second ring of Acts 1:8 ('Judea and Samaria'). The Ethiopian eunuch, a man of great authority under Candace (8:27), is a foreigner of high rank. Saul's conversion is so important that Luke tells it three times in Acts; keep the focus on grace — the chief persecutor is stopped and called by Christ's own initiative (9:3–6, 15). Note Ananias's honest hesitation (9:13–14); his obedience despite it is a model for the group. If Simon the sorcerer (8:18–23) comes up, note the warning against treating God's power as something to buy or control.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

The passage the Ethiopian is reading is Isaiah 53:7–8 (Acts 8:32–33) — the suffering Servant — and Philip 'beginning from this Scripture, preached to him about Jesus' (8:35). It is worth showing the group Isaiah 56:3–8 as well: the promise that the foreigner and the eunuch will no longer be cut off is being kept in this very scene. HISTORICAL NOTE: Samaria matters here: Samaria was outside Jerusalem and Judea (8:1, 5). When the apostles heard Samaria had received the word, they sent Peter and John (8:14).

GATHER (5 MIN)

Ask: is there anyone you've quietly written off as 'too far gone' to ever follow Jesus? Hold that person in mind during the discussion.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Pray specifically for the people named in the gathering question. Ask God to do for them what He did for Saul.

A TIMED PLAN drawn to scale · minutes

5	6	10	18	13	8
Gather	Read together	Observe	Interpret	Apply	Close in prayer

ANSWER GUIDE

Discussion questions

1 **READ TOGETHER** What surprises you most about how Jesus deals with Saul — and how Ananias obeys? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. Saul is introduced as “still breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (9:1), and on the road the Lord stops him with a light and a voice that calls him by name (9:3–4). Jesus answers Saul’s question with “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (9:5) and then gives him a next step: “rise up and enter into the city” (9:6). Ananias raises an objection, then goes, and his first word to Saul is “Brother Saul” (9:17). Let people say which of these moments caught them, and why.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Pick one moment in 9:3–6 or 9:17. What did Jesus or Ananias say or do there?

2 **OBSERVE** What good comes out of the persecution that scatters the church (8:1, 4)?

The scattering is the first result. A “great persecution” (8:1) arose, and the believers “were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles.” Then 8:4 says “Therefore those who were scattered abroad went around preaching the word.” The first example is Philip in Samaria, where the verses report “great joy in that city” (8:8). The text gives what the scattered believers did and what followed in Samaria, so the group can answer from those verses.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 8:1 and 8:4 together. What happened to the believers, and what did they do as they went?

3 **OBSERVE** How does Philip respond to the Spirit’s specific direction toward the Ethiopian (8:26–35)?

Two directions come, the first from an angel and the second from the Spirit. The angel says to go south to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza (8:26), and Philip “arose and went” (8:27). The Spirit then says “Go near, and join yourself to this chariot” (8:29), and “Philip ran to him” (8:30). He opens with a question, “Do you understand what you are reading?”, and when invited he sits with the man and starts from the Scripture the man is reading (8:31, 8:35). The verses show quick obedience and then a patient conversation.

IF THE GROUP STALLS List what Philip is told to do in 8:26 and 8:29. What does he do each time?

4 **OBSERVE** How does Jesus identify Himself to Saul on the road (9:4–5)?

The voice asks “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (9:4). Saul answers “Who are you, Lord?” (9:5), and the reply is “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Saul had gone after “any who were of the Way” (9:2), yet Jesus says the persecution is aimed at Him. The Lord then sends Saul into the city to be told what to do (9:6).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 9:1–2, then 9:4–5. Whom was Saul going after, and whom does Jesus say he is persecuting?

5 OBSERVE What is Ananias asked to do, and why does he object (9:10–16)?

The Lord tells Ananias to go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judah for Saul (9:11). He adds that Saul has seen in a vision a man named Ananias laying his hands on him so that he receives his sight (9:12). Ananias answers with what he has heard: “how much evil he did to your saints at Jerusalem” (9:13), and that Saul has “authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name” (9:14). His reply shows why the errand troubled him, and the group may call that fear or hesitation. The Lord answers by naming Saul as “my chosen vessel” (9:15) and sends him anyway.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 9:13–14. What does Ananias tell the Lord about Saul?

6 INTERPRET Why is it significant that the gospel reaches Samaritans and an African official this early?

Philip “proclaimed to them the Christ” (8:5) in Samaria, and when the people “believed Philip preaching good news concerning God’s Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ” (8:12), men and women were baptized. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word, they sent Peter and John (8:14). The Ethiopian is described as “a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians” (8:27), and he “went on his way rejoicing” (8:39). In 1:8 Jesus named “in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth” as the reach of the witness, and chapter 8 shows the word reaching Samaria and a man from Ethiopia. Believers differ on how to read the timing of the Spirit in 8:15–17, and the safe reading is simply that the Samaritans did receive Him.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Compare the crowd in 8:5–12 with the man in 8:27–28. Who are they, and how does each respond?

7 INTERPRET What does ‘why do you persecute me?’ reveal about how closely Jesus identifies with His church?

Saul had set out to bring back “any who were of the Way, whether men or women” (9:2). Jesus says the persecution is aimed at Him, and says it twice in one exchange (9:4–5). Ananias later calls the same people “your saints” (9:13) and speaks of those who “call on your name” (9:14). The text shows that the Lord counts harm to His people as harm to Himself.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Compare what Saul was doing in 9:1–2 with what Jesus says in 9:4. Who does Jesus say is being persecuted?

8 INTERPRET Why does God send an ordinary disciple, Ananias, rather than dealing with Saul alone?

The text does not state a reason. It shows what happened. Jesus spoke to Saul directly and told him “you will be told what you must do” (9:6). Saul in his own vision had seen “a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him” (9:12), so the Lord had prepared both men. Ananias brings the Lord’s message, calls him “Brother Saul” (9:17), and Saul is then baptized and stays “several days with the disciples who were at Damascus” (9:19). The group can offer reasons from these verses.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 9:17–19. What does Ananias say to Saul, and where does Saul go next?

- 9 INTERPRET** Philip starts 'from this Scripture' — Isaiah 53 — and gets to Jesus (8:35). Practice it as a group: how would you walk someone from Isaiah 53 to the gospel in two minutes?

PERSONAL

There is no single right answer. The passage Philip meets is read aloud in 8:32–33, beginning “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.” The man asks “Who is the prophet talking about? About himself, or about someone else?” (8:34), and Philip, “beginning from this Scripture, preached to him about Jesus” (8:35). The verses do not record what Philip said, so the group can build its own two minutes from what it knows of Jesus. A good start is to begin with the verses and let the question lead.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 8:34–35. What question does the man ask, and where does Philip begin?

- 10 APPLY** Who is the 'Saul' in your life — someone you'd be shocked to see come to faith?

PERSONAL

There is no single right answer. Saul is described in 9:1 as “still breathing threats and slaughter,” and Ananias's reaction in 9:13–14 shows how it looked to those he threatened. Then 9:15 says the Lord calls him “my chosen vessel.” People may name a kind of person, never someone who harmed them, and nobody needs to say more. The text offers hope for people who seem unlikely without promising how it will go.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 9:1 and 9:15 side by side. What does each say about Saul?

- 11 APPLY** Would you obey if God sent you toward someone you feared, the way Ananias did?

PERSONAL

There is no single right answer. Ananias spoke his concern first, and the Lord replied with a reason (9:13–16). Then the text says “Ananias departed and entered into the house” (9:17). Good answers can be honest about hesitation, since the passage records it, and can name a small step as readily as a large one. Nobody has to describe a specific person or situation.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 9:13–17. What did Ananias say, and what did he do next?

NOTES

Reflection questions

- 1** How has disruption or hardship in your life ever ended up spreading something good?
This question asks people to look at a hard season and notice if good came from it. Chapter 8 reports what the scattered believers did (8:4) and does not say every hardship ends this way. Invite stories freely and let anyone pass who is still in the middle of one.
- 2** Are you sensitive to the Spirit's nudge toward one specific person, as Philip was?
Philip heard the Spirit say to go near the chariot (8:29) and acted quickly, but the verses do not describe how he knew. Invite honest answers, including uncertainty about how direction comes. Let people say what has helped them listen, such as Scripture, a friend or a quiet moment.

3

Is there a relationship where you've stopped praying because it seems hopeless?

The group has just read about a man many would have given up on (9:1–19). Invite people to name, privately if they like, a relationship they have stopped praying about, and ask for nothing more than that. Close with the thought that the Lord already knows each name.

LEADER'S GUIDE · SESSION 4 OF 8

The Gospel for All Nations

Acts 10–12 · 60 minutes · 5–12 people · participant pages 24–28 · memory verse Acts 10:34–35

Read this before you gather — no seminary required.

GROUP LEADER NOTES

This is one of the great turning points in Acts. Jewish custom kept close separation from Gentiles (Peter calls it “unlawful,” 10:28), so Peter entering Cornelius’s home is genuinely scandalous — that’s why he has to defend it in chapter 11. The sheet vision is applied to people (10:28), not only food. Note the honesty of 12:1–19: James is martyred and Peter is rescued in the same chapter. The group may ask why God delivers one and not the other — resist easy answers; sit with the mystery while affirming God’s goodness and sovereignty. Antioch becomes the launchpad for the rest of Acts, so flag it.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

Peter’s vision (10:9–16) collides with the food laws of Leviticus 11 — and the point lands in 10:28: ‘God has shown me that I shouldn’t call any man unholy or unclean.’ His confession that ‘God doesn’t show favoritism’ (10:34) echoes Deuteronomy 10:17, and the whole Cornelius episode fulfills the promise that in Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). HISTORICAL NOTE: Cornelius was a centurion of the Italian Regiment at Caesarea, the Roman provincial capital — a ‘God-fearer,’ a devout man who feared God, gave generously to the people, and prayed always (10:2). His is the first Gentile household Acts shows receiving the Spirit.

GATHER (5 MIN)

Ask: have you ever been surprised by where you found genuine faith — in someone you didn’t expect?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Confess any partiality — the people or groups we’ve quietly excluded — and ask God to give the group His heart for every nation.

A TIMED PLAN drawn to scale · minutes

5	6	10	18	13	8
Gather	Read together	Observe	Interpret	Apply	Close in prayer

ANSWER GUIDE

Discussion questions

1 **READ TOGETHER** What changes in Peter's understanding in this moment — and what confirms he's right?

Peter says he now perceives that “God doesn’t show favoritism” (10:34), and he spells it out: “in every nation he who fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him” (10:35). The confirmation comes while he is still speaking, when “the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word” (10:44). The believers who came with Peter were “amazed” (10:45) that the gift was poured out on the Gentiles. Peter’s own conclusion is “They have received the Holy Spirit just like us” (10:47).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 10:34–35, then 10:44–47. What does Peter say first, and what happens while he is speaking?

2 **OBSERVE** How do the two visions — Cornelius's and Peter's — fit together (10:1–20)?

Cornelius sees an angel, who tells him to “send men to Joppa” (10:5) for Simon, who is also called Peter. While those men are on the way, Peter on the roof sees a sheet with all kinds of animals and hears “Rise, Peter, kill and eat!” (10:13). Peter refuses, and the voice answers “What God has cleansed, you must not call unclean” (10:15). As he ponders, the Spirit says “three men seek you” (10:19) and tells him to go with them, “doubting nothing; for I have sent them” (10:20). Each vision leads to the other, and both are at work before the two men meet.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 10:19–20 and 10:22. What does the Spirit tell Peter, and what do the men say about why they came?

3 **OBSERVE** What does Peter realize about God and people (10:34–35)?

Peter realizes that God does not play favorites. He says it in 10:34 as “God doesn’t show favoritism” and gives the sense in 10:35. Earlier in the chapter he had said “God has shown me that I shouldn’t call any man unholy or unclean” (10:28). His sermon adds that Jesus Christ is “Lord of all” (10:36) and that “everyone who believes in him will receive remission of sins.” Faithful readers differ on how much 10:35 says about who is saved, and the text keeps it beside 10:43.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 10:28 and 10:34–35 together. What does Peter say God showed him, and what does he now say about God?

4 OBSERVE How does the Jerusalem church react when Peter explains himself (11:1–18)?

The first reaction is complaint. Those “of the circumcision contended with him” (11:2) and said “You went in to uncircumcised men, and ate with them!” (11:3). Peter “explained to them in order” (11:4) what had happened, and ended with “who was I, that I could withstand God?” (11:17). Then “they held their peace, and glorified God” (11:18). They concluded that “God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”

IF THE GROUP STALLS Compare 11:2–3 with 11:18. What do they say at the start, and what do they say at the end?

5 OBSERVE How does the church respond to Peter's imprisonment, and how do they react when he's freed (12:5, 12–16)?

Herod had Peter jailed, and the text says “constant prayer was made by the assembly to God for him” (12:5). After the angel brings Peter out, he goes to the house of Mary, where “many were gathered together and were praying” (12:12). Rhoda recognizes his voice and “didn't open the gate for joy” (12:14), and the others say “You are crazy!” (12:15). When they open the door, “they saw him, and were amazed” (12:16). The scene shows people who pray steadily and are surprised by the answer.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 12:13–16. What does Rhoda do, what do the others say, and what happens when they open the door?

6 INTERPRET Why does the Spirit fall on the Gentiles before they are baptized — what is God showing (10:44–48; 11:17; 15:8)?

The Spirit falls first. Peter was still speaking when “the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word” (10:44), and only then does he ask “Can anyone forbid these people from being baptized with water?” (10:47). His reason is “They have received the Holy Spirit just like us,” and the baptism follows (10:48). Later he tells the others that “God gave to them the same gift as us” (11:17). Christians read the order of Spirit and baptism differently in other passages, but here the text lets the gift settle the question for Peter.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 10:47 and 11:17. What reason does Peter give for baptizing these people?

7 INTERPRET What does 11:19–26 show about the church at Antioch before the name ‘Christians’ appears?

The verse states a fact. “The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” It does not say who gave the name or why. The verses before it show a church where many “believed and turned to the Lord” (11:21), where Barnabas, on arriving, saw “the grace of God” (11:23) and was glad, and where Barnabas and Saul taught many people for a year (11:26). The name carries the word Christ, which fits disciples gathered around Him.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 11:19–26. What do you learn about the church in Antioch before the name appears?

8 INTERPRET What is Luke's point in placing Herod's death right next to the line 'the word of God grew' (12:23–24)?

The text puts the two events side by side and does not explain the link. Herod had begun to oppress the assembly, killed James, and seized Peter (12:1–3). In 12:23 an angel of the Lord struck him “because he didn't give God the glory,” and he died. The next verse says “the word of God grew and multiplied” (12:24). The group can see that the king who set himself against the assembly is gone while the word continues.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 12:22–24. What did the people shout, what happened to Herod, and what does 12:24 say next?

9 INTERPRET The vision was about food, but Peter says God taught him about people (10:28). How does Peter connect the two in 10:34–35 and 11:17?

The vision shows animals, and the voice says “What God has cleansed, you must not call unclean” (10:15). Peter's own explanation in 10:28 is about people, and he says God showed him he should not call “any man unholy or unclean.” He perceived God “doesn't show favoritism” (10:34), and the Gentiles received the same gift (11:17). Christians differ on what the food laws mean today, and this passage does not settle that.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 10:15 and 10:28 side by side. What does Peter say God showed him?

10 APPLY What kind of person are you most tempted to treat as an unlikely candidate for the gospel? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. Cornelius is described as devout and generous, and as one who always prayed (10:2), and 11:14 reports that Peter would “speak to you words by which you will be saved.” Peter himself first answered the voice with “Not so, Lord” (10:14), so honest answers may begin there. People can name a kind of person or a habit of thought, and nobody needs to name an individual. Lead toward what God did next in the chapter.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 10:2, 10:4 and 11:14. What is said about Cornelius, and what does Peter bring?

11 APPLY The church prayed for Peter yet was stunned when he showed up (12:15). Where do you pray without really expecting God to act? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. The assembly prayed constantly (12:5) and, when the answer came to the door, they said “You are crazy!” (12:15). The text reports this without a rebuke, and the same chapter records that James was killed with the sword (12:2). Good answers may name a prayer that has gone quiet or a request that feels too large. People choose how much to share.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 12:5 and 12:15. What did the assembly do, and how did they respond to the news?

NOTES

Reflection questions

- 1** **Whom have you quietly considered 'unclean' or outside God's reach?**
This question asks people to look honestly at who they have put outside God's reach. The vision was repeated three times (10:16), and Peter said in 10:28 that God had shown him not to call any man unclean. Invite quiet answers and let people choose how much to say.
- 2** **What prejudice might God be challenging in your own heart this week?**
Peter's change came through a vision, a word from the Spirit and a visit to Cornelius's house (10:19–20, 10:27–28). Invite people to name one assumption they hold about who is welcome, in general terms if they prefer. Keep the tone gentle and note that Peter was honest about his first answer in 10:14.
- 3** **Do you pray expecting God to answer — or just out of habit?**
The assembly prayed constantly (12:5) and was amazed at the answer (12:16). This question is for honest answers about habit and expectation, so ask for no performance. Let people say where prayer has felt routine and what it would look like to bring something specific.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 12:2–3

Herod killed James with the sword, and "when he saw that it pleased the Jews," he seized Peter also (12:2–3). Herod is the one acting, and James, Peter and the first believers are Jews. Do not let the phrase become a charge against Jewish people. If someone asks why James died and Peter was freed, stay with the text and do not suggest that more prayer or faith would have changed it.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 12:23

Do not read 12:23 into anyone's illness or death today.

LEADER'S GUIDE · SESSION 5 OF 8

Sent to the Nations

Acts 13–15 · 60 minutes · 5–12 people · participant pages 29–33 · memory verse Acts 15:11

Read this before you gather — no seminary required.

