



UNLEASHED

A STUDY OF ACTS

Part 1

Name:

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

FALL 2021



wentzville
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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LETTER FROM KURT

The book of Acts, in my opinion, is the most indispensable book of the New Testament. We have 4 Gospel accounts, 13 letters from Paul, and many letters from other writers which are all equally important. But Acts stands alone as a unique book which tells stories and teaches theology that are only found in this book. It describes what the early church looks like, and prescribes what all churches should aspire to.

Acts is more than just a historical documentary...it is a narrative that tells the story of God's followers. This narrative includes many scenes, acts [no pun intended], characters, and plot lines which lead us back to God. There is one person who ties everything together and is woven throughout the narrative as the main character with the leading role...and it may not be who you think it is.

It may surprise you that the leading role in Acts is not Paul. It's not Peter. It is not even Jesus. The main character in the book of Acts is the person of the Holy Spirit! You see his presence, power, and influence throughout every story and plot twist.

Jesus received the Holy Spirit at his baptism, and then released his Spirit to God at the cross. Then he promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would be unleashed upon them after he leaves [John 14:15-17; Acts 1:4-8]. We learn more about who the Holy Spirit is and how he operates in the book of Acts than any other book.

Luke's gospel account was the first episode in his biblical drama, which focused on all that Jesus began to do [Acts 1:1]. The book of Acts is the second episode which changes the focus to what Jesus' followers continue to do through the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.

It is my hope and prayer that throughout this Life Group season you not only learn about Jesus and his first followers...but that you receive, discern, and UNLEASH the Holy Spirit in your life!

Kurt Charlton

Discipleship Minister

[See the next page for an introduction to the book of Acts]

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

INTRODUCTION

Acts is written by Luke, the physician, who is the only Gentile author of the New Testament. Luke covertly includes himself into the narrative a few times by saying we/us. The Gospel of Luke is episode 1; Acts is episode 2. Acts follows the general flow of Jesus' instructions in Acts 1:8. Jerusalem [Acts 1:1-8:1a]; Judea/Samaria [Acts 8:1b-12:25]; Ends of the world [Acts 13-28].

MAJOR THEMES:

-HOLY SPIRIT [and his power]

Holy Spirit is mentioned 56 times, which is more per chapter than any other book of the Bible. He is responsible for every major turning point in the narrative. [1:2; 1:8; 2:1-4; 4:28-31; 5:32; 8:15-17; 10:44-46; 11:15; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:4-6; 20:22]

-PERSECUTION [and its results]

Early Christians suffered intense persecution, but Luke always records the positive attitudes and results. [4:3-4; 4:23-24; 5:40-42; 8:1-4; 11:19-21; 12:1-19; 14:1-7; 14:8-22; 16:25-34; 18:1-8; 21:11]

-BAPTISM [and its importance]

Baptism was clearly commanded as a response to faith in Jesus [2:38] and was the common practice for all new believers. [2:37-41; 8:5-13; 8:36-38; 9:10-12; 9:17-19; 10:47-48; 16:13-15; 16:27-34; 18:5-8; 19:1-5; 22:14-17]

-THE CHURCH [and its ups/downs]

Luke gives church summary statements like a narrator who wants to inform the readers of what they missed in-between each scene. [2:42-47; 4:32-37; 5:12-16; 5:42; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:19-20]

-PRAYER [and its effects]

Prayer is intentionally scattered throughout the entire narrative. It is almost like a supporting character beside the Holy Spirit. [1:14; 1:21; 4:31; 6:6; 9:40; 10:1-9; 12:12; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8]

DESCRIPTIVE VS. PRESCRIPTIVE

Be careful not to read the book of Acts as a prescription for how every single church should operate today. There are times when Luke is merely describing the events as they unfold. It is up to us to interpret and apply what these descriptions mean for us today. One way to do this is to seek the underlying principle that is described, and then turn that into a prescription.

