

A STUDY GUIDE THROUGH ACTS
PART 1 (CHAPTERS 1-14)

WITNESS

YOU ARE SENT



Why?

This guide is designed to help you dig deeper into the book of Acts as we study it together as a church. We encourage you to sit down with a Bible, journal, pen, and an open heart each day and allow this to help you in your time with the Lord.

In it, you will find a chapter to read each day, questions to think through and journal on, and a verse to memorize each week. Our hope is that this guide will help you learn to meditate on the God's Word and challenge you to grow deeper in your relationship with God.

Background of Acts:

The news of Jesus cannot be stopped. Beginning with a fledgling band of disciples, the transforming message of hope offered by Jesus would spread from Jerusalem to Rome in less than 35 years. The leaders of Jesus' day assumed his death would forever stamp out his claims. In God-sized irony, Jesus' death only fueled the spread of this message because he did not remain dead but defeated death through his glorious resurrection.

The resurrected Christ forever changed those who witnessed these events. They trusted that he would send them his Spirit to empower them for the mission that lay ahead (2:1-4). At Pentecost, the Spirit came in might and power and established the church that will prevail over the gates of Hades for all time (Matthew 16:18). Peter's sermon following the sending of the Spirit made it clear that this miracle was the fulfillment of God's promises and further validated the claims of Jesus to be God's Messiah and the Savior of the world.

Luke provides Theophilus and all subsequent readers with a glimpse into the culture of this young church. Those who trusted Jesus gathered together in teaching, singing, prayer, fellowship, and shared meals. By the power of God, many placed their faith in Christ and were added to the church (Acts 2:42-47).

The church would never permanently escape the fires of persecution, but through this opposition the church would continue to spread. The stoning of Stephen in Acts 8 scattered believers throughout the known world, and with them went God's Spirit and the message of the gospel. These displaced believers established churches and invited the inhabitants of new cities to place their faith in Christ.

A primary catalyst for the spread of the gospel was the conversion of Saul, a vehement persecutor of the church (9:1-22). God revealed himself in a blinding flash of light and altered Saul's fate forever. Saul began to be called Paul (13:9). Paul's subsequent mission work focused on the Gentiles and is central to the later portion of Luke's writing in the book of Acts. Luke describes Paul's three chief missionary journeys, his labor among the churches and the countless obstacles he faced in his mission. Through it all, however, God continued to show himself faithful to his promise to build his church and use his people in that grand mission.

Week 1: Acts 1

Read Acts 1

Need to Know: Acts begins where the book of Luke leaves off. Luke tracks Jesus' life from his birth to the cross. Acts tracks his ascension and his continued work through the Holy Spirit. As you read this chapter each day, put yourself in the shoes of the early believers. How convincing it would be to physically see the resurrected Jesus? How much anticipation would there be for the gift he insisted you to wait on?

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1 (v. 1-4): Why do you think Jesus presented himself and many convincing proofs that He was alive to the apostles? Do you ever struggle with doubt that Jesus rose from the dead? How does this passage encourage you?
- Day 2 (v. 5-11): What is the promised gift that Jesus is referring to? What does verse 8 teach us about what the result of this gift will be? Would you say that you have received this gift? Explain
- Day 3 (v. 12-26): What did the believers do in the upper room? What did the believers do before Matthias was chosen? Why do you think prayer was a priority for the early believers? How can it become more of a priority in your life?
- Day 4: Why is the Holy Spirit the biggest necessity in the church? How do we connect with Him?
- Day 5: How can you join the mission of the church today? Who can you share the gospel with today? Who can you invite to church?