GROUP LEADER NOTES

Luke calls him 'Saul, who is also called Paul' (13:9), and calls him Paul from then on. His sermon in Pisidian Antioch (13:16–41) mirrors Stephen's — it walks through Israel's story — but climaxes in justification by faith, a theme central to Paul's letters. The crowd at Lystra calling them Jupiter and Mercury (the WEB's names for the Greek Zeus and Hermes; 14:12) shows the pagan world they're entering. The Jerusalem Council (chapter 15, c. AD 49) is the doctrinal hinge of the book: it settles what Gentile believers must keep, protects grace for Jews and Gentiles alike, and models how the church discerns truth through Scripture, testimony, and shared leadership. On the Paul–Barnabas split: note that God used both — the text records two teams going out (15:39–41).

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

Paul's synagogue sermon at Pisidian Antioch quotes Psalm 2:7 (13:33), Isaiah 55:3 (13:34), Psalm 16:10 (13:35), and Habakkuk 1:5 as warning (13:41); the missionaries take Isaiah 49:6 as their commission — 'a light for the Gentiles' (13:47). At the Jerusalem council, James ties Peter's report to Amos 9:11–12 (15:13–18): the rebuilt tent of David under which 'all the Gentiles' seek the Lord (15:16–18). HISTORICAL NOTE: A synagogue service of the period included Scripture readings and an open invitation for a visiting teacher to give a 'word of exhortation' (13:15) — and Paul is invited to speak at Pisidian Antioch (13:15). His audiences were 'men of Israel, and you who fear God' (13:16): Jews and Gentile God-fearers side by side.

GATHER (5 MIN)

Ask: what's one 'rule' you once thought you had to keep to earn God's approval — before you understood grace?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank God that salvation is a gift, not a wage. Pray for any group member tempted to perform for God's love rather than rest in it.

A TIMED PLAN drawn to scale · minutes

5	6	11	19	12	7
Gather	Read together	Observe	Interpret	Apply	Close in prayer

ANSWER GUIDE

Discussion questions

1 **READ TOGETHER** How would you put the council's conclusion about salvation in your own words?

Peter puts it in 15:11: "we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are." He gives the reason in the verses before. God gave the Gentiles the Holy Spirit, "just like he did to us" (15:8), and "made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith" (15:9). These verses are Peter's words to the apostles and elders, and the council's decision itself comes later in James's judgment at 15:19.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 15:8 and 15:9 again. What did God give the Gentiles, and what does 15:9 say about any distinction between us and them?

2 **OBSERVE** How are Barnabas and Saul sent out, and by whom (13:1–4)?

The Holy Spirit speaks while the leaders "served the Lord and fasted" (13:2): "Separate Barnabas and Saul for me, for the work to which I have called them." The group then fasted, prayed, laid their hands on the two men and sent them away (13:3). Verse 4 says the two were "sent out by the Holy Spirit" (13:4), so the text credits both the Spirit and the assembly. Faithful traditions differ on what the laying on of hands conveys here, and the text reports that it was done.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Compare 13:2 with 13:4. Who is named as the one calling, and who is named as the one sending?

3 **OBSERVE** How do Paul and Barnabas respond to being worshiped as gods at Lystra (14:11–18)?

The crowd shouts, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men" (14:11), and the priest brings oxen and garlands to the gates (14:13). Barnabas and Paul "tore their clothes" (14:14) and sprang into the crowd. They say, "We also are men of like passions with you" (14:15), and they call the people to turn to "the living God." Even so, the two "hardly stopped the multitudes from making a sacrifice to them" (14:18). The verses show a sacrifice prepared and stopped only with difficulty.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 14:14 and 14:15. What do Barnabas and Paul do first, and what do they say about themselves?

4 OBSERVE What happens to Paul at Lystra, and what does he do next (14:19–22)?

Jews from Antioch and Iconium persuaded the crowds, and “they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead” (14:19). The text says what the crowd supposed and says no more about his condition. Then “he rose up, and entered into the city” (14:20), and the next day he went on to Derbe with Barnabas. After preaching there they “returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch” (14:21), strengthening the disciples. Paul went back to the cities that had turned on them.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Follow the places in 14:19 through 14:21. Where does Paul go after he stands up, and where do the two go after Derbe?

5 OBSERVE What question threatens to divide the church, and how is it resolved (15:1–20)?

Some men came down from Judea and taught, “Unless you are circumcised after the custom of Moses, you can’t be saved” (15:1). After discord, the brothers appointed Paul, Barnabas and others to go up to Jerusalem (15:2), where some believing Pharisees said it was necessary “to command them to keep the law of Moses” (15:5). Peter and James spoke, and James’s judgment was “we don’t trouble those from among the Gentiles who turn to God” (15:19). The letter from the apostles, the elders and the brothers (15:23) said it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to them “to lay no greater burden on you than these necessary things” (15:28). Faithful traditions differ on how the abstentions listed in 15:20 and 15:29 apply today, and the text records them as part of the decision.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Find the demand in 15:1 and the demand in 15:5. Then find the sentence in 15:28 that answers them.

6 INTERPRET Why does it matter that the church sent Barnabas and Saul away on mission (13:1–4)?

The text names five prophets and teachers (13:1), and the Spirit asks for two of them (13:2). What the text shows is the sending (13:3 and 13:4) and the report on their return, “all the things that God had done with them” (14:27). The church gave them up for the work, and the same church heard the result.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 13:1 and 13:2. How many leaders are named, and which two does the Spirit ask for?

7 INTERPRET Paul and Barnabas say we enter the kingdom ‘through many afflictions’ (14:22). How does that reframe suffering?

Paul and Barnabas had been thrown out of Pisidian Antioch (13:50), and Paul had been stoned at Lystra (14:19). They went back anyway. They were “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith.” The words about affliction belong to both missionaries in 14:21 and 14:22, and the text gives them as strengthening. Hardship stands in the account as part of the road to God’s Kingdom. After the persecution at Pisidian Antioch, the disciples there were “filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (13:52).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 13:50 through 13:52. What happened to Paul and Barnabas, and how are the disciples described?

8 INTERPRET Why does Peter say Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by grace (15:10–11)?

Peter calls the demand a yoke “which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (15:10). If salvation waited on keeping the law, it would rest on a load that Peter says neither the fathers nor he and the others were able to bear. Peter gives the answer in 15:11, that “we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus,” and God cleanses hearts “by faith” (15:9). Paul’s earlier sermon says the same, that “everyone who believes is justified from all things” (13:39), including what the law of Moses could not clear. Peter and Paul both place the ground of salvation in the Lord Jesus (15:11, 13:38).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 15:10 and 15:11. What does Peter say about the yoke, and what does he say saves?

9 INTERPRET Peter (Acts 2) and Paul (Acts 13) both rest the resurrection on Psalm 16:10 — ‘you will not allow your Holy One to see decay.’ Why is this psalm the apostles’ anchor text for the resurrection, and why can it not be about David himself (13:36–37)?

Paul reads from the psalm in 13:35: “You will not allow your Holy One to see decay.” He then explains why the words cannot be about David: “David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell asleep, was laid with his fathers, and saw decay” (13:36). The next verse says “he whom God raised up saw no decay” (13:37). The psalm line fits the one God raised from the dead (13:30). Peter makes the same move in 2:27 through 2:31.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Compare 13:36 with 13:37. Who saw decay, and who did not?

10 INTERPRET James says Peter’s report ‘agrees with the words of the prophets’ (15:14–15). What does James see in Amos 9:11–12 that agrees with what Peter, Paul and Barnabas reported, and how does the council hold testimony and Scripture together?

James begins with what had just been reported, “how God first visited the nations to take out of them a people for his name” (15:14). He then says, “This agrees with the words of the prophets” (15:15), and quotes what is written. In the quotation God rebuilds the fallen tabernacle of David so that “the rest of men may seek after the Lord” (15:17), including “all the Gentiles who are called by my name.” Peter’s account and the report of Barnabas and Paul came first, and the text shows the testimony and the prophets agreeing.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 15:14 and 15:15. What is the event, and what does James say it agrees with?

11 APPLY Where might you be quietly adding requirements to the gospel — for yourself or others? PERSONAL

There is no single right answer. The men in 15:1 and 15:5 added a requirement, and Peter calls it a yoke in 15:10. Good answers may name a rule for behavior or a standard for being accepted. People can say as much or as little as they like, and some may simply listen. The verse to return to is 15:11, which gives the basis for being saved.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 15:10 and 15:11. What does Peter call the added requirement, and what does he say saves?

12 APPLY Paul and Barnabas later split sharply over John Mark (15:36–39). How does your group handle strong disagreement among committed believers? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. Barnabas planned to take John Mark, and Paul did not think it a good idea to take someone who had “withdrawn from them in Pamphylia” (15:38). Then “the contention grew so sharp that they separated from each other” (15:39), and Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus while Paul chose Silas and went out “commended by the brothers to the grace of God” (15:40). The text does not say who was right, and it reports Paul strengthening the assemblies (15:41). Group members can speak about how they handle conflict without naming anyone.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 15:36 through 15:41. What did each man do after the split, and who commended Paul as he left?

NOTES

Reflection questions

- 1** Where are you trying to earn what God freely gives by grace?
This question asks people to look for a private requirement they have placed on themselves, such as being good enough first. The men in 15:1 and 15:5 added a demand, and Peter answers with grace in 15:11. Let people say as much as they choose.
- 2** How do you respond when following Jesus brings hardship rather than reward?
Hardship is part of the account in 14:19 through 14:22, and so is joy in 13:52. Invite honest answers and leave room for people who are in a hard season now. Lead toward what the disciples were given in those verses, which is strengthening and encouragement.
- 3** Is there a disagreement with another believer you need to handle with more grace?
The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas in 15:36 through 15:41 is the model case. Invite people to think of a disagreement and what grace toward the other person might look like. Nobody needs to name the person or give the details.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 15:1–29

The Council settles what Gentile believers must do. It does not tell Jewish believers to stop keeping the law: later the leaders in Jerusalem say that thousands of Jewish believers “are all zealous for the law” (21:20). When the group speaks of a “yoke” (15:10), keep it from becoming a way of speaking against Jewish practice. In 13:46 Paul and Barnabas say “we turn to the Gentiles,” and in 14:1 they enter the synagogue at Iconium; read 13:46 as a turn in one city, not a verdict on Jewish people. The four requests in 15:20 and 15:29 (idols, sexual immorality, what is strangled, and blood) are read in different ways today, and the group does not need to settle it.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 14:9 AND 14:19

Never treat illness, or healing that has not come, as a sign of weak faith (14:9). 14:19 describes Paul being stoned; read it calmly and let anyone step out.

LEADER'S GUIDE · SESSION 6 OF 8

The Gospel Enters Europe

Acts 16–18 · 60 minutes · 5–12 people · participant pages 34–38 · memory verse Acts 16:31

Read this before you gather — no seminary required.

GROUP LEADER NOTES

The 'Macedonian call' (16:9) is the moment the gospel crosses into Europe — a pivot with huge consequences. Notice the three people Luke shows in Philippi span the social spectrum: Lydia (a seller of purple), the slave girl (a slave whose owners profited from her, 16:16), and the jailer (the keeper of the prison) — the gospel crosses every distinction. The Areopagus speech (17:22–31) is a master class in contextualized witness: Paul quotes their own poets but still calls them to repent and points to the resurrection. Encourage the group to imitate the Bereans (17:11) — checking everything, including this study, against Scripture. Aquila and Priscilla appear here (18:1–3) and will matter again.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

Notice the difference in audience: in the Thessalonian synagogue Paul reasons 'from the Scriptures' (17:2–3), but on the Areopagus he quotes Greek poets — likely Epimenides and Aratus (17:28) — and argues from creation to judgment. The Lord's night word to Paul at Corinth, 'Don't be afraid... for I am with you' (18:9–10), echoes language God spoke to others in Scripture, such as Isaiah 41:10 and Jeremiah 1:8, now to a new missionary in a pagan city. HISTORICAL NOTE: Philippi was a Roman colony — a miniature Rome, proud of its citizenship — which is why the charge that these men 'advocate customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans' (16:20–21) bites, and why Paul's own citizenship (16:37) overturns the verdict. The Areopagus was Athens' venerable council for examining new teachings.

GATHER (5 MIN)

Ask: when has a closed door or interruption actually turned out to be God redirecting you somewhere better?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Ask God for open doors and sensitivity to His leading — and for the kind of joy that can sing in hard places.

A TIMED PLAN drawn to scale · minutes

5	6	10	18	13	8
Gather	Read together	Observe	Interpret	Apply	Close in prayer

ANSWER GUIDE

Discussion questions

1 READ TOGETHER What's remarkable about how Paul and Silas behave in that prison cell?

They had been beaten with rods, thrown into prison, and put into the inner prison with their feet in the stocks (16:22 through 16:24). Then “about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God” (16:25). The text adds that “the prisoners were listening to them.” After the earthquake, Paul cried out, “for we are all here” (16:28), and later they spoke the word of the Lord to the jailer and all in his house (16:32). The text records what they did and gives no account of how they felt.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 16:24 and 16:25. What had just been done to them, and what are they doing at midnight?

2 OBSERVE How is Paul's route directed and redirected by the Spirit (16:6–10)?

They were “forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia” (16:6). Next they “tried to go into Bithynia” (16:7), and the Spirit did not allow it. They passed by Mysia and came down to Troas (16:8). There a vision came to Paul in the night, a man of Macedonia saying, “Come over into Macedonia and help us” (16:9). They concluded that “the Lord had called us to preach the Good News to them” (16:10).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 16:6 through 16:8. What did they try, and what stopped them each time?

3 OBSERVE Who are the three people Paul meets in Philippi (16:14, 16–18, 27–34)?

Lydia sold purple, came from Thyatira, and “worshiped God” (16:14), and “The Lord opened her heart to listen to the things which were spoken by Paul.” She and her household were baptized (16:15). A girl with “a spirit of divination” (16:16) brought her masters much gain, and Paul commanded the spirit to come out in the name of Jesus Christ (16:18). The text reports that the spirit came out and does not say what she believed afterward. The jailer asked, “what must I do to be saved” (16:30), and by the end he rejoiced “having believed in God” (16:34).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 16:14, 16:18 and 16:30 through 16:34. Who acts in each scene, and what happens to the person?

4 OBSERVE What makes the Bereans ‘more noble’ (17:11)?

The Bereans “received the word with all readiness of mind” (17:11). They were also “examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.” The verse calls them more noble than those in Thessalonica, and it credits both an open mind and daily checking. The next verse reports the result: “Many of them therefore believed” (17:12).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 17:11. What two things did the Bereans bring to what they heard?

5 OBSERVE How does Paul begin his message to the philosophers in Athens (17:22–23)?

Paul begins with the people in front of him. He says, “I perceive that you are very religious in all things” (17:22). He tells them he passed along, observed their objects of worship, and found an altar inscribed “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD” (17:23). Then he says, “What therefore you worship in ignorance, I announce to you.” This follows 17:16, where his spirit was provoked as he saw the city full of idols, so he began with what he had seen.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 17:16 and 17:22 through 17:23. What did Paul see, and what did he say about the altar?

6 INTERPRET What does the Spirit's redirection teach about following God's guidance?

The text shows the Lord guiding in more than one way. The Spirit forbade Asia, the Spirit did not allow Bithynia, and a vision opened Macedonia (16:6 through 16:9). The company then reached a shared conclusion: “concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the Good News to them” (16:10). They kept traveling, and 16:8 has them coming down to Troas. The text does not say how the Spirit made His no known.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Trace 16:6 through 16:10. What did they try, what stopped them, and what did they conclude?

7 INTERPRET Why does Luke deliberately show such different people — a seller of purple, a slave girl, a jailer — together?

The three come from different places in the city: a woman by the riverside (16:13 through 16:14), a girl who met them on the way to prayer (16:16), and a jailer in the prison (16:27 through 16:30). The Lord opens Lydia's heart (16:14), Jesus' name drives out the spirit (16:18), and the jailer hears “the word of the Lord” (16:32). The passage does not say why the account includes all three. It shows the Lord's name and word meeting each of them where they were.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Compare 16:14, 16:18 and 16:32. What does each person meet, and what does the Lord or His name do?

8 INTERPRET How does Paul connect with pagan thinkers in Athens without compromising the message?

Paul uses what the Athenians already have in front of them. He starts from their altar (17:23) and tells them of the maker: “The God who made the world and all things in it” (17:24). He cites their own writers: “As some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also his offspring.’” (17:28) Then he says God “commands that all people everywhere should repent” (17:30) and ends with judgment and the resurrection (17:31). The message keeps its center, and the starting point changes.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 17:28 through 17:31. What does Paul borrow from the poets, and what does he still say about repentance?

- 9 INTERPRET** Compare Paul in the synagogue (17:2–3) with Paul on the Areopagus (17:22–31). What changes — and what is identical? What does that teach the group about speaking to people who don't yet trust the Bible?

In the synagogue Paul “reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (17:2), explaining that “the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead” (17:3). On the Areopagus he begins with an altar and speaks of the God who made the world. In both places he speaks of a risen Christ. The speech says “the man whom he has ordained” (17:31) without naming Jesus, and 17:18 says Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection. With people who do not yet trust the Bible, the account shows him starting where they are and bringing the same risen Lord.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Compare 17:3 with 17:31. What does Paul say about the risen one in each place?

- 10 APPLY** Do you examine teaching against Scripture for yourself, like the Bereans? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. The Bereans were commended for “examining the Scriptures daily,” which includes weighing what they heard. Good answers name a small habit, such as reading the passage before or after a message or asking where a teaching comes from in the text. People can say as much or as little as they choose. The Bereans received the word with readiness and checked it daily, and 17:11 holds the two together.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 17:11 again. What did the Bereans do each day, and what did they do when they first heard the word?