Should we cast lots or draw names out of a hat when choosing leaders for our church? Should we meet together every single day of the week? Should we sell all of our possessions and give our money to the poor? Should we speak in tongues when we accept the Holy Spirit? These are examples of descriptions not prescriptions for everyone, everywhere.

An example of turning a description into a principle can be found in Acts 2:42. Luke says the first converts devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship. The principle for us is that we should be devoted to God's Word and to living in community with other Christ followers. Acts 2:46 says they met daily in the temple courts and in homes. The principle for us is that we should regularly gather corporately and privately with other believers.



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A STUDY OF ACTS

Week 1 - Jesus & the Mission

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ACTS 1:1-11

WHO IS LUKE? THEOPHILUS?

Luke was a physician and a traveling companion to Paul and others. His style and organization of writing shows he was very well educated and researched. At the same time, Luke's audience was not necessarily the educated elite. His narratives focus on the simple, outcasts, and downtrodden such as shepherds, fishermen, women, and others. Luke is the only Gentile author of the New Testament, and actually wrote more words than Paul. The New Testament is roughly composed of ⅓ Luke, ⅓ Paul, and ⅓ other writers.

Luke dedicated both narratives to Theophilus, who was most likely a wealthy Greek-speaking Christian who commissioned Luke and perhaps paid for his travels. Both books would have been copied and shared throughout the entire region. Read the introductions of both narratives [Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-5] and note the similarities. Also look at how the closing of Luke naturally flows into the opening of Acts.

Luke and Acts are meant to be read in succession and in tandem. Luke masterfully mirrors the movement of Jesus in Luke with the movement of the Church in Acts.



- Jesus born under Roman rule [Luke 1:1-2:52]
- Jesus' ministry in Galilee [Luke 3:1-9:50]
- Jesus' ministry in Samaria/Judea [Luke 9:51-19]
- Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem [Luke 19:28-24:53]



- Church/Paul in Rome [Acts 27-28]
- Church in the Gentile world [Acts 13-26]
- Church in Samaria/Judea [Acts 8:1b-12:25]
- Church is born in Jerusalem [Acts 1:1-8:1a]

ACTS 1:1-3

The Gospel of Luke is episode 1; Acts is episode 2. Luke was about everything Jesus did and taught. Acts is about everything that Jesus' followers [through the power of the Holy Spirit!] continue to do.

ACTS 1:4-5

Jesus tells the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Luke reminds us that this was all according to plan, and that Jesus had already promised this was going to happen. See Jesus' last words in Luke 24:49.

ACTS 1:6-7

Jesus tells the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Luke reminds us that this was all according to plan, and that Jesus had already promised this was going to happen. See Jesus' last words in Luke 24:49.

ACTS 1:8

These last words of Jesus are possibly the most important verse in the book of Acts. It contains instructions, prophetic fulfillment, and prophetic prediction. Luke organizes the book of Acts to follow this exact order: Jerusalem [Acts 1:1-8:1a]; Judea/Samaria [Acts 8:1b-12:25]; Ends of the world [Acts 13-28].

ACTS 1:9-11

Jesus ascended into heaven on a cloud. The apostles, and most likely other disciples, were intently looking up into the sky to see where Jesus was going. Perhaps they were stunned that Jesus left. Perhaps they thought he would return very shortly [Matthew 24:42]. Angels had to appear to the apostles and encourage them to stop looking to the sky to find Jesus. It is almost like they had to show up to say “Didn’t you hear what he said?! Get to work!”

ACTS 1:1-11 [NIV]

Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

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

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

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

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

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

WEEK 1 - JESUS & THE MISSION [ACTS 1:1-11]

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. What are some movie sequels that bombed?
2. What are some movie sequels that were just as good as the original
3. What have you been able to accomplish in life because of the generosity of someone else?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Read Acts 1:1. How would you explain this odd introduction to someone who has never heard of the book of Acts?
2. Read Acts 1:1-5. The book of Acts begins during a time of confusion for the followers of Jesus. What had the apostles been through in the past month or so?
3. Read Acts 1:6-8. What were the apostles expecting? What were they told to wait for? How do you think they responded to this?