Memory Verse:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Week 2: Acts 2

Read Acts 2

Need to Know: In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, a massive promise was fulfilled. God promised in the Old Testament to pour out his Holy Spirit on all people (Joel 2:28-32). During Jesus' ministry, He taught about the coming Holy Spirit (John 14-16 & Acts 1:8). This chapter brought about a new covenant between God and his people. Jesus has blessed his church by putting His Spirit in every believer. This means we currently live in the age of the Spirit. The Spirit empowers each believer with power and gifts to accomplish His mission.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1 (v. 1-13): What signs at Pentecost most resonate with you? Why do you think the Holy Spirit came with rushing wind, fire, and different languages?
- Day 2 (v. 14-41): What sticks out to you about Peter's sermon to the crowd? What does his message teach you about presenting the gospel?
- Day 3 (v. 14-41): What was their response to Peter's sermon? How do we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? What is repentance? Why is it important to be baptized?
- Day 4 (v. 42-47): These verses show us what the Spirit-filled church should be like. List the characteristics that describe this church. Has this been your experience with the church? Why or Why not?
- Day 5 (v. 42-47): What does it look like to be devoted to the apostles teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer? How might you be more fully devoted to each of these things?

Memory Verse:

Peter replied, "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

Week 3: Acts 3

Read Acts 3

Need to Know: This chapter describes how the apostles continued Jesus's ministry in word and deed as the healing of a lame man attracted a crowd to hear Peter's sermon about Jesus.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1 (v. 1-10): What about this miracle most resonates with you? Why? Does God heal people today? Explain.
- Day 2 (v. 1-10): Why should Christians care for people in need? What are you doing to care for the broken? What does this passage teach us about caring for both physical and spiritual needs?
- Day 3 (v. 11-26): What essential facts does Peter tell them about Jesus? What three kinds of evidence does he give for these facts (apart from his citation of Scripture)?
- Day 4 (v. 11-26): What does Peter tell his listeners they must do to receive Christ? What does he say will be the results of receiving Christ?
- Day 5 (v. 11-26): What can we learn about sharing the gospel from Peter? Who do you need to share the gospel with today?

Memory Verse:

*"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."
Acts 3:19*

Week 4: Acts 4

Read Acts 4

Need to Know: This chapter is a heated show-down between the religious establishment and Peter and John concerning their Christ-centered preaching.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1 (v. 1-31): Why did the preaching of Peter and John upset the religious establishment? What is the difference between religion and a relationship with Jesus?
- Day 2 (v. 1-31): What characteristics did the religious establishment observe in Peter and John in v. 13? What does this teach us about the importance of spending time with Jesus?
- Day 3 (v. 1-31): How is the power of the Holy Spirit related to bold proclamation? Why should we pray for boldness? What does boldness look like in evangelism?
- Day 4: In v. 32-35, “no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own,” they shared everything they had,” and there were no needy persons among them.” What obstacles are there to this situation being repeated in our culture today? How can Christians and churches overcome those obstacles?
- Day 5 (v. 32-35): What keeps people from being radically generous? How is the concept of grace tied to generosity?

Memory Verse:

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

Acts 4:13

Week 5: Acts 5

Read Acts 5

Need to Know: This chapter begins with the powerful story of Ananias and Sapphira that teaches us the importance of listening to the Holy Spirit and doing what He says. These consequences may seem harsh but God takes about hypocrisy and unity in His church very seriously. Next, we see how faithful gospel ministry results in both opposition and blessing in the rest of this chapter.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1 (v. 4:32-5:11): How is Barnabas' attitude towards generosity in chapter 4 different than Ananias and Sapphira's in chapter 5? How does this story challenge you? What does this story teach about hypocrisy?
- Day 2 (v. 1-11): What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? Why was it so serious and so seriously dealt with? How can we fall into a similar trap? How can we avoid it?
- Day 3 (v. 12-16): Why do you think more and more people were believing in the Lord during this time? Is Christianity as contagious now as it was then? Why or why not?
- Day 4 (v. 17-42): Why should we expect opposition when we do faithful gospel ministry? How do some people try to intimidate Christians today? What does this passage teach us about suffering?
- Day 5 (v. 17-42): How applicable do you think Gamaliel's argument is today to new movements and sects? What criteria can we use to form an opinion when we encounter different or unfamiliar perspectives on our faith?