- 11 APPLY** Could you worship God in the middle of your current hardship, the way Paul and Silas did? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. Paul and Silas had been beaten and bound, and at midnight they were “praying and singing hymns to God” (16:25). The text reports their prayer and singing and says nothing about how they felt. Good answers may be a prayer, a song or a word of thanks, and some people will find that hard right now. Nobody needs to explain their situation to take part.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 16:22 through 16:25. What had been done to Paul and Silas, and what did they do at midnight?

NOTES

Reflection questions

- 1** Where do you sense God may be closing one door to open another?
This question asks people to think about guidance. In 16:6 through 16:10 a closed door was followed by a vision. Invite people to name a closed door or a change they sense, and let them say as little as they like.
- 2** Whom might you be overlooking that God is ready to save?
The three people in Philippi were a woman by the river, a girl in the street and a jailer in the prison. Invite people to think about the kinds of people they pass without noticing. Names are not needed.

3 What 'midnight' are you in right now — and can you still worship there?

Midnight in 16:25 follows a beating and the stocks. Invite honest answers, including answers that say it is hard to worship right now. Lead toward the simple acts the verse names, which are praying and singing.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 16:16–19 AND 18:6

The girl in 16:16–19 is used by her owners for their profit. Someone in the room may know what it is to be used by others, so stay with what the text says and do not turn the scene into a story about her spiritual state. In 18:6 Paul tells the Jews who opposed him in Corinth, "Your blood be on your own heads!" and says he will go to the Gentiles. Paul is a Jew himself. He moves into the house of Justus, next door to the synagogue, and Crispus, its ruler, believes (18:7–8). Do not let 18:6 become a verdict on Jewish people. If someone shares that they are being used or are in danger, the help lines at the back of this guide, and clearpathbiblestudies.com/help, come first.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 16:3 AND 18:18

Acts shows Jewish believers keeping Jewish practice after Pentecost. Paul has Timothy, whose mother is Jewish, circumcised "because of the Jews who were in those parts" (16:3), and he shaves his head at Cenchreae, "for he had a vow" (18:18). This fits the Council's decision in chapter 15: Gentiles are not required to keep the law, and nothing there tells Jewish believers to stop.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 16:31–34

The household hears and believes (16:31–34); this is not a guarantee about any one family member.

LEADER'S GUIDE · SESSION 7 OF 8

Power, Farewell, and the Road to Jerusalem

Acts 19–22 · 60 minutes · 5–12 people · participant pages 39–43 · memory verse Acts 20:24

Read this before you gather — no seminary required.

GROUP LEADER NOTES

Ephesus was home to the temple of Artemis (Diana) (19:27), and those who practiced magical arts burned their books (19:19) — worth a fortune — which shows repentance that costs something real, and the silversmiths' riot (19:23–41) ties the loss of trade to the honor of Artemis (19:25–27). Acts 20:17–38 is Paul's only recorded speech to Christian leaders and a model of pastoral ministry — transparency, hard work, and warning against 'wolves.' From chapter 19 the tone shifts toward the passion-like journey to Jerusalem; Paul's resolve to go to Jerusalem is stated in 19:21 and 20:22–24. Help the group hold the tension in 21:4, 12–14: Luke reports that disciples said 'through the Spirit' that he should not go up (21:4), that Paul was ready to die (21:13), and that they said 'The Lord's will be done' (21:14).

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

Paul's farewell charge — shepherd 'the flock... the assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood' (20:28) — hands the shepherd calling of Ezekiel 34 to ordinary elders: God had promised to remove the shepherds who fed themselves and to shepherd His flock Himself. The 'wolves' warning (20:29) stands in the same prophetic line. HISTORICAL NOTE: Ephesus was the commercial heart of Asia and home of the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders — so a gospel that emptied the silversmiths' order books (19:24–27) shook the city's economy, not just its religion. Paul's three years there (20:31) made it his longest recorded stay.

GATHER (5 MIN)

Ask: who is someone who 'poured themselves out' for your faith — a leader, parent, or friend — and what did that cost them?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Pray for the leaders who have shepherded your group, and ask God for the courage to follow Him even when it costs.

A TIMED PLAN drawn to scale · minutes

5	6	10	18	13	8
Gather	Read together	Observe	Interpret	Apply	Close in prayer

ANSWER GUIDE

Discussion questions

1 READ TOGETHER What kind of leader does Paul reveal himself to be in this farewell?

Paul shows himself as a leader who goes forward without knowing the outcome. He says he goes “bound by the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there” (20:22). He counts his own life as secondary to finishing “the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus” (20:24). At the end he kneels and prays with them all, and the elders “wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him” (20:37). Their sorrow is tied in 20:38 to “the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more.”

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 20:24 and then 20:36–38. What does Paul care about most, and how do the elders respond to him?

2 OBSERVE How does the gospel change the new believers’ relationship to their old practices in Ephesus (19:18–20)?

Two things happen in the believers. Many of them came “confessing, and declaring their deeds” (19:18). Then many who had practiced magical arts “brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all” (19:19). The books were worth “fifty thousand pieces of silver.” Luke closes the scene with a sentence about the word: “the word of the Lord was growing and becoming mighty” (19:20).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Find the two actions in 19:18 and 19:19. What did the believers do first, and what did they do with the books?

3 OBSERVE What actually drives the riot in Ephesus (19:23–27)?

A silversmith named Demetrius calls the craftsmen together and says, “by this business we have our wealth” (19:25). He names a second danger: that “the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be counted as nothing” (19:27). Those who heard him are filled with anger and cry, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” (19:28). Then the whole city is in confusion (19:29), and “Most of them didn’t know why they had come together” (19:32). The text shows money and devotion to the goddess sitting side by side in the same speech.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read Demetrius’s speech in 19:25–27. What does he say is at risk?

4 OBSERVE How does Paul describe his own ministry to the Ephesian elders (20:18–21, 33–35)?

Paul reminds them of how he lived among them, “how I was with you all the time” (20:18), “serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears” (20:19). He taught them “publicly and from house to house” (20:20) and testified of “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus” (20:21). About

money he says, “I coveted no one’s silver, gold, or clothing” (20:33), and that his own hands served his needs and those of his companions. He closes with a saying of Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (20:35).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Find what Paul says about his teaching in 20:20–21 and about his work in 20:33–35. What does he offer them as an example?

5 OBSERVE How do Paul’s friends try to stop him going to Jerusalem, and how does he answer (21:10–14)?

At Tyre, disciples “said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem” (21:4). At Caesarea the prophet Agabus takes Paul’s belt, binds his own feet and hands, and says what the Holy Spirit says will happen to the owner of the belt in Jerusalem. The companions and the local people “begged him not to go up to Jerusalem” (21:12). Paul answers that he is ready to be bound and also “to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (21:13). When he would not be persuaded, they said, “The Lord’s will be done” (21:14).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 21:12–14. How do his friends respond, and how does Paul answer them?

6 INTERPRET What does the public burning of costly magic books reveal about genuine repentance (19:19)?

The text shows repentance that is open and costly. The believers confessed first (19:18). Then they burned the books “in the sight of all” (19:19), and the verse says they “counted their price” and “found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver.” Luke places the growth of the word right after this: “the word of the Lord was growing and becoming mighty” (19:20). The verse puts the two side by side and gives no cause.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 19:19 slowly. What did they do with the books, and what does the verse say about the cost?

7 INTERPRET Paul calls the church ‘the assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood’ (20:28). What does that say about the church’s worth?

The verse names the price: the assembly is “of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood” (20:28). The verse uses both words, “all the flock” and “the assembly of the Lord and God.” The Holy Spirit “has made you overseers,” so the elders care for something that belongs to God. The warning that follows takes the flock seriously, since wolves come “not sparing the flock” (20:29). Some manuscripts read “church of God,” others “of the Lord,” and the phrase “his own blood” is read in different ways; either way, the verse says the church was bought at the cost of blood. The group can stay with that.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 20:28 again. What was paid, and what are the overseers told to do?

8 INTERPRET What does Paul's resolve to suffer (21:13) reveal about how he understands God's will?

Paul keeps going after the Spirit's testimony. He goes "bound by the Spirit" (20:22), and says "the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions wait for me" (20:23). In 21:13 he says he is ready to die "for the name of the Lord Jesus," and his aim is to finish "my race with joy" (20:24). The disciples at Tyre said through the Spirit that he should not go (21:4). The text does not explain how those two fit, and faithful readers differ, so the group can hold that question loosely.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Put 20:22–23 beside 21:4. What does each verse say the Spirit is doing?

9 INTERPRET Read Ezekiel 34:1–10 alongside Acts 20:28–31. What does Ezekiel's indictment of self-feeding shepherds add to Paul's warning — and what does 'purchased with his own blood' say about how much the flock is worth?

Ezekiel 34 is outside this reading, so let the group read it in their own Bibles and bring what they find. Acts shows the elders told to "shepherd the assembly" and warned that "vicious wolves will enter in among you" (20:29). Some danger comes from inside: "Men will arise from among your own selves, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (20:30). Paul himself is held up as an example of a shepherd who gives, since "these hands served my necessities, and those who were with me" (20:34). The worth of the flock is shown by the price in 20:28.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 20:29–30. Where does the danger come from, and what does Paul tell them to do about it in 20:31?

10 APPLY What 'costly books' — habits, attachments, idols — might God be asking you to give up for good? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. The text gives one pattern: the believers confessed, and then they brought the books out and burned them in front of others (19:18–19). Good answers may name a habit, a possession, a screen, or a relationship that competes with Christ for first place. The text does not tell anyone what to give up, and no one should be pressed to name it. Let people share only what they choose, and invite a small concrete step.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Look at 19:18–19 again. What did they do first, and what happened next?

11 APPLY Where is following Jesus asking you to choose faithfulness over comfort or safety? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. Paul says he does not "hold my life dear to myself" (20:24), and he is ready to die at Jerusalem (21:13). His friends "begged him not to go up to Jerusalem" (21:12), so people can disagree about the safe course. The passage ends that scene with the friends saying, "The Lord's will be done" (21:14). Good answers may name a conversation, a decision at work, or a costly step of obedience, never staying where someone is harmed. People share only what they choose.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 21:12–14. What did Paul's friends want for him, and what did they say when he would not be persuaded?

NOTES

Reflection questions

- 1** What attachment is God asking you to surrender fully — not just trim back?
This question echoes the burned books of 19:19, where the believers burned the books and the text names the price. Invite one attachment, and make it plain that people may keep the name of it private. A short silence is fine.
- 2** Whom are you responsible to 'watch over,' and are you doing it sacrificially?
Paul's charge in 20:28 is given to elders, but the question asks everyone to think of the people placed in their care, such as children, friends, a class or a team. Keep the tone gentle, since Paul's own example in 20:31–35 includes tears and hard work. People who feel they fall short can hear that Paul entrusts the elders to God and to the word of His grace (20:32).
- 3** Is there a place where you're choosing safety over obedience?
This question asks for honesty about a choice that may still be open. The friends in 21:12–14 loved Paul, so wanting safety is not treated as a flaw in the text, and the question never asks anyone to stay where they are being harmed. Invite people to name a place where they are unsure, and close by returning to the words of the friends in 21:14.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 21:20–26 AND 22:21–22

The leaders in Jerusalem tell Paul that thousands of Jewish believers "are all zealous for the law" (21:20), and Paul joins four men in a vow to show that "you yourself also walk keeping the law" (21:24). Paul is a Jew who keeps faith with his people. In 22:21–22 the crowd erupts at the word "Gentiles." That anger belongs to that crowd on that day, and the passage is not a verdict on Jewish people.

LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 21:4–14

Paul chose a costly road, and his friends loved him enough to plead with him (21:12). When the group answers the questions about safety and obedience, make plain that faithfulness never means staying where someone is being hurt. If anyone is in danger at home or anywhere else, getting safe comes first; use the help lines at the back of this guide.

LEADER'S GUIDE · SESSION 8 OF 8

Witness to the Ends of the Earth

Acts 23–28 · 60 minutes · 5–12 people · participant pages 44–48 · memory verse Acts 28:31

Read this before you gather — no seminary required.

GROUP LEADER NOTES

Roman citizens could appeal to the emperor, which is how Paul's legal maneuver (25:11) fulfills the Lord's promise that he'd testify in Rome (23:11). Notice how each trial becomes evangelism — Paul cares more about his hearers' souls than his own acquittal (26:29). Luke's detailed storm account (chapter 27, narrated as 'we') shows Paul, though a prisoner, becoming the calm leader because he trusts God's word. Acts ends at 28:31 with the gospel preached 'without hindrance'. The group can discuss why Luke may have ended there. This is a good session to celebrate, take communion if your tradition allows, and cast vision for what's next. Consider how the group might keep meeting or invite others into a new study.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

Even under arrest Paul stays under Scripture — caught speaking against the high priest, he yields to Exodus 22:28 (23:5) — and he tells Agrippa his whole message is 'nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen' (26:22–23). The book's final quotation is Isaiah 6:9–10 (28:26–27): the hardening text Jesus Himself used, which turns the story outward — 'the salvation of God is sent to the nations' (28:28). HISTORICAL NOTE: Paul's appeal to Caesar (25:11) was the right of a Roman citizen to have his case heard by the emperor — which is how Paul comes to Rome as a prisoner (25:11–12; 27:1). His two years of open preaching 'in his own rented house' (28:30) were under military custody, chained to a soldier, yet 'without hindrance' is Luke's deliberate last word.

GATHER (5 MIN)

Look back over the whole study: what's one way the Book of Acts has stretched or changed you in the last eight sessions?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thank God for the journey through Acts. Pray that your group would keep advancing the gospel 'with all boldness, without hindrance' wherever you go next.

A TIMED PLAN drawn to scale · minutes

5	6	11	19	12	7
Gather	Read together	Observe	Interpret	Apply	Close in prayer

ANSWER GUIDE

Discussion questions

1 **READ TOGETHER** How does the promise in 23:11 shape the way you read everything that follows?

The Lord says, “Cheer up, Paul, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must testify also at Rome” (23:11). With that word in hand, a plot of more than forty people (23:13) reads as a threat to a promise. Later Festus says, “To Caesar you shall go” (25:12), and an angel tells Paul in the storm, “You must stand before Caesar” (27:24). The text does not say Paul had the promise in mind when he appealed to Caesar, yet it carries him toward Rome. The book ends with Paul there, preaching “with all boldness, without hindrance” (28:31).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 23:11 and then 27:24. What is the same in both, and what does each add?

2 **OBSERVE** What does the Lord tell Paul the night after the uproar (23:11)?

The Lord Himself comes to Paul: “the Lord stood by him” (23:11). This comes the following night, after the commanding officer feared Paul would be “torn in pieces” (23:10) by the council. The first word is “Cheer up.” The Lord then looks back and ahead: Paul has testified at Jerusalem, and “you must testify also at Rome.”

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 23:10 and 23:11 together. What has just happened to Paul, and what does the Lord say to him?

3 **OBSERVE** What is the heart of Paul's defense before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa (24:14–15; 26:22–23)?

Before Felix, Paul says he serves the God of his fathers, “believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets” (24:14). His hope is “that there will be a resurrection of the dead” (24:15). Before Agrippa he says he is “saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen” (26:22). That means “how the Christ must suffer” (26:23) and how Christ, “by the resurrection of the dead, he would be first to proclaim light both to these people and to the Gentiles.” In both defenses the center is the resurrection and the Christ.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Compare 24:15 with 26:23. What shows up in both speeches?

4 **OBSERVE** How does Paul lead the terrified crew during the storm (27:21–26, 33–36)?

The sailors and passengers have lost hope: “all hope that we would be saved was now taken away” (27:20). Paul stands “in the middle of them” (27:21) and tells them to “cheer up” (27:22), because an angel told him, “Don't be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar” (27:24). He trusts what he was told: “I believe God, that it will be just as it has been spoken to me” (27:25). Later he urges them to eat, takes bread, and “he gave thanks to God in the presence of all” (27:35). The result is that “they all cheered up, and they also took food” (27:36).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 27:33–36. What does Paul do first, and how do the others respond?

5 OBSERVE How does Luke describe Paul's final two years in Rome (28:30–31)?

Luke places Paul under guard from the start: he was allowed to stay “with the soldier who guarded him” (28:16), and he tells the Jewish leaders, “I am bound with this chain” (28:20). Then comes the closing summary. Paul “stayed two whole years in his own rented house and received all who were coming to him” (28:30). He was “preaching God's Kingdom, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, without hindrance” (28:31). The guard and the freedom to preach stand side by side in the text.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 28:30–31 once more. What did Paul do, and who came to him?

6 INTERPRET Why does Paul keep turning his legal defense into an appeal to believe (26:27–29)?

Paul's own commission shapes his speech. The Lord sent him “to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light” (26:18), so a hearing is also a chance to speak of Christ. When Paul asks Agrippa, “do you believe the prophets?” (26:27), he is speaking directly to the king's faith. His wish in 26:29 is for all who hear him to become “such as I am, except for these bonds.” After they had withdrawn, they said, “This man does nothing worthy of death or of bonds” (26:31).

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 26:27–29. What does Paul ask Agrippa, and what does he pray for?

7 INTERPRET Why does God preserve all 276 people aboard for Paul's sake (27:24, 37)?

The reason is given in 27:24: “God has granted you all those who sail with you.” The count is “two hundred seventy-six souls on the ship” (27:37). When the sailors try to leave, Paul says, “Unless these stay in the ship, you can't be saved” (27:31). When the soldiers would kill the prisoners, the centurion, “desiring to save Paul” (27:43), stops them, and “they all escaped safely to the land” (27:44). The passage does not say more about why God arranged it this way, so the group can let the verses speak.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Find the promise in 27:24 and the result in 27:44. What links them?