4. The Holy Spirit is mentioned in verses 2, 4, 5, and 8. How do you think this relates to the command Jesus gives at the end of verse 8?
5. What would be the value in making his disciples wait for the Holy Spirit?
6. Why do you think Jesus chose to use the term “witnesses” in verse 8?
7. What is the significance of the places Jesus mentions in verse 8?

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. If you were honest, what are some false expectations you have as a follower of Jesus?
2. You have been given power through the Holy Spirit! How are you going to unleash it today?
3. Who and what are your Jerusalem/Judea/Samaria/ends of the earth? How can you be a witness?

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER

[Spend some time praying with your Life Group. When asking for requests, try to keep the focus on personal praises/requests that relate to people in the group.]

PRAY FOR MISSION OF THE WEEK

Daniel & Kelsey H.

Daniel & Kelsey serve in a closed country in North Africa through Frontiers Missions, where they are leading others to Christ while helping to run skate parks as their reason for being in the country. They moved to North Africa in March with their 2-year-old son and 6-week-old daughter. Please pray that they are able to continue to change lives through the power of the Holy Spirit working through them and in the people around them.

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”
John 14:26 [NIV]

- ▶ When has someone been an advocate for you? When have you advocated for someone else?

- ▶ How does this trinitarian relationship bring you comfort? What does it mean for you to have a personal advocate?

DAY 2:

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”
[Luke 24:49, NIV]

- ▶ What are some examples of clothing that helps protect people from harm?

- ▶ Do you feel like you are “clothed with power from on high”? Why or why not? How can you use this power each day?

DAY 3:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
[Matthew 28:19, NIV]

- ▶ How does this relate to Jesus’ last words in Acts 1:4-8?

- ▶ When have you gone places to make disciples? What places, near and far, can you go to in the future?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
[Matthew 28:20, NIV]

- ▶ How does this relate to Jesus’ last words in Acts 1:4-8?

- ▶ Do you often feel like Jesus is with you? Why or why not? When do you feel near to him? Far from him?

DAY 5:

“Then they gathered around him and asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’”
[Acts 1:6, NIV]

- ▶ What questions would you have for Jesus if you were able to sit down with him today?

- ▶ Jesus’ answer was surprising and challenging. When have you been surprised and challenged by the words of Jesus?

DAY 6:

“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”
[Acts 1:11, NIV]

- ▶ When have you expected Jesus to do something which did not happen the way you thought it would happen?

- ▶ How do the words of the angels encourage action instead of idle anticipation? What are you waiting for and what do you need to take action on?



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Week 2 - Waiting for the Holy Spirit

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ACTS 1:12-26

ACTS 1:12-14

The apostles must have been confused. They left the Mount of Olives and went to their borrowed room in Jerusalem. They took a roll call and started praying. Luke records all 11 apostles by name, which sets up the scene.

ACTS 1:15-17

Peter was the spokesperson and natural leader of the apostles and disciples, perhaps because he was older [Matthew 17:24-27]. After Jesus' departure, Peter addresses everyone to bring assurance, direction, and biblical guidance.

ACTS 1:18-19

Luke gives a parenthetical explanation to the reader to explain what happened to Judas. Luke wants the reader to know that Judas' death was graphic and notable since "everyone in Jerusalem heard about this."

ACTS 1:20

Peter quotes from two verses from the Old Testament [Psalm 69:25; 109:8] to affirm that this all happened to fulfill Scripture. This would have brought immediate comfort to everyone who was still in shock from Judas' actions and Jesus' departure. Peter gives direction that someone must take Judas' place.

ACTS 1:21-22

Jesus called 12 men to be his main disciples during his earthly ministry. He had other disciples [see Acts 1:15], but these 12 were the ones he gave ownership and leadership to. Now that Jesus is gone, he commissioned the apostles to lead the early church [Acts 1:8]. However, one problem exists...there are only 11 because Judas Iscariot killed himself.