Memory Verse:

"The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead – whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." Acts 5:30-32

Week 6: Acts 6

Read Acts 6

Need to Know: This chapter gives us an inside look into the early church and the blessings and challenges faced by the rapidly growing body of Christ. Next, we are introduced to the first Christian martyr named Stephen.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1 (v. 1-7): What does this passage teach us about church growth? How should we view it
- Day 2 (v. 1-7): What does this passage teach us about appointing leaders in the local church? What were the characteristics they were looking for? Would you say these characteristics describe you? Why or why not?
- Day 3 (v. 1-7): Why did the apostles consider caring for widows important? Why was the unity of the church threatened? Why must prayer and proclamation of God's Word be central in pastoral ministry?
- Day 4 (v. 8-15): What does this passage teach us about Stephen? From where did Stephen receive power? How are the Spirit and wisdom related?
- Day 5 (v. 8-15): What does this passage tell us about why Stephen's ministry was so effective? Which of his characteristics do you lack? What can you do to grow in that area(s)?

Memory Verse:

"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

Acts 6:7

Week 7: Acts 7

Read Acts 7

Need to Know: This chapter describes the remarkable Christ-like life and ministry of Stephen, whose martyrdom advanced God's mission.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1 (v. 1-50): How does Stephen's very long speech answer the original question (v1)? How does each section about Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Solomon advance his basic argument? How does he adapt his argument to the premises and nature of his audience?
- Day 2: What impresses you the most about Stephen's sermon? Why?
- Day 3: Could you narrate the Old Testament story that culminates in Christ if someone asked you to do so? Why is it important to see Christ through the Old Testament?
- Day 4: What is Stephen's main point in verses 51-53? What does it mean to be stiff-necked and resist the Holy Spirit? How do you guard against this?
- Day 5: How does Stephen's story inspire you? What similarities do you see between Jesus and Stephen's death?

Memory Verse:

But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look, he said, I see heaven open and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."

Acts 7:55-56

Week 8: Acts 8

Read Acts 8

Need to Know: This passage describes some of the remarkable events that happened when the gospel advanced into Samaria through the faithful witness of Philip, Peter, and John.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1 (v. 1-4): What are the results of the execution of Stephen and the persecution that it brought? (Have you seen God work good things through a disaster?) How does this result fit in with Stephen's message?
- Day 2: How is Acts 8:4-25 related to Acts 1:8? Why is this significant? Why did God delay pouring out His Spirit on the Samaritan believers until Peter and John laid hands on them?
- Day 3 (v. 26-40): What do we learn about sharing our faith from the story of the Ethiopian conversion? What does this passage teach us about being led by the Holy Spirit?
- Day 4: What disappoints you about the character of Simon? Why? Do you think Simon had genuine faith in Christ? Why or why not?
- Day 5: Why is Acts 8:26-40 a good illustration of Matthew 28:18-20? What is baptism and why is it important?

Memory Verse:

Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart."

Acts 8:20-22

Week 9: Acts 9

Read Acts 9

Need to Know: In a dramatic display of God's saving grace, Luke records the most famous conversion in church history: Saul of Tarsus. We know Him now as the Apostle Paul, arguably the greatest missionary of all time.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1: What sticks out to you about Saul's conversion? How is it similar or different from your salvation experience?
- Day 2: Read some of the other passages related to Saul's conversion and note the similarities and differences: Acts 22:1-21; Acts 26:12-23; Romans 1:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:8-10; Galatians 1:11-24; Philippians 3:4-11; and 1 Timothy 1:12-17.
- Day 3: What does this passage teach us about God's grace in salvation? What does this passage teach us about Jesus?
- Day 4: What practical lessons might be learned from Ananias's inclusion in the story?
- Day 5: What about Jesus' commission of Paul most resonates with you?

Memory Verse:

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.
Acts 9:17-19

Week 10: Acts 10

Read Acts 10

Need to Know: In this chapter, we read an incredible story about Peter and Cornelius. This passage is monumental. God is teaching them that the gospel has broken down the wall between Jewish people and the rest of the world. His plan is to save people from every tribe and every nation and create a church that displays the diversity of heaven. In God's kingdom there is no room for racism or favoritism.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1: How does God speak to Cornelius? What is Peter doing when God speaks to him? What does this teach you about how and when God speaks? What is your next step when it comes to hearing from God?
- Day 3: What was the meaning of the vision? How does v. 34-35 show that Peter understands now the meaning of the vision?
- Day 2: What does v. 28-35 teach us about racism and prejudice? What does this passage teach us about God's heart to reach all people? What walls of favoritism and racism need to be torn down in your heart?
- Day 4: Why is the story of Cornelius's conversion so important? If Cornelius was so religious, then why did he need the gospel?
- Day 5: How does this passage highlight the nature and importance of gospel hospitality? Why are relationships so important in the Bible?