8 INTERPRET Why might Luke end the book with the gospel reaching Rome rather than telling us Paul's verdict?

The text does not say why Luke stops where he does, and the group can offer ideas. What it does give is a closing scene built on Paul's activity: “preaching God's Kingdom, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ” (28:31). Officials had already said he did “nothing worthy of death or of bonds” (26:31). The gospel was not arriving in Rome for the first time, since “the brothers, when they heard of us, came to meet us” (28:15), and Paul “thanked God and took courage.” The last words are about boldness and no hindrance.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 28:14–15, then 28:30–31. Who is already in Rome, and what is Paul doing at the end?

- 9 INTERPRET** Paul's last quotation is Isaiah 6:9–10, words about hardened hearts. Why quote it, given some believed (28:24) and Paul welcomed all (28:30)?

Acts gives the Isaiah words in 28:26–27 without chapter numbers, so the group works from what Acts gives. The crowd is divided: “Some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved” (28:24). Paul says “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet” (28:25) and quotes of the people that “this people's heart has grown callous.” Then he announces, “the salvation of God is sent to the nations, and they will listen” (28:28). Paul goes on to receive “all who were coming to him” (28:30), so the text shows the door still open to everyone.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 28:24–28. What are the two responses, and what does Paul announce at the end?

- 10 INTERPRET** Paul says he is ‘saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen’ (26:22–23). Could your group do it? Try it: which Old Testament passages would you use for the Messiah's suffering, resurrection, and light to the nations? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. Paul says he is “saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen” (26:22), and he names the suffering of the Christ, the resurrection, and light for Jews and Gentiles (26:23). The reading does not name particular passages, so groups may bring different ones. Let people offer what they know and leave the rest.

IF THE GROUP STALLS List the three things Paul names in 26:23. Which would you look up first?

- 11 APPLY** Agrippa answers, ‘With a little persuasion are you trying to make me a Christian?’ (26:28). Where do you keep Christ at arm's length when He presses close?

PERSONAL

There is no single right answer. The WEB reads Agrippa's words as a question: “With a little persuasion are you trying to make me a Christian?” (26:28). “Almost persuaded” is the wording of another translation, and readers take the tone of Agrippa's reply in different ways. The text records that Paul prays for “whether with little or with much” (26:29), and then that Agrippa “rose up” (26:30). Good answers may name an area where someone is holding something back, and nobody needs to say more than they choose.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 26:28–30. What does Paul pray for, and what does Agrippa do next?

12 **APPLY** Acts ends open-ended — the mission continues through us. What's your next step in being a witness where you live? **PERSONAL**

There is no single right answer. In this reading Paul speaks of God and of the Christ where he is: before a governor, before a king, and in his rented house. At Rome he was “testifying about God’s Kingdom, and persuading them concerning Jesus” (28:23), and the response was mixed (28:24). Good answers may name a neighbor, a workplace, a family member, or a small habit of speaking about Christ. Let people name a step that fits their own life, and do not press for more.

IF THE GROUP STALLS Read 28:23–24. What did Paul do with the people who came to him, and how did they respond?

NOTES

Reflection questions

- 1** **Where are you holding Christ at arm’s length, keeping something back?**
This question carries the same hesitation as 26:28, though the WEB reads Agrippa’s words as a question and the tone of his reply is hard to know. Invite a quiet answer and make it plain that nobody has to say aloud what they are holding back. Close by returning to Paul’s prayer in 26:29.
- 2** **How does knowing God’s purpose for you steady you when life feels out of control?**
The question asks how a known purpose steadies a person when life feels out of control. The ship in chapter 27 gives a picture: hope was gone (27:20), and Paul stood on a word he had been given (27:25). Let people name a situation where they feel adrift, and keep the mood calm.
- 3** **Acts ends with you: where is your ‘ends of the earth’ — the next place the gospel needs to go through your life?**
The phrase echoes 1:8, “the uttermost parts of the earth,” and is not in this session’s chapters. This session shows Paul speaking to whoever came to him (28:30–31), so invite answers that are close to home. A person, a place, or a single conversation counts.

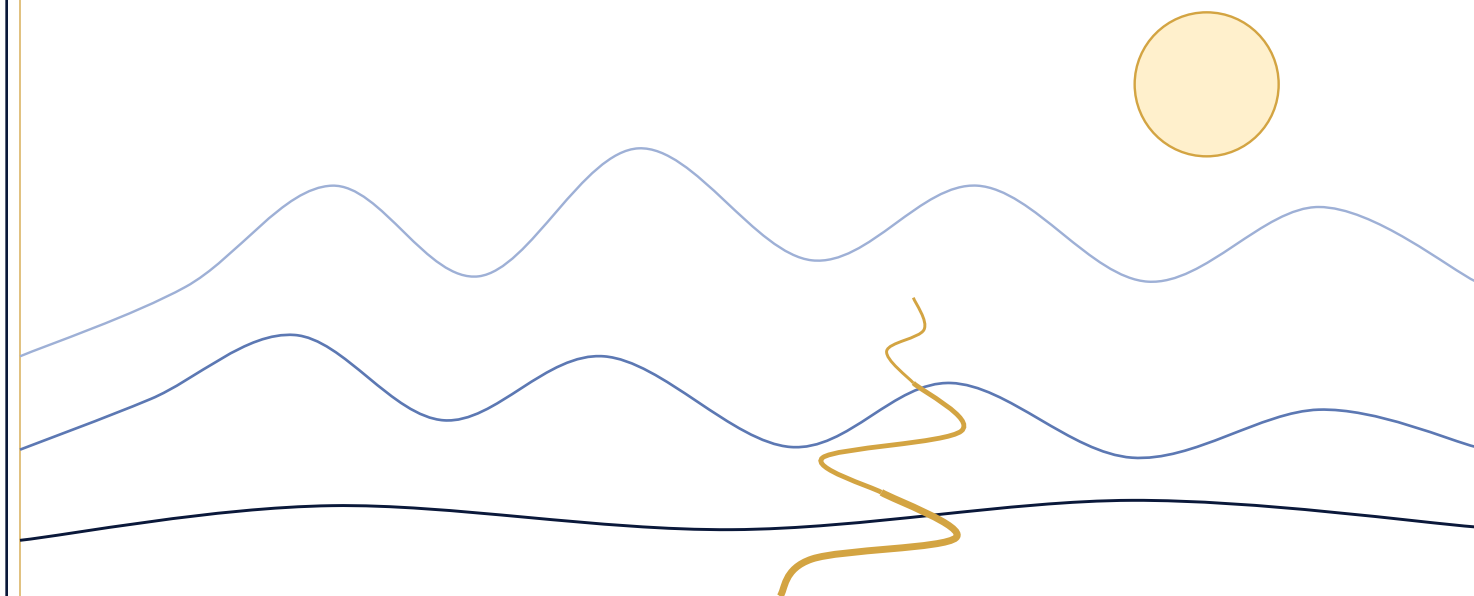
LEADER'S CARE NOTE · 28:17–28

Paul calls the Jewish leaders in Rome “brothers” and says he had done nothing “against the people or the customs of our fathers” (28:17). Some believed and some disbelieved (28:24). The words from Isaiah describe a hardened response, and “the salvation of God is sent to the nations” (28:28) adds the nations to the story. Do not let the passage be used against Jewish people. Christians differ on how to read the end of Acts for the future of Israel, and the group does not need to settle it.

PART FOUR

Acts

The complete text in the World English Bible, arranged by session.



WORLD ENGLISH BIBLE

Acts

The complete text, arranged by session. Verse numbers are small and raised; each session's reading begins with a tinted heading.

SESSION 1 READING

Acts 1–3 The Spirit and the Birth of the Church · session on page 9

ACTS 1

Waiting for Power

¹The first book I wrote, Theophilus, concerned all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, ²until the day in which he was received up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³To these he also showed himself alive after he suffered, by many proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking about God's Kingdom. ⁴Being assembled together with them, he commanded them, "Don't depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which you heard from me.

⁵For John indeed baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶Therefore when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, are you now restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷He said to them, "It isn't for you to know times or seasons which the Father has set within his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth."

⁹When he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰While they were looking steadfastly into the sky as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white clothing, ¹¹who also said, "You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who was received up from you into

the sky, will come back in the same way as you saw him going into the sky."

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³When they had come in, they went up into the upper room where they were staying; that is Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴All these with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer and supplication, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

¹⁵In these days, Peter stood up in the middle of the disciples (and the number of names was about one hundred twenty), and said, ¹⁶"Brothers, it was necessary that this Scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was guide to those who took Jesus. ¹⁷For he was counted with us, and received his portion in this ministry. ¹⁸Now this man obtained a field with the reward for his wickedness, and falling headlong, his body burst open, and all his intestines gushed out. ¹⁹It became known to everyone who lived in Jerusalem that in their language that field was called 'Akeldama,' that is, 'The field of blood.' ²⁰For it is written in the book of Psalms,

'Let his habitation be made desolate.

Let no one dwell in it;'

and,

‘Let another take his office.’

²¹“Of the men therefore who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John, to the day that he was received up from us, of these one must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

²³They put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴They prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away, that he might go to his own place.” ²⁶They drew lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was counted with the eleven apostles.

ACTS 2

The Spirit Comes

¹Now when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²Suddenly there came from the sky a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³Tongues like fire appeared and were distributed to them, and one sat on each of them.

⁴They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak. ⁵Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under the sky. ⁶When this sound was heard, the multitude came together and were bewildered, because everyone heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷They were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Behold, aren’t all these who speak Galileans? ⁸How do we hear, everyone in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabians: we hear them speaking in our languages the mighty works of God!” ¹²They were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

¹³Others, mocking, said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spoke out to them, “You men of Judea, and all you who dwell at Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to my words. ¹⁵For these aren’t drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶But this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷*‘It will be in the last days, says God,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.
Your sons and your daughters will prophesy.
Your young men will see visions.
Your old men will dream dreams.*

¹⁸*Yes, and on my servants and on my handmaidens
in those days,
I will pour out my Spirit, and they will prophesy.*

¹⁹*I will show wonders in the sky above,
and signs on the earth beneath:
blood, and fire, and billows of smoke.*

²⁰*The sun will be turned into darkness,
and the moon into blood,
before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes.*

²¹*It will be that whoever will call on the name of the
Lord will be saved.’*

²²“Men of Israel, hear these words! Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God to you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him among you, even as you yourselves know, ²³him, being delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by the hand of lawless men, crucified and killed; ²⁴whom God raised up, having freed him from the agony of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it. ²⁵For David says concerning him,

*‘I saw the Lord always before my face,
for he is on my right hand, that I should not be
moved.*

²⁶*Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue
rejoiced.*

Moreover my flesh also will dwell in hope;

²⁷*because you will not leave my soul in Hades,
neither will you allow your Holy One to see decay.*

²⁸*You made known to me the ways of life.*

You will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

²⁹"Brothers, I may tell you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹he foreseeing this spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that his soul wasn't left in Hades, and his flesh didn't see decay. ³²This Jesus God raised up, to which we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this, which you now see and hear. ³⁴For David didn't ascend into the heavens, but he says himself,

*'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit by my right hand
³⁵until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'*

³⁶"Let all the house of Israel therefore know certainly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as the Lord our God will call to himself." ⁴⁰With many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

⁴¹Then those who gladly received his word were baptized. There were added that day about three thousand souls. ⁴²They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer. ⁴³Fear came on every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together, and had all things in common. ⁴⁵They sold their possessions

and goods, and distributed them to all, according as anyone had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷praising God, and having favor with all the people. The Lord added to the assembly day by day those who were being saved.

ACTS 3 Healing at the Gate

¹Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ²A certain man who was lame from his mother's womb was being carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask gifts for the needy of those who entered into the temple. ³Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive gifts for the needy. ⁴Peter, fastening his eyes on him, with John, said, "Look at us." ⁵He listened to them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have, that I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!" ⁷He took him by the right hand and raised him up. Immediately his feet and his ankle bones received strength. ⁸Leaping up, he stood and began to walk. He entered with them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God. ⁹All the people saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰They recognized him, that it was he who used to sit begging for gifts for the needy at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. ¹¹As the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

¹²When Peter saw it, he responded to the people, "You men of Israel, why do you marvel at this man? Why do you fasten your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk?"

¹³The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up, and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. ¹⁴But you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked

for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, to which we are witnesses. ¹⁶By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which is through him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

¹⁷“Now, brothers, I know that you did this in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But the things which God announced by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled.

¹⁹“Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰and that he may send Christ Jesus, who was ordained for you before, ²¹whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God spoke long ago

by the mouth of his holy prophets. ²²For Moses indeed said to the fathers, ‘The Lord God will raise up a prophet for you from among your brothers, like me. You shall listen to him in all things whatever he says to you. ²³It will be that every soul that will not listen to that prophet will be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ ²⁴Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days. ²⁵You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘All the families of the earth will be blessed through your offspring.’ ²⁶God, having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to you first to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your wickedness.”

SESSION 2 READING

Acts 4–7 A Bold and Costly Witness · session on page 14

ACTS 4

Boldness Before the Council

¹As they spoke to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came to them, ²being upset because they taught the people and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³They laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was now evening. ⁴But many of those who heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

⁵In the morning, their rulers, elders, and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and as many as were relatives of the high priest. ⁷When they had stood Peter and John in the middle of them, they inquired, “By what power, or in what name, have you done this?”

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “You rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, ⁹if we are examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰may it be known to you all, and to all

the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, this man stands here before you whole in him. ¹¹He is ‘the stone which was regarded as worthless by you, the builders, which has become the head of the corner.’ ¹²There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that is given among men, by which we must be saved!”

¹³Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled. They recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴Seeing the man who was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. ¹⁵But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, ¹⁶saying, “What shall we do to these men? Because indeed a notable miracle has been done through them, as can be plainly seen by all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we can’t deny it. ¹⁷But so that this spreads no further among the people, let’s threaten them, that from now on they don’t speak to anyone in this name.” ¹⁸They called them,

and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves, ²⁰for we can’t help telling the things which we saw and heard.”

²¹When they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people; for everyone glorified God for that which was done. ²²For the man on whom this miracle of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

²³Being let go, they came to their own company and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴When they heard it, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, “O Lord, you are God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them; ²⁵who by the mouth of your servant, David, said,

*‘Why do the nations rage,
and the peoples plot a vain thing?*

*²⁶The kings of the earth take a stand,
and the rulers take council together,
against the Lord, and against his Christ.’*

²⁷“For truly, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together against your holy servant, Jesus, whom you anointed, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your council foreordained to happen. ²⁹Now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy Servant Jesus.”

³¹When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were gathered together. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. ³²The multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul. Not one of them claimed that anything of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. ³³With great power, the apostles gave their testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Great grace was on them all. ³⁴For neither was there

among them any who lacked, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵and laid them at the apostles’ feet, and distribution was made to each, according as anyone had need. ³⁶Joses, who by the apostles was also called Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of Encouragement), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, ³⁷having a field, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

ACTS 5

Purity and Power

¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession, ²and kept back part of the price, his wife also being aware of it, then brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. ³But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land? ⁴While you kept it, didn’t it remain your own? After it was sold, wasn’t it in your power? How is it that you have conceived this thing in your heart? You haven’t lied to men, but to God.”

⁵Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and died. Great fear came on all who heard these things. ⁶The young men arose and wrapped him up, and they carried him out and buried him. ⁷About three hours later, his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. ⁸Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.”

She said, “Yes, for so much.”

⁹But Peter asked her, “How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.”

¹⁰She fell down immediately at his feet and died. The young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband.

¹¹Great fear came on the whole assembly, and on all who heard these things. ¹²By the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. They were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. ¹³None of the rest dared to join them, however the people honored them. ¹⁴More believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both

men and women. ¹⁵They even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mattresses, so that as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might overshadow some of them. ¹⁶The multitude also came together from the cities around Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits: and they were all healed.

¹⁷But the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy ¹⁸and laid hands on the apostles, then put them in public custody. ¹⁹But an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors by night, and brought them out and said, ²⁰“Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”

²¹When they heard this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and taught. But the high priest came, and those who were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²²But the officers who came didn't find them in the prison. They returned and reported, ²³“We found the prison shut and locked, and the guards standing before the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside!”

²⁴Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these words, they were very perplexed about them and what might become of this. ²⁵One came and told them, “Behold, the men whom you put in prison are in the temple, standing and teaching the people.” ²⁶Then the captain went with the officers, and brought them without violence, for they were afraid that the people might stone them.

²⁷When they had brought them, they set them before the council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, “Didn't we strictly command you not to teach in this name? Behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood on us.”

²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you killed, hanging him on a

tree. ³¹God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. ³²We are his witnesses of these things; and so also is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³But they, when they heard this, were cut to the heart, and were determined to kill them. ³⁴But one stood up in the council, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, honored by all the people, and commanded to put the apostles out for a little while. ³⁵He said to them, “You men of Israel, be careful concerning these men, what you are about to do. ³⁶For before these days Theudas rose up, making himself out to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves. He was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were dispersed, and came to nothing. ³⁷After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the enrollment, and drew away some people after him. He also perished, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad. ³⁸Now I tell you, withdraw from these men, and leave them alone. For if this counsel or this work is of men, it will be overthrown. ³⁹But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it, and you would be found even to be fighting against God!”

⁴⁰They agreed with him. Summoning the apostles, they beat them and commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for Jesus' name.

⁴²Every day, in the temple and at home, they never stopped teaching and preaching Jesus, the Christ.

ACTS 6

Servants and the Spread of the Word

¹Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, a complaint arose from the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily service. ²The twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not appropriate for us to forsake the word of God and serve tables. ³Therefore select from among you, brothers, seven men of good report, full

of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. ⁴But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.”