ACTS 1:23-26

Casting lots seems very odd [no pun intended!] to us, but it was very common in ancient Judaism. It was a widely accepted practice that was viewed as a way to seek the direction of God [or Gods for pagans]. God commanded, allowed, and even worked miraculously through the casting of lots in the Old Testament. It is very interesting to note that Luke and Acts both begin with casting lots and the appearance of angels [see Luke 1:9-11]. Casting lots is not a practice that is encouraged today. This is the only time it is recorded in the early church. Note that this happened before the Holy Spirit was dispensed at Pentecost. We now have the unleashed power and direction of the Holy Spirit and God's complete Scripture to guide us.

ACTS 1:12-26 [NIV]

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. ¹³ When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶ and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in our ministry."

¹⁸ (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹ Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

²⁰ "For," said Peter, "it is written in the Book of Psalms:

"May his place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in it,'

and,

"May another take his place of leadership.'

²¹ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²² beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

²³ So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.

²⁴ Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles."

WEEK 2 - WAITING FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT [ACTS 1:12-26]

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. What were some of your favorite board games growing up? Now?
2. What are some big things in your life you are waiting for right now? [Think: engagement, degree, promotion, children, retirement, etc.]
3. When have you waited for something with much anticipation, only to find out it was different than what you expected?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Read Acts 1:9-11. Why do you think Luke included this scene where the apostles seem confused?
2. Read Acts 1:12-14. What do Thomas, Peter, and Jesus' brothers all have in common?
3. What do you think everyone was praying for in verse 14? [See Acts 1:6-8]

4. Read Acts 1:15-20. How does Peter relate the Holy Spirit and Old Testament to their recent events? How do you think the believers felt about this?
5. Read Acts 1:21-26. What were the qualifications to be considered for apostleship? What is the reason for this?
6. Why do you think they cast lots for such an important decision? Is this something we can still do today?
7. How does prayer play a part in the choosing of the next apostle? [See 1:14 and 1:24]

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. What decisions do you need to pray about today? What kind of direction are you waiting for?
2. How can you make prayer a part of discerning God's direction in your life?
3. How can you unleash the power of the Holy Spirit as you pray for direction this week?

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER

[Spend some time praying with your Life Group. When asking for requests, try to keep the focus on personal praises/requests that relate to people in the group.]

PRAY FOR MISSION OF THE WEEK

HOPE Ministries Food Pantry

HOPE provides families in St. Charles county assistance with food and physical needs. You can donate non-perishable food items to this ministry by visiting the food cart in the WCC café. Take home a bag and bring it back with the items requested for the month.

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.”
[Lamentations 3:25, NIV]

- ▶ What do you think it means for God to be “good to those who wait for Him”? When have you seen this in your life?

- ▶ The apostles waited, prayed, and were seeking God’s direction in this unstable time. What do you need to wait for God and seek Him for today?

DAY 2:

“They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”
[Acts 1:14, NIV]

- ▶ When have you prayed continually for a long period of time? What happened?

- ▶ Who can you join together in prayer with today? This week?

DAY 3:

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”
[Ephesians 6:18, NIV]

- ▶ What do you think it means to pray in the Spirit? How can you do that this week?

- ▶ What are “all kinds of prayers and requests” you can and should be praying for?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.”
[Acts 1:23, NIV]

- ▶ When have you faced a decision which seemed to have two equally good outcomes? What did you decide and why?

- ▶ Who are some leaders or servants who faithfully work behind the scenes and do not care about the credit? How can you do this for WCC and the Kingdom?

DAY 5:

“Then they prayed, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen’”
[Acts 1:24, NIV]

- ▶ When have you prayed for God’s direction regarding a big decision in your life? How do you feel he responded?

- ▶ When have you seen leaders who did not have the right heart? How can you avoid this for yourself, and seek to help others to have the right heart?

DAY 6:

“I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.”
[Jeremiah 17:10, NIV]

- ▶ Does it bring comfort of concern that God searches your heart and mind?