Memory Verse:

*Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."
Acts 10:34-35*

Week 11: Acts 11

Read Acts 11

Need to Know: This chapter starts with Peter re-explaining his vision and testimony from the last chapter. Then, we see some of the reasons the church in Antioch – a model missionary church – changed the world.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1: What questions and criticisms do the Jewish believers have for Peter when he got to Jerusalem? Why do you think the believers had no objections after hearing what Peter had to say in v. 4-18?
- Day 2: Why is the voice of God so essential when it comes to unity within God's church? Why do you think that Christians weren't called "Christians" until Antioch?
- Day 3: How does v. 22-24 describe Barnabas? Would you say this is an accurate description of you? Why or Why not? How can you specifically grow in these areas?
- Day 4: Read v. 20- 21. What was the secret to the church in Antioch's success? How do we know when God is with us and God is not?
- Day 5: Why do you think the Antioch church was so successful in showing the power of the gospel? What can we learn from them as God's church today?

Memory Verse:

"The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord."

Acts 11:21

Week 12: Acts 12

Read Acts 12

Need to Know: King Herod launches a public assault on the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, killing James and imprisoning Peter, but he ultimately cannot stop the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1: What sticks out to you in this chapter? How does this story prove the point of v. 24?
- Day 2: What does this chapter teach us about the power of prayer? How does this passage encourage us to bring large requests to God?
- Day 3: Why should Christians expect opposition when seeking to advance the gospel? What opposition have you experienced seeking to advance the gospel?
- Day 4: What does this passage teach us about God's peace? Would you say you are experiencing the peace of God? Why or Why not?
- Day 5: How does this passage provide believers with hope? Would you say you are living in the hope of Christ? Why or why not?

Memory Verse:

*"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for Him."
Acts 12:5*

Week 13: Acts 13

Read Acts 13

Need to Know: In these initial stops on the Paul and Barnabas's first missionary journey, we find several important applications for word-driven, Spirit-empowered missionaries.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1: What do verses 1-3 teach us about worship and prayer? What do we learn about how the Holy Spirit speaks? Are you seeking to hear from God the same way these believers were?
- Day 2: Why was Paul so forceful with Elymas in v. 6-12? Why was the miraculous judgment on Elymas appropriate? What can we learn from this encounter?
- Day 3: Read Paul's gospel presentation in v. 13-41. What about Paul's sermon most resonates with you? What do verses 38-39 teach us is the result of the gospel? What does it mean to be set free from sin through Jesus?
- Day 4: What do you learn from the people's reaction to Paul's sermon? Why do the ones that reject the gospel do so? Why do the ones who accept the gospel do so?
- Day 5: What do v. 49-52 teach us about opposition? What does it look like to be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit?

Memory Verse:

"Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through Him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses."

Acts 13:38-39

Week 14: Acts 14

Read Acts 14

Need to Know: The completion of the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas provides us with an instructive and inspiring model of Christian perseverance.

Journaling Questions:

- Day 1: What do we learn from Paul and Barnabas's experience in Iconium in v. 1-7? What does this teach us about living out the mission of God?
- Day 2: What do we learn from Paul and Barnabas's experience in Lystra in v. 8-20? What does this teach us about living out the mission of God?
- Day 3: What does Paul's brief message in Lystra teach about communicating the gospel to different types of people?
- Day 4: What do Paul's return visits teach about discipleship and church planting?
- Day 5: Thinking about this whole missionary journey, what can you take away from this personally? How does living out the mission encourage you? How does living out the mission keep you dependent on God?

Memory Verse:

"Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the seas and everything in them."

Acts 14:15