⁵These words pleased the whole multitude. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch; ⁶whom they set before the apostles. When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. ⁷The word of God increased and the number of the disciples greatly multiplied in Jerusalem. A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

⁸Stephen, full of faith and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹But some of those who were of the synagogue called “The Libertines”, and of the Cyrenians, of the Alexandrians, and of those of Cilicia and Asia arose, disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰They weren’t able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. ¹¹Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” ¹²They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and came against him and seized him, then brought him in to the council, ¹³and set up false witnesses who said, “This man never stops speaking blasphemous words against this holy place and the law. ¹⁴For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us.” ¹⁵All who sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face like it was the face of an angel.

ACTS 7

Stephen’s Witness and Death

¹The high priest said, “Are these things so?”

²He said, “Brothers and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³and said to him, ‘Get out of your land and away from your relatives, and come into a land which I will show you.’

⁴Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. From there, when his father was dead, God moved him into this land, where you are now living. ⁵He gave him no inheritance in it, no, not so

much as to set his foot on. He promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his offspring after him, when he still had no child. ⁶God spoke in this way: that his offspring would live as aliens in a strange land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. ⁷‘I will judge the nation to which they will be in bondage,’ said God, ‘and after that they will come out, and serve me in this place.’ ⁸He gave him the covenant of circumcision. So Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day. Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹“The patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt. God was with him, ¹⁰and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

¹¹Now a famine came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction. Our fathers found no food. ¹²But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers the first time. ¹³On the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph’s race was revealed to Pharaoh. ¹⁴Joseph sent and summoned Jacob, his father, and all his relatives, seventy-five souls. ¹⁵Jacob went down into Egypt and he died, himself and our fathers, ¹⁶and they were brought back to Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price in silver from the children of Hamor of Shechem.

¹⁷“But as the time of the promise came close which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, ¹⁸until there arose a different king, who didn’t know Joseph. ¹⁹The same took advantage of our race, and mistreated our fathers, and forced them to throw out their babies, so that they wouldn’t stay alive. ²⁰At that time Moses was born, and was exceedingly handsome. He was nourished three months in his father’s house. ²¹When he was thrown out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him up and reared him as her own son. ²²Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was mighty in his words and works. ²³But when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his

brothers, the children of Israel. ²⁴Seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him who was oppressed, striking the Egyptian. ²⁵He supposed that his brothers understood that God, by his hand, was giving them deliverance; but they didn't understand.

²⁶"The day following, he appeared to them as they fought, and urged them to be at peace again, saying, 'Sirs, you are brothers. Why do you wrong one another?' ²⁷But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?' ²⁸Do you want to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹Moses fled at this saying, and became a stranger in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

³⁰"When forty years were fulfilled, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. ³¹When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight. As he came close to see, a voice of the Lord came to him, ³²'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Moses trembled, and dared not look. ³³The Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you stand is holy ground. ³⁴I have surely seen the affliction of my people that is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning. I have come down to deliver them. Now come, I will send you into Egypt.'

³⁵"This Moses, whom they refused, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'—God has sent him as both a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶This man led them out, having worked wonders and signs in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷This is that Moses, who said to the children of Israel, 'The Lord our God will raise up a prophet for you from among your brothers, like me.' ³⁸This is he who was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received living revelations to give to us, ³⁹to whom our fathers wouldn't be obedient, but rejected him, and turned back in their hearts to Egypt, ⁴⁰saying to Aaron, 'Make us gods that will go before us, for as for this Moses, who led us out of the

land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him.' ⁴¹They made a calf in those days, and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their hands. ⁴²But God turned, and gave them up to serve the army of the sky, as it is written in the book of the prophets,

'Did you offer to me slain animals and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

⁴³You took up the tabernacle of Moloch, the star of your god Rephan, the figures which you made to worship. I will carry you away beyond Babylon.'

⁴⁴"Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, even as he who spoke to Moses commanded him to make it according to the pattern that he had seen; ⁴⁵which also our fathers, in their turn, brought in with Joshua when they entered into the possession of the nations, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, to the days of David, ⁴⁶who found favor in the sight of God, and asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷But Solomon built him a house. ⁴⁸However, the Most High doesn't dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says,

⁴⁹'heaven is my throne, and the earth a footstool for my feet. What kind of house will you build me?' says the Lord.

'Or what is the place of my rest?

⁵⁰Didn't my hand make all these things?'

⁵¹"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit! As your fathers did, so you do. ⁵²Which of the prophets didn't your fathers persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, of whom you have now become betrayers and murderers. ⁵³You received the law as it was ordained by angels, and didn't keep it!"

⁵⁴Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. ⁵⁵But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, ⁵⁶and

said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears, then rushed at him with one accord.

⁵⁸They threw him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses placed their garments at the feet of a

young man named Saul. ⁵⁹They stoned Stephen as he called out, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”

⁶⁰He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, don’t hold this sin against them!” When he had said this, he fell asleep.

SESSION 3 READING

Acts 8–9 The Gospel Breaks Out · session on page 19

ACTS 8

Scattered to Sow

¹Saul was consenting to his death. A great persecution arose against the assembly which was in Jerusalem in that day. They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles. ²Devout men buried Stephen and lamented greatly over him. ³But Saul ravaged the assembly, entering into every house and dragged both men and women off to prison. ⁴Therefore those who were scattered abroad went around preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶The multitudes listened with one accord to the things that were spoken by Philip when they heard and saw the signs which he did. ⁷For unclean spirits came out of many of those who had them. They came out, crying with a loud voice. Many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸There was great joy in that city.

⁹But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who used to practice sorcery in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, making himself out to be some great one, ¹⁰to whom they all listened, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is that great power of God.” ¹¹They listened to him, because for a long time he had amazed them with his sorceries. ¹²But when they believed Philip preaching good news concerning God’s Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Simon himself also believed. Being baptized, he continued with Philip. Seeing signs and great miracles occurring, he was amazed.

¹⁴Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵who, when they had come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit; ¹⁶for as yet he had fallen on none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of Christ Jesus. ¹⁷Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, “Give me also this power, that whomever I lay my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.” ²⁰But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart isn’t right before God. ²²Repent therefore of this, your wickedness, and ask God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are in the poison of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.”

²⁴Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that none of the things which you have spoken happen to me.”

²⁵They therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the Good News to many villages of the Samaritans. ²⁶But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise, and go toward the south to the way that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert.”

²⁷He arose and went; and behold, there was a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸He was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹The Spirit said to Philip, “Go near, and join yourself to this chariot.”

³⁰Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹He said, “How can I, unless someone explains it to me?” He begged Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of the Scripture which he was reading was this,

*“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.
As a lamb before his shearer is silent,
so he doesn’t open his mouth.*

*³³In his humiliation, his judgment was taken away.
Who will declare His generation?
For his life is taken from the earth.”*

³⁴The eunuch answered Philip, “Who is the prophet talking about? About himself, or about someone else?”

³⁵Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached to him about Jesus. ³⁶As they went on the way, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Behold, here is water. What is keeping me from being baptized?”

³⁸He commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, and the eunuch didn’t see him any more, for he went on his way rejoicing.

⁴⁰But Philip was found at Azotus. Passing through, he preached the Good News to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea.

ACTS 9

The Conversion of Saul

¹But Saul, still breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked for letters from him to the

synagogues of Damascus, that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³As he traveled, he got close to Damascus, and suddenly a light from the sky shone around him. ⁴He fell on the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵He said, “Who are you, Lord?”

The Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But rise up and enter into the city, then you will be told what you must do.”

⁷The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the sound, but seeing no one. ⁸Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no one. They led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. ⁹He was without sight for three days, and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

He said, “Behold, it’s me, Lord.”

¹¹The Lord said to him, “Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judah for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus. For behold, he is praying, ¹²and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight.”

¹³But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he did to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴Here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.”

¹⁵But the Lord said to him, “Go your way, for he is my chosen vessel to bear my name before the nations and kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”

¹⁷Ananias departed and entered into the house. Laying his hands on him, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he received his sight. He arose and was baptized. ¹⁹He took food and was strengthened. Saul stayed several

days with the disciples who were at Damascus.

²⁰Immediately in the synagogues he proclaimed the Christ, that he is the Son of God. ²¹All who heard him were amazed, and said, “Isn’t this he who in Jerusalem made havoc of those who called on this name? And he had come here intending to bring them bound before the chief priests!”

²²But Saul increased more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ. ²³When many days were fulfilled, the Jews conspired together to kill him, ²⁴but their plot became known to Saul. They watched the gates both day and night that they might kill him, ²⁵but his disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket. ²⁶When Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸He was with them entering into Jerusalem, ²⁹preaching boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. He spoke and disputed against the Hellenists, but they were seeking to kill him. ³⁰When the brothers knew it, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him off to Tarsus. ³¹So the assemblies throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace, and were built up. They were multiplied, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

³²As Peter went throughout all those parts, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.

³³There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, because he was paralyzed. ³⁴Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed!” Immediately he arose. ³⁵All who lived at Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

³⁶Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which when translated, means Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and acts of mercy which she did. ³⁷In those days, she became sick, and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸As Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. ³⁹Peter got up and went with them. When he had come, they brought him into the upper room. All the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰Peter sent them all out, and knelt down and prayed. Turning to the body, he said, “Tabitha, get up!” She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹He gave her his hand, and raised her up. Calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴²This became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³He stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon.

SESSION 4 READING

Acts 10–12 The Gospel for All Nations · session on page 24

ACTS 10

God Shows No Partiality

¹Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, ²a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house, who gave gifts for the needy generously to the people, and always prayed to God. ³At about the ninth hour of the day, he clearly saw in

a vision an angel of God coming to him, and saying to him, “Cornelius!”

⁴He, fastening his eyes on him, and being frightened, said, “What is it, Lord?”

He said to him, “Your prayers and your gifts to the needy have gone up for a memorial before God.

⁵Now send men to Joppa, and get Simon, who is also

called Peter. ⁶He is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the seaside.

⁷When the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier of those who waited on him continually. ⁸Having explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. ⁹Now on the next day as they were on their journey, and got close to the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray at about noon. ¹⁰He became hungry and desired to eat, but while they were preparing, he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw heaven opened and a certain container descending to him, like a great sheet let down by four corners on the earth, ¹²in which were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild animals, reptiles, and birds of the sky. ¹³A voice came to him, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat!”

¹⁴But Peter said, “Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”

¹⁵A voice came to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed, you must not call unclean.”

¹⁶This was done three times, and immediately the vessel was received up into heaven. ¹⁷Now while Peter was very perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon’s house, stood before the gate, ¹⁸and called and asked whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was lodging there. ¹⁹While Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men seek you. ²⁰But arise, get down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.”

²¹Peter went down to the men, and said, “Behold, I am he whom you seek. Why have you come?”

²²They said, “Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man and one who fears God, and well spoken of by all the nation of the Jews, was directed by a holy angel to invite you to his house, and to listen to what you say.” ²³So he called them in and provided a place to stay. On the next day Peter arose and went out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴On the next day they entered into Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his relatives and his near

friends. ²⁵When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, fell down at his feet, and worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter raised him up, saying, “Stand up! I myself am also a man.” ²⁷As he talked with him, he went in and found many gathered together. ²⁸He said to them, “You yourselves know how it is an unlawful thing for a man who is a Jew to join himself or come to one of another nation, but God has shown me that I shouldn’t call any man unholy or unclean.

²⁹Therefore I also came without complaint when I was sent for. I ask therefore, why did you send for me?”

³⁰Cornelius said, “Four days ago, I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour, I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, ³¹and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer is heard, and your gifts to the needy are remembered in the sight of God. ³²Send therefore to Joppa, and summon Simon, who is also called Peter. He is staying in the house of a tanner named Simon, by the seaside. When he comes, he will speak to you.’ ³³Therefore I sent to you at once, and it was good of you to come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God to hear all things that have been commanded you by God.”

³⁴Peter opened his mouth and said, “Truly I perceive that God doesn’t show favoritism; ³⁵but in every nation he who fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him. ³⁶The word which he sent to the children of Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all — ³⁷you yourselves know what happened, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; ³⁸even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses of everything he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they also killed, hanging him on a tree. ⁴⁰God raised him up the third day, and gave him to be revealed, ⁴¹not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen before by God, to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the

dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that this is he who is appointed by God as the Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him, that through his name everyone who believes in him will receive remission of sins.”

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word.

⁴⁵They of the circumcision who believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was also poured out on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in other languages and magnifying God.

Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷“Can anyone forbid these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just like us.” ⁴⁸He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay some days.

ACTS 11

The Church at Antioch

¹Now the apostles and the brothers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ²When Peter had come up to Jerusalem, those who were of the circumcision contended with him, ³saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men, and ate with them!”

⁴But Peter began, and explained to them in order, saying, ⁵“I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision: a certain container descending, like it was a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners. It came as far as me. ⁶When I had looked intently at it, I considered, and saw the four-footed animals of the earth, wild animals, creeping things, and birds of the sky. ⁷I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter, kill and eat!’ ⁸But I said, ‘Not so, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered into my mouth.’ ⁹But a voice answered me the second time out of heaven, ‘What God has cleansed, don’t you call unclean.’ ¹⁰This was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹Behold, immediately three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent from Caesarea to me. ¹²The Spirit told me to go with them, without

discriminating. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered into the man’s house. ¹³He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying to him, ‘Send to Joppa, and get Simon, who is called Peter, ¹⁴who will speak to you words by which you will be saved, you and all your house.’ ¹⁵As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John indeed baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷If then God gave to them the same gift as us, when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?”

¹⁸When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life!”

¹⁹They therefore who were scattered abroad by the oppression that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews only. ²⁰But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. ²²The report concerning them came to the ears of the assembly which was in Jerusalem. They sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch, ²³who, when he had come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad. He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should remain near to the Lord. ²⁴For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, and many people were added to the Lord.

²⁵Barnabas went out to Tarsus to look for Saul.

²⁶When he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they were gathered together with the assembly, and taught many people. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

²⁷Now in these days, prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up, and indicated by the Spirit that there should be a great famine all over the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius. ²⁹As any of the disciples had plenty, each determined to send relief

to the brothers who lived in Judea; ³⁰which they also did, sending it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

ACTS 12

Chains and Deliverance

¹Now about that time, King Herod stretched out his hands to oppress some of the assembly. ²He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. ³When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This was during the days of unleavened bread. ⁴When he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of four soldiers each to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. ⁵Peter therefore was kept in the prison, but constant prayer was made by the assembly to God for him. ⁶The same night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains. Guards in front of the door kept the prison.

⁷And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side, and woke him up, saying, “Stand up quickly!” His chains fell off his hands. ⁸The angel said to him, “Get dressed and put on your sandals.” He did so. He said to him, “Put on your cloak and follow me.” ⁹And he went out and followed him. He didn’t know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he saw a vision. ¹⁰When they were past the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened to them by itself. They went out, and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

¹¹When Peter had come to himself, he said, “Now I truly know that the Lord has sent out his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from everything the Jewish people were expecting.”

¹²Thinking about that, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

¹³When Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter’s voice, she didn’t open the gate for joy, but ran in, and reported that Peter was standing in front of the gate.

¹⁵They said to her, “You are crazy!” But she insisted that it was so. They said, “It is his angel.” ¹⁶But Peter continued knocking. When they had opened, they saw him, and were amazed. ¹⁷But he, beckoning to them with his hand to be silent, declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. He said, “Tell these things to James and to the brothers.” Then he departed and went to another place.

¹⁸Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.

¹⁹When Herod had sought for him, and didn’t find him, he examined the guards, then commanded that they should be put to death. He went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there. ²⁰Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. They came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus, the king’s personal aide, their friend, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king’s country for food. ²¹On an appointed day, Herod dressed himself in royal clothing, sat on the throne, and gave a speech to them. ²²The people shouted, “The voice of a god, and not of a man!”

²³Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he didn’t give God the glory. Then he was eaten by worms and died.

²⁴But the word of God grew and multiplied.

²⁵Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their service, also taking with them John who was called Mark.

SESSION 5 READING

Acts 13–15 Sent to the Nations · session on page 29**ACTS 13**

Sent Out from Antioch

¹Now in the assembly that was at Antioch there were some prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²As they served the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Separate Barnabas and Saul for me, for the work to which I have called them.”

³Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. ⁴So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia. From there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵When they were at Salamis, they proclaimed God’s word in the Jewish synagogues. They also had John as their attendant. ⁶When they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar Jesus, ⁷who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, ¹⁰and said, “You son of the devil, full of all deceit and all cunning, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is on you, and you will be blind, not seeing the sun for a season!”

Immediately a mist and darkness fell on him. He went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

¹³Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John departed from them and returned to Jerusalem. ¹⁴But they, passing

on from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia. They went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, speak.”

¹⁶Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen. ¹⁷The God of this people chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they stayed as aliens in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm, he led them out of it. ¹⁸For a period of about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. ¹⁹When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land for an inheritance for about four hundred fifty years. ²⁰After these things, he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹Afterward they asked for a king, and God gave to them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²²When he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, to whom he also testified, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ ²³From this man’s offspring, God has brought salvation to Israel according to his promise, ²⁴before his coming, when John had first preached the baptism of repentance to Israel. ²⁵As John was fulfilling his course, he said, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. But behold, one comes after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’ ²⁶Brothers, children of the stock of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, the word of this salvation is sent out to you. ²⁷For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they didn’t know him, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. ²⁸Though they found no cause for death, they still asked Pilate to have him killed. ²⁹When they had fulfilled all things that were written about him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb.

³⁰But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and he was seen for many days by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people. ³²We bring you good news of the promise made to the fathers, ³³that God has fulfilled this to us, their children, in that he raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second psalm,

‘You are my Son.