- ▶ How can you live your life [heart, mind, and actions] so you will be rewarded by your deeds?

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Week 3 - Peter's Sermon/Pentecost

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ACTS 2:1-41

ACTS 2:1

Pentecost was a Jewish festival known as Feast of Harvest, which happened 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus [on the Feast of Weeks/First Fruits]. Jews would make a yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem for these holidays, so this was a perfect time for the Holy Spirit to be unleashed.

ACTS 2:2-4

Read these verses slowly and note the vivid details of Luke's description. Who spoke in tongues? Most likely it was just the 12 apostles since Luke's focus is on apostolic authority.

TONGUES

Some faith groups mistakenly teach that Christians must speak in tongues as proof that they have received the Holy Spirit. This is not taught in Scripture. Of all of the conversion stories in the book of Acts, speaking in tongues is only mentioned 3 times. These occurrences signify that the Holy Spirit had been unleashed to a new and specific group of believers:

Acts 2 - Apostles [Jews]

Acts 10 - Cornelius and his household [Gentiles]

Acts 19 - Christian baptism in Jesus is essential [Disciples]

The only other time the New Testament records believers speaking in tongues is 1 Corinthians 13-14. Paul rebukes the church for abusing the gift of tongues as a self-centered form of worship. He actually discourages the practice of tongues, and says it will cease one day.

ACTS 2:5-13

The Jewish pilgrims who heard the apostles preaching were a symbolic gathering of the scattered tribes of Israel [vs. 5]. Some suggest this event brings about the kingdom fulfillment Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:14, though it is uncertain. The places represent the known Roman empire. Everyone was astounded by the events that unfolded, which set the stage for Peter's sermon.

ACTS 2:14-36

First, Peter boldly assumes leadership to speak up with the apostles. Now, he is the spokesperson of the apostles to the world...even though he could not even speak of Jesus when confronted by a little girl [See Luke 22:56-57]! His boldness symbolizes the power and unleashing of the Holy Spirit. He uses Scripture to show this is the fulfillment of prophecy, and that we are now in the last days. He gives the full gospel message that Jesus was the Messiah, died on the cross, and was resurrected by God. He is Lord and Messiah!

ACTS 2:37-41

The people were emotionally, logically, and biblically moved by Peter's message. They knew there was a response that was needed. Peter gave the simple, yet essential response to the next steps after their initial belief in Jesus: repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit!

ACTS 2:1-41 [NIV]

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

² When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

Peter Addresses the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

²² “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him:

“‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

²⁹ “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.

³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

WEEK 3 - PETER'S SERMON/PENTECOST [ACTS 2:1-41]

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. When have you seen a chaotic, unexplainable event?
2. What is the loudest or strangest sound you have heard come from nature?
3. What is the largest fire you have ever seen?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Read Acts 2:1-4. Luke describes 3 symbols associated with the arrival of the Holy Spirit. Explain the significance of each of them:
2. Read Acts 2:5-13. Why would Luke mention the people groups that were present?
3. What was the purpose of the supernatural events that happened to the apostles?
Hint...it is not speaking in tongues.

4. Read Acts 2:14-21. How do you think these Jews would now understand Joel 2 in a different way?
5. Read Acts 2:22-36. What was the common knowledge the Israelites had about Jesus? What was the purpose of Peter's persuasive sermon?
6. Read Acts 2:36 again. What does it mean for Jesus to be Messiah? What does it mean for Jesus to be Lord?
7. Read Acts 2:37-41. How did the crowd respond? How did Peter respond? Why is a response necessary for salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit?

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. Have you received, accepted, and unleashed the Holy Spirit through faith, repentance, and baptism?
2. Have you made Jesus both Messiah and Lord of your life?
3. How will you unleash the power of the Holy Spirit in your life and if the lives of others this week?

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER

[Spend some time praying with your Life Group. When asking for requests, try to keep the focus on personal praises/requests that relate to people in the group.]