Today I have become your father.’

³⁴“Concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he has spoken thus: ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’ ³⁵Therefore he says also in another psalm, ‘You will not allow your Holy One to see decay.’ ³⁶For David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell asleep, was laid with his fathers, and saw decay. ³⁷But he whom God raised up saw no decay. ³⁸Be it known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man is proclaimed to you remission of sins, ³⁹and by him everyone who believes is justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Beware therefore, lest that come on you which is spoken in the prophets:

⁴¹‘Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which you will in no way believe, if one declares it to you.’ ”

⁴²So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. ⁴³Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴The next Sabbath, almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God. ⁴⁵But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.

⁴⁶Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, and said, “It was necessary that God’s word should be spoken to you first. Since indeed you thrust it from yourselves, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life,

behold, we turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷For so has the Lord commanded us, saying,

‘I have set you as a light for the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.’ ”

⁴⁸As the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God. As many as were appointed to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹The Lord’s word was spread abroad throughout all the region. ⁵⁰But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and threw them out of their borders. ⁵¹But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium. ⁵²The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 14

Through Suffering into the Kingdom

¹In Iconium, they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed. ²But the disbelieving Jews stirred up and embittered the souls of the Gentiles against the brothers. ³Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who testified to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴But the multitude of the city was divided. Part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. ⁵When some of both the Gentiles and the Jews, with their rulers, made a violent attempt to mistreat and stone them, ⁶they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra, Derbe, and the surrounding region. ⁷There they preached the Good News.

⁸At Lystra a certain man sat, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked. ⁹He was listening to Paul speaking, who, fastening eyes on him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole, ¹⁰said with a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet!” He leaped up and walked. ¹¹When the multitude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying in the language of Lycaonia, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” ¹²They called Barnabas “Jupiter”,

and Paul “Mercury”, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³The priest of Jupiter, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and would have made a sacrifice along with the multitudes. ¹⁴But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their clothes, and sprang into the multitude, crying out, ¹⁵“Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to the living God, who made the sky, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them; ¹⁶who in the generations gone by allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷Yet he didn’t leave himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you rains from the sky and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

¹⁸Even saying these things, they hardly stopped the multitudes from making a sacrifice to them. ¹⁹But some Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there, and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

²⁰But as the disciples stood around him, he rose up, and entered into the city. On the next day he went out with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹When they had preached the Good News to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many afflictions we must enter into God’s Kingdom. ²³When they had appointed elders for them in every assembly, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed.

²⁴They passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶From there they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. ²⁷When they had arrived, and had gathered the assembly together, they reported all the things that God had done with them, and that he had

opened a door of faith to the nations. ²⁸They stayed there with the disciples for a long time.

ACTS 15

The Jerusalem Council

¹Some men came down from Judea and taught the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised after the custom of Moses, you can’t be saved.” ²Therefore when Paul and Barnabas had no small discord and discussion with them, they appointed Paul and Barnabas, and some others of them, to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. ³They, being sent on their way by the assembly, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles. They caused great joy to all the brothers. ⁴When they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the assembly and the apostles and the elders, and they reported everything that God had done with them.

⁵But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

⁶The apostles and the elders were gathered together to see about this matter. ⁷When there had been much discussion, Peter rose up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that a good while ago God made a choice among you that by my mouth the nations should hear the word of the Good News and believe. ⁸God, who knows the heart, testified about them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just like he did to us. ⁹He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now therefore why do you tempt God, that you should put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are.”

¹²All the multitude kept silence, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul reporting what signs and wonders God had done among the nations through them. ¹³After they were silent, James answered, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simeon has reported how

God first visited the nations to take out of them a people for his name. ¹⁵This agrees with the words of the prophets. As it is written,

¹⁶*‘After these things I will return.*

I will again build the tabernacle of David, which has fallen.

I will again build its ruins.

I will set it up ¹⁷that the rest of men may seek after the Lord;

all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who does all these things.’

¹⁸“All of God’s works are known to him from eternity. ¹⁹Therefore my judgment is that we don’t trouble those from among the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰but that we write to them that they abstain from the pollution of idols, from sexual immorality, from what is strangled, and from blood. ²¹For Moses from generations of old has in every city those who preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

²²Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole assembly, to choose men out of their company, and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brothers. ²³They wrote these things by their hand:

“The apostles, the elders, and the brothers, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: greetings. ²⁴Because we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, ‘You must be circumcised and keep the law,’ to whom we gave no commandment; ²⁵it seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶men who

have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves will also tell you the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay no greater burden on you than these necessary things: ²⁹that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality, from which if you keep yourselves, it will be well with you. Farewell.”

³⁰So, when they were sent off, they came to Antioch. Having gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. ³¹When they had read it, they rejoiced over the encouragement. ³²Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged the brothers with many words and strengthened them. ³³After they had spent some time there, they were sent back with greetings from the brothers to the apostles. ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

³⁶After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s return now and visit our brothers in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, to see how they are doing.” ³⁷Barnabas planned to take John, who was called Mark, with them also. ³⁸But Paul didn’t think that it was a good idea to take with them someone who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia, and didn’t go with them to do the work. ³⁹Then the contention grew so sharp that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and went out, being commended by the brothers to the grace of God. ⁴¹He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the assemblies.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

The verse numbers in this text skip 8:37, 15:34 and 24:6b–8a. Those words are in some later manuscripts but not in the earliest ones, so the World English Bible leaves them out, as most modern Bibles do. Some Bibles, such as the King James Version, include them. The best known is 8:37, where the Ethiopian confesses his faith before he is baptized. The WEB keeps 28:29, which the earliest manuscripts lack.

SESSION 6 READING

Acts 16–18 The Gospel Enters Europe · session on page 34**ACTS 16**

Doors Open in Macedonia

¹He came to Derbe and Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewess who believed; but his father was a Greek.

²The brothers who were at Lystra and Iconium gave a good testimony about him. ³Paul wanted to have him go out with him, and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts; for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered the decrees to them to keep which had been ordained by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem. ⁵So the assemblies were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

⁶When they had gone through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷When they had come opposite Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit didn't allow them. ⁸Passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹A vision appeared to Paul in the night. There was a man of Macedonia standing, begging him, and saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go out to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the Good News to them. ¹¹Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis; ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the foremost of the district, a Roman colony. We were staying some days in this city.

¹³On the Sabbath day we went outside of the city by a riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one who worshiped God, heard us. The Lord opened her heart to listen to the things which were spoken by

Paul. ¹⁵When she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

¹⁶As we were going to prayer, a certain girl having a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much gain by fortune telling. ¹⁷Following Paul and us, she cried out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us a way of salvation!" ¹⁸She was doing this for many days.

But Paul, becoming greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" It came out that very hour. ¹⁹But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰When they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men, being Jews, are agitating our city ²¹and advocate customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."

²²The multitude rose up together against them and the magistrates tore their clothes from them, then commanded them to be beaten with rods. ²³When they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely, ²⁴who, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and secured their feet in the stocks.

²⁵But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were loosened. ²⁷The jailer, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

²⁸But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, “Don’t harm yourself, for we are all here!”

²⁹He called for lights, sprang in, fell down trembling before Paul and Silas, ³⁰brought them out, and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” ³²They spoke the word of the Lord to him, and to all who were in his house.

³³He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and was immediately baptized, he and all his household. ³⁴He brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his household, having believed in God.

³⁵But when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, “Let those men go.”

³⁶The jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore come out and go in peace.”

³⁷But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us publicly without a trial, men who are Romans, and have cast us into prison! Do they now release us secretly? No, most certainly, but let them come themselves and bring us out!”

³⁸The sergeants reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, ³⁹and they came and begged them. When they had brought them out, they asked them to depart from the city. ⁴⁰They went out of the prison, and entered into Lydia’s house. When they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them, then departed.

ACTS 17

Reasoning in the Marketplace

¹Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²Paul, as was his custom, went in to them, and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

⁴Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and not a few of the chief women. ⁵But the unpersuaded Jews took along some wicked men from the marketplace, and gathering a crowd, set the city in an uproar. Assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them out to the people. ⁶When they didn’t find them, they dragged Jason and certain brothers before the rulers of the city, crying, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here also, ⁷whom Jason has received. These all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus!” ⁸The multitude and the rulers of the city were troubled when they heard these things. ⁹When they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. ¹⁰The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea. When they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue.

¹¹Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. ¹²Many of them therefore believed; also of the prominent Greek women, and not a few men. ¹³But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Beroea also, they came there likewise, agitating the multitudes. ¹⁴Then the brothers immediately sent out Paul to go as far as to the sea, and Silas and Timothy still stayed there.

¹⁵But those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens. Receiving a commandment to Silas and Timothy that they should come to him very quickly, they departed.

¹⁶Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the city full of idols. ¹⁷So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who met him. ¹⁸Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also were conversing with him. Some said, “What does this babbling want to say?”

Others said, “He seems to be advocating foreign deities,” because he preached Jesus and the resurrection.

¹⁹They took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is, which you are speaking about?” ²⁰For you bring certain strange things to our ears. We want to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹Now all the Athenians and the strangers living there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

²²Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus, and said, “You men of Athens, I perceive that you are very religious in all things. ²³For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription: ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ What therefore you worship in ignorance, I announce to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and all things in it, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, doesn’t dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵He isn’t served by men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself gives to all life and breath, and all things. ²⁶He made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth, having determined appointed seasons, and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷that they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸‘For in him we live, move, and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also his offspring.’ ²⁹Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold, or silver, or stone, engraved by art and design of man. ³⁰The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked. But now he commands that all people everywhere should repent, ³¹because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained; of which he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead.”

³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, “We want to hear you again concerning this.”

³³Thus Paul went out from among them. ³⁴But certain men joined with him and believed, among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

ACTS 18

Establishing the Church in Corinth

¹After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. ²He found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, who had recently come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. He came to them, ³and because he practiced the same trade, he lived with them and worked, for by trade they were tent makers. ⁴He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded Jews and Greeks. ⁵But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

⁶When they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook out his clothing and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on, I will go to the Gentiles!”

⁷He departed there, and went into the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

⁸Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house. Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized. ⁹The Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, “Don’t be afraid, but speak and don’t be silent; ¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many people in this city.”

¹¹He lived there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. ¹²But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, ¹³saying, “This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”

¹⁴But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If indeed it were a matter of wrong or of wicked crime, you Jews, it would be reasonable that I should bear with you; ¹⁵but if they are questions about words and names and your own

law, look to it yourselves. For I don't want to be a judge of these matters." ¹⁶So he drove them from the judgment seat.

¹⁷Then all the Greeks seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. Gallio didn't care about any of these things.

¹⁸Paul, having stayed after this many more days, took his leave of the brothers, and sailed from there for Syria, together with Priscilla and Aquila. He shaved his head in Cenchreae, for he had a vow. ¹⁹He came to Ephesus, and he left them there; but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to stay with them a longer time, he declined; ²¹but taking his leave of them, he said, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem, but I will return again to you if God wills." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

²²When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the assembly, and went down to Antioch.

²³Having spent some time there, he departed, and went through the region of Galatia, and Phrygia, in order, establishing all the disciples. ²⁴Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus. He was mighty in the Scriptures. ²⁵This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside, and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

²⁷When he had determined to pass over into Achaia, the brothers encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him. When he had come, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; ²⁸for he powerfully refuted the Jews, publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

SESSION 7 READING

Acts 19–22 Power, Farewell, and the Road to Jerusalem · session on page 39

ACTS 19

Power in Ephesus

¹While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus and found certain disciples. ²He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They said to him, "No, we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³He said, "Into what then were you baptized?"

They said, "Into John's baptism."

⁴Paul said, "John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus."

⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke with other languages and prophesied.

⁷They were about twelve men in all. ⁸He entered into the synagogue and spoke boldly for a period of three

months, reasoning and persuading about the things concerning God's Kingdom.

⁹But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This continued for two years, so that all those who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

¹¹God worked special miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out. ¹³But some of the itinerant Jews, exorcists, took on themselves to invoke over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." ¹⁴There were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did this.

¹⁵The evil spirit answered, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?” ¹⁶The man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived at Ephesus. Fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. ¹⁸Many also of those who had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds. ¹⁹Many of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. They counted their price, and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰So the word of the Lord was growing and becoming mighty.

²¹Now after these things had ended, Paul determined in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

²²Having sent into Macedonia two of those who served him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. ²³About that time there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen, ²⁵whom he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, “Sirs, you know that by this business we have our wealth. ²⁶You see and hear that not at Ephesus alone, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are no gods that are made with hands. ²⁷Not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be counted as nothing and her majesty destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worships.”

²⁸When they heard this they were filled with anger, and cried out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹The whole city was filled with confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel. ³⁰When Paul wanted to enter in to the people, the disciples didn’t

allow him. ³¹Certain also of the Asiarchs, being his friends, sent to him and begged him not to venture into the theater. ³²Some therefore cried one thing, and some another, for the assembly was in confusion. Most of them didn’t know why they had come together. ³³They brought Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. Alexander beckoned with his hand, and would have made a defense to the people. ³⁴But when they perceived that he was a Jew, all with one voice for a time of about two hours cried out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

³⁵When the town clerk had quieted the multitude, he said, “You men of Ephesus, what man is there who doesn’t know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great goddess Artemis, and of the image which fell down from Zeus? ³⁶Seeing then that these things can’t be denied, you ought to be quiet and to do nothing rash. ³⁷For you have brought these men here, who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. ³⁸If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a matter against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them press charges against one another. ³⁹But if you seek anything about other matters, it will be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰For indeed we are in danger of being accused concerning today’s riot, there being no cause. Concerning it, we wouldn’t be able to give an account of this commotion.” ⁴¹When he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

ACTS 20

A Shepherd’s Farewell

¹After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, took leave of them, and departed to go into Macedonia. ²When he had gone through those parts, and had encouraged them with many words, he came into Greece. ³When he had spent three months there, and a plot was made against him by Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia. ⁴These accompanied him as far as Asia: Sopater of Beroea; Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians; Gaius of Derbe;

Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. ⁵But these had gone ahead, and were waiting for us at Troas. ⁶We sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas in five days, where we stayed seven days.

⁷On the first day of the week, when the disciples were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and continued his speech until midnight. ⁸There were many lights in the upper room where we were gathered together. ⁹A certain young man named Eutychus sat in the window, weighed down with deep sleep. As Paul spoke still longer, being weighed down by his sleep, he fell down from the third floor and was taken up dead. ¹⁰Paul went down and fell upon him, and embracing him said, “Don’t be troubled, for his life is in him.”

¹¹When he had gone up, and had broken bread and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even until break of day, he departed. ¹²They brought the boy in alive, and were greatly comforted.

¹³But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there; for he had so arranged, intending himself to go by land. ¹⁴When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard, and came to Mitylene. ¹⁵Sailing from there, we came the following day opposite Chios. The next day we touched at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium, and the day after we came to Miletus. ¹⁶For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening, if it were possible for him, to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

¹⁷From Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to himself the elders of the assembly. ¹⁸When they had come to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time, ¹⁹serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears, and with trials which happened to me by the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I didn’t shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus. ²²Now, behold, I go bound by the Spirit to

Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there; ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions wait for me.

²⁴But these things don’t count; nor do I hold my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify to the Good News of the grace of God.

²⁵“Now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I went about preaching God’s Kingdom, will see my face no more. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you today that I am clean from the blood of all men, ²⁷for I didn’t shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood. ²⁹For I know that after my departure, vicious wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Men will arise from among your own selves, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

³¹Therefore watch, remembering that for a period of three years I didn’t cease to admonish everyone night and day with tears. ³²Now, brothers, I entrust you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build up, and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I coveted no one’s silver, gold, or clothing. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands served my necessities, and those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring you ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

³⁶When he had spoken these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷They all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, ³⁸sorrowing most of all because of the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

ACTS 21

Resolved for Jerusalem

¹When we had departed from them and had set sail, we came with a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ²Having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard, and set sail. ³When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left hand, we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for the ship was there to unload her cargo. ⁴Having found disciples, we stayed there seven days. These said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem. ⁵When those days were over, we departed and went on our journey. They all, with wives and children, brought us on our way until we were out of the city. Kneeling down on the beach, we prayed. ⁶After saying goodbye to each other, we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.

⁷When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais. We greeted the brothers and stayed with them one day. ⁸On the next day, we who were Paul's companions departed, and came to Caesarea.

We entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

⁹Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. ¹⁰As we stayed there some days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹Coming to us and taking Paul's belt, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, "The Holy Spirit says: 'So the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt, and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

¹²When we heard these things, both we and the people of that place begged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

¹⁴When he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The Lord's will be done."

¹⁵After these days we took up our baggage and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some of the disciples from

Caesarea also went with us, bringing one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we would stay.

¹⁷When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸The day following, Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present.

¹⁹When he had greeted them, he reported one by one the things which God had worked among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰They, when they heard it, glorified God. They said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law. ²¹They have been informed about you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children and not to walk after the customs. ²²What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.

²³Therefore do what we tell you. We have four men who have taken a vow. ²⁴Take them and purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses for them, that they may shave their heads. Then all will know that there is no truth in the things that they have been informed about you, but that you yourself also walk keeping the law. ²⁵But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written our decision that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from food offered to idols, from blood, from strangled things, and from sexual immorality."

²⁶Then Paul took the men, and the next day purified himself and went with them into the temple, declaring the fulfillment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them.

²⁷When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and laid hands on him, ²⁸crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place. Moreover, he also brought Greeks into the temple, and has defiled this holy place!" ²⁹For they had seen Trophimus, the Ephesian, with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

³⁰All the city was moved and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple. Immediately the doors were shut. ³¹As they were trying to kill him, news came up to the commanding officer of the regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³²Immediately he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. They, when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, stopped beating Paul. ³³Then the commanding officer came near, arrested him, commanded him to be bound with two chains, and inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴Some shouted one thing, and some another, among the crowd. When he couldn't find out the truth because of the noise, he commanded him to be brought into the barracks.

³⁵When he came to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd; ³⁶for the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!" ³⁷As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he asked the commanding officer, "May I speak to you?"

He said, "Do you know Greek? ³⁸Aren't you then the Egyptian, who before these days stirred up to sedition and led out into the wilderness the four thousand men of the Assassins?"

³⁹But Paul said, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city. I beg you, allow me to speak to the people."

⁴⁰When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with his hand to the people. When there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,

ACTS 22

Paul Tells His Story

¹"Brothers and fathers, listen to the defense which I now make to you."

²When they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they were even more quiet. He said, ³"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict tradition of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as you all are today. ⁴I persecuted this Way to the death,

binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. ⁵As also the high priest and all the council of the elders testify, from whom also I received letters to the brothers, and traveled to Damascus to bring them also who were there to Jerusalem in bonds to be punished. ⁶As I made my journey, and came close to Damascus, about noon, suddenly a great light shone around me from the sky. ⁷I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' ⁸I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute.'

⁹"Those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they didn't understand the voice of him who spoke to me. ¹⁰I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' The Lord said to me, 'Arise, and go into Damascus. There you will be told about all things which are appointed for you to do.' ¹¹When I couldn't see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

¹²One Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews who lived in Damascus, ¹³came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' In that very hour I looked up at him. ¹⁴He said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. ¹⁵For you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶Now why do you wait? Arise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

¹⁷"When I had returned to Jerusalem, and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance, ¹⁸and saw him saying to me, 'Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not receive testimony concerning me from you.' ¹⁹I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue those who believed in you. ²⁰When the blood of Stephen, your witness, was shed, I also was standing by, consenting to his death, and guarding the cloaks of those who killed him.'

²¹"He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you out far from here to the Gentiles.'"

²²They listened to him until he said that; then they lifted up their voice and said, “Rid the earth of this fellow, for he isn’t fit to live!”

²³As they cried out, threw off their cloaks, and threw dust into the air, ²⁴the commanding officer commanded him to be brought into the barracks, ordering him to be examined by scourging, that he might know for what crime they shouted against him like that. ²⁵When they had tied him up with thongs, Paul asked the centurion who stood by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and not found guilty?”

²⁶When the centurion heard it, he went to the commanding officer and told him, “Watch what you are about to do, for this man is a Roman!”

²⁷The commanding officer came and asked him, “Tell me, are you a Roman?”

He said, “Yes.”

²⁸The commanding officer answered, “I bought my citizenship for a great price.”

Paul said, “But I was born a Roman.”

²⁹Immediately those who were about to examine him departed from him, and the commanding officer also was afraid when he realized that he was a Roman, because he had bound him. ³⁰But on the next day, desiring to know the truth about why he was accused by the Jews, he freed him from the bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all the council to come together, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

SESSION 8 READING

Acts 23–28 Witness to the Ends of the Earth · session on page 44

ACTS 23

Plots and Protection

¹Paul, looking steadfastly at the council, said, “Brothers, I have lived before God in all good conscience until today.”

²The high priest, Ananias, commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

³Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to judge me according to the law, and command me to be struck contrary to the law?”

⁴Those who stood by said, “Do you malign God’s high priest?”

⁵Paul said, “I didn’t know, brothers, that he was high priest. For it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’” ⁶But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Men and brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. Concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!”

⁷When he had said this, an argument arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the crowd was divided. ⁸For the Sadducees say that

there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess all of these. ⁹A great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees’ part stood up, and contended, saying, “We find no evil in this man. But if a spirit or angel has spoken to him, let’s not fight against God!”

¹⁰When a great argument arose, the commanding officer, fearing that Paul would be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

¹¹The following night, the Lord stood by him and said, “Cheer up, Paul, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must testify also at Rome.”

¹²When it was day, some of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³There were more than forty people who had made this conspiracy. ¹⁴They came to the chief priests and the elders, and said, “We have bound ourselves under a great curse to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵Now therefore, you with the council inform the commanding officer that he should bring him down to you tomorrow, as

though you were going to judge his case more exactly. We are ready to kill him before he comes near.”

¹⁶But Paul’s sister’s son heard they were lying in wait, and he came and entered into the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷Paul summoned one of the centurions, and said, “Bring this young man to the commanding officer, for he has something to tell him.”

¹⁸So he took him, and brought him to the commanding officer, and said, “Paul, the prisoner, summoned me and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to tell you.”

¹⁹The commanding officer took him by the hand, and going aside, asked him privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?”

²⁰He said, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though intending to inquire somewhat more accurately concerning him. ²¹Therefore don’t yield to them, for more than forty men lie in wait for him, who have bound themselves under a curse to neither eat nor drink until they have killed him. Now they are ready, looking for the promise from you.”

²²So the commanding officer let the young man go, charging him, “Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me.” ²³He called to himself two of the centurions, and said, “Prepare two hundred soldiers to go as far as Caesarea, with seventy horsemen, and two hundred men armed with spears, at the third hour of the night.” ²⁴He asked them to provide animals, that they might set Paul on one, and bring him safely to Felix the governor. ²⁵He wrote a letter like this:

²⁶“Claudius Lysias to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

²⁷“This man was seized by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them, when I came with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. ²⁸Desiring to know the cause why they accused him, I brought him down to their council. ²⁹I found him to be accused about questions of their law, but not to be charged with anything worthy of death or of imprisonment. ³⁰When I was told that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him to you

immediately, charging his accusers also to bring their accusations against him before you. Farewell.”

³¹So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³²But on the next day they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the barracks. ³³When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. ³⁴When the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. When he understood that he was from Cilicia, he said, ³⁵“I will hear you fully when your accusers also arrive.” He commanded that he be kept in Herod’s palace.

ACTS 24

On Trial Before Felix

¹After five days, the high priest, Ananias, came down with certain elders and an orator, one Tertullus. They informed the governor against Paul. ²When he was called, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, “Seeing that by you we enjoy much peace, and that prosperity is coming to this nation by your foresight, ³we accept it in all ways and in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. ⁴But that I don’t delay you, I entreat you to bear with us and hear a few words. ⁵For we have found this man to be a plague, an instigator of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. ⁶He even tried to profane the temple, and we arrested him. ⁸By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him.”

⁹The Jews also joined in the attack, affirming that these things were so. ¹⁰When the governor had beckoned to him to speak, Paul answered, “Because I know that you have been a judge of this nation for many years, I cheerfully make my defense, ¹¹seeing that you can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem. ¹²In the temple they didn’t find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the synagogues, or in the city. ¹³Nor can they prove to you the things of which they now accuse me. ¹⁴But this I confess to you, that after the Way, which they call a sect, so I

serve the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; ¹⁵having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. ¹⁶In this I also practice always having a conscience void of offense toward God and men. ¹⁷Now after some years, I came to bring gifts for the needy to my nation, and offerings; ¹⁸amid which certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, not with a mob, nor with turmoil. ¹⁹They ought to have been here before you, and to make accusation, if they had anything against me. ²⁰Or else let these men themselves say what injustice they found in me when I stood before the council, ²¹unless it is for this one thing that I cried standing among them, ‘Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged before you today!’ ”

²²But Felix, having more exact knowledge concerning the Way, deferred them, saying, “When Lysias, the commanding officer, comes down, I will decide your case.” ²³He ordered the centurion that Paul should be kept in custody, and should have some privileges, and not to forbid any of his friends to serve him or to visit him. ²⁴But after some days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵As he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, “Go your way for this time, and when it is convenient for me, I will summon you.” ²⁶Meanwhile, he also hoped that money would be given to him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore also he sent for him more often and talked with him. ²⁷But when two years were fulfilled, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds.

ACTS 25

I Appeal to Caesar

¹Festus therefore, having come into the province, after three days went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ²Then the high priest and the principal men of the

Jews informed him against Paul, and they begged him, ³asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem; plotting to kill him on the way. ⁴However Festus answered that Paul should be kept in custody at Caesarea, and that he himself was about to depart shortly. ⁵“Let them therefore”, he said, “that are in power among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong in the man, let them accuse him.”

⁶When he had stayed among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he sat on the judgment seat, and commanded Paul to be brought. ⁷When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing against him many and grievous charges which they could not prove, ⁸while he said in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar, have I sinned at all.”

⁹But Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, answered Paul and said, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem, and be judged by me there concerning these things?”

¹⁰But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also know very well.

¹¹For if I have done wrong and have committed anything worthy of death, I don’t refuse to die; but if none of those things is true that they accuse me of, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar!”

¹²Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you shall go.”

¹³Now when some days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea, and greeted Festus.

¹⁴As he stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix; ¹⁵about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, asking for a sentence against him.

¹⁶I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to give up any man to destruction before the accused has met the accusers face to face and has had opportunity to make his defense concerning the

matter laid against him. ¹⁷When therefore they had come together here, I didn't delay, but on the next day sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought. ¹⁸When the accusers stood up, they brought no charges against him of such things as I supposed; ¹⁹but had certain questions against him about their own religion, and about one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

²⁰Being perplexed how to inquire concerning these things, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. ²¹But when Paul had appealed to be kept for the decision of the emperor, I commanded him to be kept until I could send him to Caesar."

²²Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself."

"Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

²³So on the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and they had entered into the place of hearing with the commanding officers and the principal men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. ²⁴Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom all the multitude of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and as he himself appealed to the emperor I determined to send him, ²⁶of whom I have no certain thing to write to my lord. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, that, after examination, I may have something to write. ²⁷For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to also specify the charges against him."

ACTS 26

Before King Agrippa

¹Agrippa said to Paul, "You may speak for yourself."

Then Paul stretched out his hand, and made his defense. ²"I think myself happy, King Agrippa, that I am to make my defense before you today concerning all the things that I am accused by the Jews,

³especially because you are expert in all customs and

questions which are among the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently.

⁴"Indeed, all the Jews know my way of life from my youth up, which was from the beginning among my own nation and at Jerusalem; ⁵having known me from the first, if they are willing to testify, that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

⁶Now I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷which our twelve tribes, earnestly serving night and day, hope to attain. Concerning this hope I am accused by the Jews, King Agrippa! ⁸Why is it judged incredible with you, if God does raise the dead?

⁹"I myself most certainly thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰I also did this in Jerusalem. I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. ¹¹Punishing them often in all the synagogues, I tried to make them blaspheme. Being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

¹²"Whereupon as I traveled to Damascus with the authority and commission from the chief priests, ¹³at noon, O king, I saw on the way a light from the sky, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who traveled with me. ¹⁴When we had all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

¹⁵"I said, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

¹⁶But arise, and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose: to appoint you a servant and a witness both of the things which you have seen, and of the things which I will reveal to you; ¹⁷delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you, ¹⁸to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

¹⁹"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to them of

Damascus, at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance. ²¹For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen, ²³how the Christ must suffer, and how, by the resurrection of the dead, he would be first to proclaim light both to these people and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴As he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are crazy! Your great learning is driving you insane!”

²⁵But he said, “I am not crazy, most excellent Festus, but boldly declare words of truth and reasonableness. ²⁶For the king knows of these things, to whom also I speak freely. For I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him, for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.”

²⁸Agrippa said to Paul, “With a little persuasion are you trying to make me a Christian?”

²⁹Paul said, “I pray to God, that whether with little or with much, not only you, but also all that hear me today, might become such as I am, except for these bonds.”

³⁰The king rose up with the governor, and Bernice, and those who sat with them. ³¹When they had withdrawn, they spoke to one another, saying, “This man does nothing worthy of death or of bonds.”

³²Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

ACTS 27

Storm and Shipwreck

¹When it was determined that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan band.

²Embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea, Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. ³The next day, we touched at Sidon.

Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him permission to go to his friends and refresh himself. ⁴Putting to sea from there, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. ⁵When we had sailed across the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. ⁶There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy, and he put us on board. ⁷When we had sailed slowly many days, and had come with difficulty opposite Cnidus, the wind not allowing us further, we sailed under the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. ⁸With difficulty sailing along it we came to a certain place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

⁹When much time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, because the Fast had now already gone by, Paul admonished them ¹⁰and said to them, “Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.” ¹¹But the centurion gave more heed to the master and to the owner of the ship than to those things which were spoken by Paul. ¹²Because the haven was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised going to sea from there, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, and winter there, which is a port of Crete, looking southwest and northwest.

¹³When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to shore. ¹⁴But before long, a stormy wind beat down from shore, which is called Euroclydon. ¹⁵When the ship was caught and couldn't face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶Running under the lee of a small island called Clauda, we were able, with difficulty, to secure the boat. ¹⁷After they had hoisted it up, they used cables to help reinforce the ship. Fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis sand bars, they lowered the sea anchor, and so were driven along. ¹⁸As we labored exceedingly with the storm, the next day they began to throw things overboard. ¹⁹On the third day, they threw out the ship's tackle with their own hands. ²⁰When neither sun nor stars shone on us for many days, and no small storm pressed on us, all hope that we would be saved was now taken away.

²¹When they had been long without food, Paul stood up in the middle of them, and said, “Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have set sail from Crete and have gotten this injury and loss.

²²Now I exhort you to cheer up, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³For there stood by me this night an angel, belonging to the God whose I am and whom I serve, ²⁴saying, ‘Don’t be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar. Behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ ²⁵Therefore, sirs, cheer up! For I believe God, that it will be just as it has been spoken to me. ²⁶But we must run aground on a certain island.”

²⁷But when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven back and forth in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors surmised that they were drawing near to some land. ²⁸They took soundings, and found twenty fathoms. After a little while, they took soundings again, and found fifteen fathoms.

²⁹Fearing that we would run aground on rocky ground, they let go four anchors from the stern, and wished for daylight. ³⁰As the sailors were trying to flee out of the ship, and had lowered the boat into the sea, pretending that they would lay out anchors from the bow, ³¹Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, “Unless these stay in the ship, you can’t be saved.” ³²Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat, and let it fall off.

³³While the day was coming on, Paul begged them all to take some food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you wait and continue fasting, having taken nothing. ³⁴Therefore I beg you to take some food; for this is for your safety; for not a hair will perish from any of your heads.” ³⁵When he had said this, and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all, then he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶Then they all cheered up, and they also took food. ³⁷In all, we were two hundred seventy-six souls on the ship. ³⁸When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea. ³⁹When it was day, they didn’t recognize the land, but they noticed a certain bay with a beach, and they decided to try to drive the ship onto it.

⁴⁰Casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea,

at the same time untying the rudder ropes. Hoisting up the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach.

⁴¹But coming to a place where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground. The bow struck and remained immovable, but the stern began to break up by the violence of the waves.

⁴²The soldiers’ counsel was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim out and escape. ⁴³But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, stopped them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should throw themselves overboard first to go toward the land; ⁴⁴and the rest should follow, some on planks, and some on other things from the ship. So they all escaped safely to the land.

ACTS 28

To the Ends of the Earth

¹When we had escaped, then they learned that the island was called Malta. ²The natives showed us uncommon kindness; for they kindled a fire and received us all, because of the present rain and because of the cold. ³But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. ⁴When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped from the sea, yet Justice has not allowed to live.” ⁵However he shook off the creature into the fire, and wasn’t harmed. ⁶But they expected that he would have swollen or fallen down dead suddenly, but when they watched for a long time and saw nothing bad happen to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

⁷Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us, and courteously entertained us for three days. ⁸The father of Publius lay sick of fever and dysentery. Paul entered in to him, prayed, and laying his hands on him, healed him. ⁹Then when this was done, the rest also who had diseases in the island came and were cured. ¹⁰They also honored us with many honors, and when we sailed, they put on board the things that we needed.

¹¹After three months, we set sail in a ship of Alexandria which had wintered in the island, whose sign was “The Twin Brothers.” ¹²Touching at Syracuse, we stayed there three days. ¹³From there we circled around and arrived at Rhegium. After one day, a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli, ¹⁴where we found brothers, and were entreated to stay with them for seven days. So we came to Rome. ¹⁵From there the brothers, when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. ¹⁶When we entered into Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

¹⁷After three days Paul called together those who were the leaders of the Jews. When they had come together, he said to them, “I, brothers, though I had done nothing against the people or the customs of our fathers, still was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, ¹⁸who, when they had examined me, desired to set me free, because there was no cause of death in me. ¹⁹But when the Jews spoke against it, I was constrained to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything about which to accuse my nation. ²⁰For this cause therefore I asked to see you and to speak with you. For because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”

²¹They said to him, “We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor did any of the brothers come here and report or speak any evil of you. ²²But we desire to hear from you what you

think. For, as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.”

²³When they had appointed him a day, many people came to him at his lodging. He explained to them, testifying about God’s Kingdom, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning until evening. ²⁴Some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. ²⁵When they didn’t agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had spoken one word, “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, ²⁶saying,

*‘Go to this people and say,
in hearing, you will hear,
but will in no way understand.
In seeing, you will see,
but will in no way perceive.*

²⁷*For this people’s heart has grown callous.
Their ears are dull of hearing.
Their eyes they have closed.
Lest they should see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their heart,
and would turn again,
then I would heal them.’*

²⁸“Be it known therefore to you, that the salvation of God is sent to the nations, and they will listen.”

²⁹When he had said these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.

³⁰Paul stayed two whole years in his own rented house and received all who were coming to him, ³¹preaching God’s Kingdom, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, without hindrance.

AFTER THE LAST SESSION

Eight verses to carry

One verse from each session. Read them aloud once a week and they will stay with you.