PRAY FOR MISSION OF THE WEEK

Team Expansion: Allen & Cherry Messimer – Taiwan

The Messimers have served as missionaries in Taiwan since 2004. Their mission is to evangelize, disciple, and provide training so every believer can use his or her gifts in a simple church ministry. This also means every church can start new, indigenous churches. Over 90% of Taiwanese people still worship idols. teamexpansion.org

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.”
[Acts 2:2, NIV]

- ▶ When have you been shocked or in awe of a natural event? When have you been frightened by nature?

- ▶ When have you felt awe and wonder from a spiritual event? How can you use these rare experiences to encourage at times you do not feel God’s presence?

DAY 2:

“³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”
[Acts 2:3-4, NIV]

- ▶ Why do you think the tongues of fire separated and came to each of them individually?

- ▶ What is significant about the line “as the Spirit enabled them”? When has the Spirit enabled you to do something for God?

DAY 3:

“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
[Acts 2:21, NIV]

- ▶ When have you called on the name of the Lord, not just for salvation? What did that look like?

- ▶ How is this Old Testament prophecy so important for New Testament theology? What comfort, and inspiration does this give to you?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”
[Acts 2:36, NIV]

- ▶ What does it mean for Jesus to be your Messiah? How should this affect how you live your life?

- ▶ What does it mean for Jesus to be your Lord? How should this affect how you live your life?

DAY 5:

“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”
[Acts 2:37, NIV]

- ▶ When have you been cut to the heart by a sermon, song, or Scripture? What did it inspire you to do?

- ▶ What can you do to seek experiences that will cut to the heart and inspire you to action?

DAY 6:

“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
[Acts 2:38, NIV]

- ▶ What actions did Peter command, and what do they have to do with your everyday life?

- ▶ What results did Peter promise, and what do they have to do with your everyday life?

understanding
the **depth**
of our **faith**

Week 4 - The Church

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ACTS 2:42-47

CHURCH SUMMARY STATEMENTS

Acts 2:42-47 is the first of many “church summary statements” which Luke provides throughout the narrative. His editorial comments do more than just speed up and summarize the story for the reader. Each summary statement provides a positive report of the health of the church and the spread of the Holy Spirit, even in the midst of persecution. [2:42-47; 4:32-37; 5:12-16; 5:42; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:19-20]

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EARLY CHURCH:

- Devoted Church [vs. 42]
“Devoted” here means “hold fast to” or “continue in” or “persevere in.” They did not just put a mission statement on their website...they continually lived out their devotion to Christ and these 4 priorities.
- Learning Church [vs. 42]
“Apostles’ teaching” means they were concerned with healthy doctrine passed on through those who were closest to Jesus. We need to be biblically literate today!
- Friendly Church [vs. 42]
“Fellowship” is the word *koinonia*, which means much more than just being friendly. It means communal living and spiritual dependence upon one-another. Today we would say “doing life together.”
- Remembering Church [breaking of bread] [vs. 42]
“Breaking of bread” most likely refers to Communion/Lord’s Supper, which would have also involved a communal meal. They obeyed Christ’s commands in Luke 22:18-20.
- Praying Church [vs. 42]
“Prayer” is plural in Greek. Luke may have been referring to regular times of prayer similar to Jewish tradition. Prayer was a lifestyle.
- Reverent Church [vs. 43]
“Awe” is the word for “fear.” They marveled at miracles and the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Spirit-Led Church [vs. 43]
“Wonders and signs” accompany the spread of the Holy Spirit and the growth/outreach of the church, as we see through the entire narrative.

- Generous Church [vs. 44-45]

“Common” is the word *koinonia* which means fellowship or community. They shared possessions, property, and everything they had. They took personal responsibility for one-another.

- Worshipping Church [vs. 46]

“Temple courts” means they still worshipped God in public and in display of others. They also met together privately in their homes. See also “praising God” in vs. 47.

- Happy Church [vs. 46]

“Broke bread” is explained in this verse to mean eating together in their homes. They were glad and sincere because of their community with one-another.