1 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

ACTS 1:8

2 When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were gathered together. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

ACTS 4:31

3 Therefore those who were scattered abroad went around preaching the word.

ACTS 8:4

4 Truly I perceive that God doesn't show favoritism; but in every nation he who fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.

ACTS 10:34–35

5 But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are.

ACTS 15:11

6 Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.

ACTS 16:31

7 But these things don't count; nor do I hold my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify to the Good News of the grace of God.

ACTS 20:24

8 Preaching God's Kingdom, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, without hindrance.

ACTS 28:31

WHAT COMES NEXT

Acts is step 1 of 3 on the **Church Leadership** path.

1 Acts → 2 Ephesians → 3 Hebrews

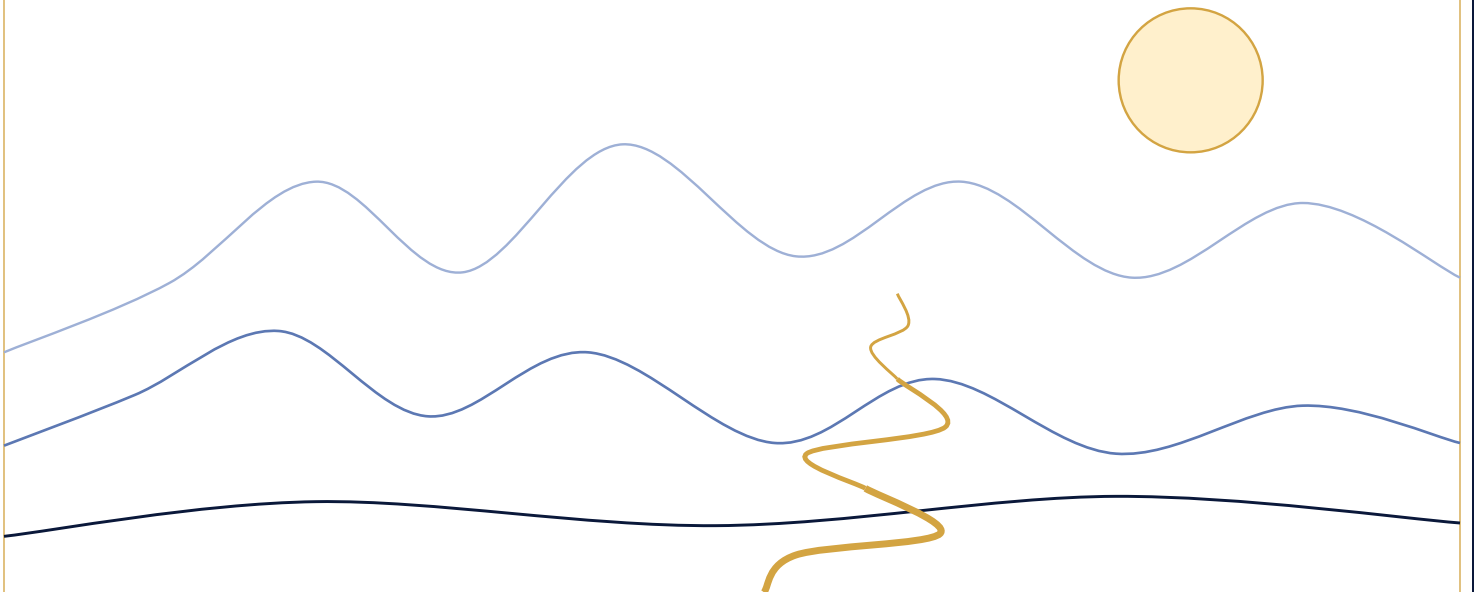
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PART FIVE

Take it with you

A worked example, a harder question for each session, a glossary, a Scripture index, and the pages that connect you to the people behind this study.



PART FIVE • BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What a good answer looks like

Most discussion questions do not have one right answer, but they do have good ones. Here is the sixth question of Session 1, a sample answer written the way a participant might write it, and the note a leader has beside it. Read all three once. That is what “doing the study” looks like.

- 6 Peter says the lame man was healed ‘In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth’ (3:6). What is he teaching the crowd about where real power comes from?**

A SAMPLE ANSWER • WRITTEN IN THE MARGIN

Peter starts with what he does not have: “I have no silver or gold” (3:6). What he has is the name of Jesus, and he uses it in the same breath: “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!” (3:6). Then the crowd stares at him and John, and Peter asks why they look at them “as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk” (3:12). He says it again a few verses later: “his name has made this man strong” (3:16). I notice he gives the credit away twice, once in the command and once in the explanation. So the question I’m left with is whose name I let people credit when something good comes through me.

WHY IT IS A GOOD ANSWER

It stays in the passage. It uses Peter’s own words (“no silver or gold,” “by our own power or godliness”) and gives the verse for each one.

It notices what repeats. The name of Jesus is in the command (3:6) and again in the explanation (3:16). Seeing that is the observation.

It ends with the writer, not with a summary. “Whose name I let people credit” is the writer’s own question. It does not recap the verses.

THE LEADER’S NOTE FOR THE SAME QUESTION • PAGE 124

Peter begins with what he has to give: “I have no silver or gold, but what I have, that I give you” (3:6). He then commands the man to get up and walk. When the crowd stares, he asks why they look at him and John “as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk” (3:12). He says God “has glorified his Servant Jesus” (3:13) and that “his name has made this man strong” (3:16).

Getting the most from this guide

- **Write before you talk.** In a group, two minutes of silent writing before the first question gives quieter people time to find their words.
- **Ask “Where do you see that in the passage?”** Acts moves fast, and its sermons are easy to nod along to. Pointing to the verse slows the group down enough to see what the text actually says.
- **Write the memory verse from memory first.** The closing page asks you to write it without looking back. Guess first, then check the text. That is how the verse stays with you.
- **Keep the one thing small.** The “One thing to live out” is meant to be done, not admired.

PART FIVE · FOR GROUPS THAT WANT MORE

Go deeper

One extra question for each session, for groups that have walked with Acts before. Each comes with a leader's note. Leaders can use one in the Interpret or Apply minutes of the timed plan if the room has the energy. This section is for leaders.

Session 1 · Acts 1–3

- Before Pentecost the believers choose a replacement for Judas (1:15–26). They pray, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two you have chosen” (1:24), and then “They drew lots” (1:26). What does their prayer show about how they make a decision, and what do they do first (1:14)?

LEADER'S NOTE

The believers have been together “with one accord” in prayer (1:14), and the number is about one hundred twenty (1:15). Their prayer asks the Lord to show His choice (1:24). Readers differ on whether drawing lots is meant as a pattern for the church, and the text does not say. Later the whole group chooses the seven (6:3–6). Good answers stay with what the believers do and say, and with the order: prayer first, then the decision.

Session 2 · Acts 4–7

- Luke puts Barnabas's gift (4:36–37) right before Ananias and Sapphira's (5:1–2). Both sell land and lay money at the apostles' feet. What does Luke ask the reader to compare, and what does Peter name as the difference (5:3–4)?

LEADER'S NOTE

Peter does not name the amount. He names the lie: “You haven't lied to men, but to God” (5:4). He also says the land was theirs and the money was in their power (5:4), so the giving was free. Good answers keep to those words. Do not let the story become a measure of how much anyone should give, or a claim about what God does to givers today.

Session 3 · Acts 8–9

- When Saul comes to Jerusalem, “they were all afraid of him” (9:26). “But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles” (9:27). What does Barnabas risk, and what does his action make possible?

LEADER’S NOTE

The disciples were not “believing that he was a disciple” (9:26). Barnabas declares to the apostles what Saul has seen and preached (9:27). Saul is then “with them entering into Jerusalem” (9:28). Luke goes on to say the assemblies had peace and “were multiplied” (9:31). Good answers notice that one person’s trust opens a door. Do not make Barnabas a rule for how anyone should treat people who have hurt them, since the text only shows what he did.

Session 4 · Acts 10–12

- When prophets from Jerusalem come to Antioch, Agabus says there will be a great famine (11:28). The disciples “each determined to send relief to the brothers who lived in Judea” (11:29). What does this show about how the new believers in Antioch see the believers in Judea?

LEADER’S NOTE

The disciples in Antioch each decide to send relief, “as any of the disciples had plenty” (11:29), and Barnabas and Saul carry it to the elders in Judea (11:30). Good answers notice that believers in one city act like family toward believers in another. Keep to what Luke says: the giving is voluntary and it answers a need.

Session 5 · Acts 13–15

- At Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas say, “we turn to the Gentiles” (13:46). In the very next city, “they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews” (14:1). What does Luke show by putting the two verses side by side?

LEADER’S NOTE

Paul and Barnabas are Jews, and they keep going to the synagogue. The turn in 13:46 is a response in one city, and 14:1 shows them preaching to Jews and Greeks at Iconium, where “a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed.” Good answers notice that the pattern continues. Do not let 13:46 become a verdict on Jewish people. This is a good place to name that the first believers were Jews.

Session 6 · Acts 16–18

- **Apollos is “mighty in the Scriptures,” and yet “when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside, and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (18:24, 26). What do they do, and what does Luke tell us happens afterward (18:27)?**

LEADER’S NOTE

Luke praises Apollos before anyone corrects him: he “taught accurately the things concerning Jesus,” though he “knew only the baptism of John” (18:25). Priscilla and Aquila “took him aside” (18:26). Luke reports no reply from Apollos. What he does report is that the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples in Achaia, and that he “greatly helped those who had believed through grace” (18:27). Good answers stay with what is reported and do not fill the silence. Do not turn the story into a claim about who may teach.

Session 7 · Acts 19–22

- **Paul reminds the Ephesian elders of “the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (20:35). Where has Paul just shown the elders what that looks like (20:33–34)?**

LEADER’S NOTE

Paul says he coveted no one’s silver, gold, or clothing, and that his own hands served his needs and those of the people with him (20:33–34). He calls it “an example” (20:35). Good answers connect the saying to the way Paul lived among them. Keep the question on the text. It does not say that anyone who is paid for ministry has failed.

Session 8 · Acts 23–28

- **At Lystra the crowd says, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” and Paul and Barnabas “tore their clothes” and cry out (14:11–15). On Malta the islanders see that Paul is not harmed and “said that he was a god” (28:6). What does Luke tell us about Paul’s response on Malta, and what do we not know?**

LEADER’S NOTE

Luke records what the islanders say (28:6) and nothing about Paul’s reply. At Lystra Luke records the reaction at length (14:14–15). Good answers notice the contrast and do not fill the silence. The islanders also show “uncommon kindness” (28:2) and receive them all. Keep the discussion on what the text reports.

PART FIVE · WORDS ACTS USES

Glossary

Short definitions of the words a first-time reader of Acts is most likely to stumble on. Chapter and verse point to where Acts uses them.

Apostle

One sent out by Jesus with His authority. The Twelve are called apostles (1:2), and Matthias is counted with them (1:26).

Areopagus

A hill and council in Athens where new teachings were examined. Paul speaks there (17:19, 22).

Artemis

The goddess of the Ephesians, whose temple made the city famous. The silversmiths' riot is about her honor (19:27).

Baptism

A water rite tied to repentance and to belonging to Jesus. Peter calls the crowd to be baptized (2:38), and the Ethiopian is baptized (8:38).

Centurion

A Roman officer over about a hundred soldiers. Cornelius is one (10:1).

Christ

Greek for "Messiah," the anointed King God promised. Peter says God made Jesus "both Lord and Christ" (2:36).

Christians

The name first given to Jesus' followers at Antioch (11:26).

Circumcision

The sign of the covenant given to Abraham's family. Some from Judea, and some believing Pharisees, say Gentile believers must be circumcised (15:1, 5).

Council

The Jewish high court in Jerusalem, made up of rulers, elders, and scribes. The apostles stand before it (4:15; 5:21).

Elder

A leader of a local church. Paul and Barnabas appoint elders in every church (14:23).

Fasting

Going without food to pray. The church at Antioch fasts and prays before sending Barnabas and Saul (13:2–3).

Gentile

Anyone who is not Jewish. The Holy Spirit is poured out on Gentiles (10:45).

God-fearer

A Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel without becoming a full convert. Cornelius is "a devout man, and one who feared God" (10:2).

Grace

God's undeserved favor. Paul calls his message "the Good News of the grace of God" (20:24).

Holy Spirit

God's own Spirit, promised by Jesus and given at Pentecost (1:8; 2:4).

Laying on of hands

A gesture of prayer, commissioning, or receiving the Spirit (6:6; 13:3; 8:17).

Lots

An ancient way of making a choice. The believers drew lots to choose Matthias (1:26).

Magic arts

The practice of sorcery. The believers in Ephesus burn their books (19:19).

Pentecost

A Jewish harvest feast, also called the Feast of Weeks, on which the Spirit comes (2:1; 20:16).

Pharisees

A group devoted to strict observance of the Law. Some believe (15:5), and Paul is one (23:6).

Proconsul

A Roman governor of a province. Sergius Paulus (13:7) and Gallio (18:12) are proconsuls.

Proselyte

A Gentile who has converted to Judaism (2:10; 6:5).

Repent

To turn around and change direction. The call in Peter's first two sermons (2:38; 3:19).

Resurrection

Rising from the dead, the center of the apostles' message (4:2; 17:18).

Roman citizen

A person with the rights of a citizen of Rome. Paul claims his at Philippi and at Jerusalem (16:37; 22:25–29).

Sabbath

The weekly day of rest. Paul teaches in the synagogue on the Sabbath (13:14) and goes to a place of prayer by the river at Philippi (16:13).

Sadducees

A priestly group who said there is no resurrection (23:8).

Samaritan

A person from Samaria, whose people were long at odds with the Jews. Philip preaches in a city of Samaria (8:5).

Synagogue

A local Jewish place of prayer and reading. Paul often begins there (13:14; 17:2).

Temple

The house of God in Jerusalem. The believers gather in its courts (2:46; 3:1).

Theophilus

The person addressed in both Luke and Acts (1:1).

The Way

An early name for the followers of Jesus (9:2; 19:23; 24:14).

Unleavened Bread

The spring feast that follows Passover (12:3).

Witness

Someone who tells what he has seen and heard. Jesus says, "You will be witnesses to me" (1:8).

PART FIVE • WHERE EACH PASSAGE IS USED

Scripture index

Every passage cited by chapter and verse in the sessions, the reference pages, the leader's guide, and this Part Five, with the pages where it appears. The full text of Acts is in Part Four, pages 162–194.

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PART FIVE • YOUR TURN

Tell me what helped.

You've just spent some hours in this study. Before you put it on the shelf, I'd like to know how it went: the part that landed, the part that lost you, and the part you'd fix if it were yours.

Three questions. No account needed. Name and email only if you want me to write back.

1 What helped? A session, a question, a line you underlined.

2 What confused you, or slowed you down? Be blunt. If a question didn't make sense, that's my writing, not your reading.

3 What would you add, cut, or change?

What you write helps shape the next edition of this study.

— Ron Givens

Founder — Executive Director, Clear Path Bible Studies



SCAN TO ANSWER

clearpathbiblestudies.com/s/acts/feedback

Opens the three questions with this study already selected.

Jotted your answers above? Type them into the form when you're ready. Nothing on this page is sent anywhere until you do. Hand it to your group leader, too, if you'd rather say it out loud.

PART FIVE · FOR EVERYONE WHO LEADS, AND EVERYONE WHO SHARES

Care in the room

People say real things in a Bible study, and that's the point. These four agreements keep the room safe. The lines at the bottom are for the moments that are bigger than a study.

Four agreements

What's said here stays here. Names, stories, and struggles don't leave the room, not even as prayer requests somewhere else. The one exception is safety: if someone is in danger, or a child is being hurt, you get help.

No one has to speak. Silence is fine. A person who listens for eight sessions has still done the study.

The text comes first. The leader isn't the last word. When we disagree, we go back to the page together.

Disagree, but don't scorn. A question is never a threat. No mocking, no interrupting, no fixing people.

Acts has passages that land hard on real people in the room: 4:12, 5:1–11, the healings (illness is never a sign of weak faith), 12:1–23, 16:16–19, 21:4–14, 21:20–26, and the speeches that say “you killed” or turn to the Gentiles (2:23, 3:13–15, 4:10, 5:30, 7:51–53, 13:46, 18:6, 28:25–28), which are never a verdict on Jewish people. Notes are on the leader pages (122, 126, 130, 136, 140, 145, 150, 155, 160). Read each ahead of time.

If someone shares something heavy

Thank them. Don't rush to a verse. Say, “That took courage. Can we talk after?” and then do. If what they shared involves danger to them or to someone else, now or at home, the help lines below come first, and, if they want it and it is safe, you stay with them while they call.

If a child is being hurt, call Childhelp, below, any hour, and report to child protective services or the police as your state requires. Reporting laws vary by state, and in some states every adult is required to report. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

A study isn't counseling. Before you ever need it, know the name of one counselor, one pastor, and one help line, so you can hand them over without scrambling.

Help lines · United States

Emergency — call 911.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call or text 988, any hour. For anyone thinking about ending their life, in a mental-health crisis, or worried about someone who is. Veterans and service members: call 988 and press 1, or text 838255.

National Domestic Violence Hotline — 1-800-799-7233, or text START to 88788. Danger or fear at home.

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline — 1-800-422-4453. A child who is being hurt, or an adult who suspects it.

National Human Trafficking Hotline — 1-888-373-7888, or text 233733. Forced labor or forced sex.

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline — 1-800-656-4673. Free and confidential.

SAMHSA National Helpline — 1-800-662-4357. A treatment referral and information line for substance use and mental health; it is not a crisis line.

Verified October 2026. The current list, with lines for other situations, is kept at clearpathbiblestudies.com/help. These pages are not a substitute for a doctor, a counselor, or a pastor who knows you.



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