- Grace-filled Church [vs. 47]

“Favor” is the word *karis* which means “grace.” They enjoyed grace and favor from God, and from one-another because of their health.

- Growing Church [vs. 47]

Luke does not shy away from celebrating the numerical success of the early church...and neither should we. Also like Luke, we should be just as concerned with the spiritual health and growth of the church, not just numerical.

ACTS 2:42-47 [NIV]

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

WEEK 4 - THE CHURCH [ACTS 2:42-47]

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. What steps do you take in order to be healthy?
2. What steps should you take in order to be healthier?
3. What are some ways that health is measured in a person?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Read Acts 2:41-47. What were some measurements and indicators of health that Luke gives in this report on the early church?
2. What are some measurements and indicators of health that some churches may use today? How can some of these measurements be misleading?
3. Read the section on “Descriptive vs. Prescriptive” on page 4. Luke gives a broad description and summary of the health of the early church. Read Acts 2:41-47 one verse at a time and discuss what principles you think churches today should follow.

- a. 41 - Growing church
- b. 42 - Devoted church
- c. 43 - Spirit-led church
- d. 44-45 - Generous church
- e. 46 - Worshipping church
- f. 47 - Grace-filled church

4. Read Acts 2:42 again. What does the word “fellowship” actually mean? How well do you think our church and our group do with biblical fellowship?
5. What are some ways our group can be more devoted to the things the early church was devoted to?

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. Which of these principles do you need to be devoted to this week?
2. What would our church look like if we unleashed the Holy Spirit like the early church did?
3. How can you contribute to the health and growth of WCC?

PRAY FOR ONE-ANOTHER

[Spend some time praying with your Life Group. When asking for requests, try to keep the focus on personal praises/requests that relate to people in the group.]

PRAY FOR MISSIONS OF THE WEEK

Central Christian College of the Bible

The goal of Central Christian College of the Bible is to raise up servant leaders for the church and to do so as affordably as possible. CCCB believes so completely in what their students will do for Christ that they want to not only equip them with a quality education, but an affordable one so their future ministry will not be burdened by financial stress. That is why CCCB offers a Full-Tuition Scholarship and will continue to do so as long as there are means. cccb.edu

St. Louis Christian College

SLCC seeks to educate Christians and to graduate leaders who are equipped for service to God. They seek learners who are committed to Christ and highly motivated to serve God and the church; students who are capable of completing the academic rigors of a college education; adults who are willing to acquire both knowledge and skills through service and off-campus learning experiences; and men and women who are drawn from a diversity of geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. stlchristian.edu

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”
[Acts 2:41, NIV]

- ▶ When did you first accept the gospel message of Jesus? What do you remember about your baptism? [If you have not been baptized... please reach out to a pastor.]

- ▶ What would your life look like if you lived everyday with the same passion you first had when you accepted Jesus? How can you do this?

DAY 2:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”
[Acts 2:42, NIV]

- ▶ Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 of how devoted you are to each:
___Biblical teaching
___Fellowship
___Communion
___Prayer

- ▶ How can you increase your devotion to each of these this week?

DAY 3:

“Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.”
[Acts 2:43, NIV]

- ▶ When have you been in awe because of a miracle or sign from God? How did others react?

- ▶ What miracles and signs does God still perform today? How can you continue to be in awe of his power and majesty?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”
[Acts 2:44-45, NIV]

- ▶ When has someone helped you when you were in need? When have you helped others?

- ▶ What principles can you develop and apply to your life based on this description of the early church?

DAY 5:

“⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”
[Acts 2:46-47, NIV]

- ▶ Why was it important for the early church to meet daily in the temple courts? In homes?

- ▶ What principles can you develop and apply to your life based on this description of the early church?

DAY 6:

“³⁴A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
[John 13:34-35, NIV]

- ▶ Why would Jesus care about how his followers treated one-another? How do you think Jesus followers treat one-another today?

- ▶ How can you use your relationships with other believers to be an example to those outside of the church?
