

A large, vibrant pink ink splash or smoke plume rises from the bottom, filling the right side of the frame against a light teal background. The ink has a complex, swirling texture with many small bubbles and tendrils.

UNLEASHED

A STUDY OF ACTS

Part 7

Name:

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

SPRING 2022



wentzville
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE BOOK OF ACTS
5	MARCH 27, WEEK 25: COMMON GROUND
13	APRIL 3, WEEK 26: DISCIPLESHIP UNLEASHED
21	APRIL 10, WEEK 27: THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY
29	APRIL 24, WEEK 28: COMPELLED BY THE SPIRIT

PLEASE NOTE WE DO NOT HAVE GROUPS THE WEEK OF EASTER

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.



UNLEASHED

A STUDY OF ACTS

March 27 | Week 25 | Common Ground

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ACTS 17:1-34

AREOPAGUS [Acts 17:19, 22]

The Areopagus, also known as Mars Hill, can refer to both a place and a group. The place was a hill outside of the marketplace dedicated to Ares/Mars where civil and criminal cases were heard. The group was composed of well-respected city leaders including philosophers, judges, and pagan religious leaders. Socrates was brought to this same place for trial in 399 BC. The Areopagus represented the intellectual center of the universe at the time.

STOICS [ACTS 17:18]

Followers of Zeno of Cyprus [335-263 BC]. They were monastic in their approach to life. They felt that happiness came from detaching yourself from material possessions and relationships. So they avoid any pleasure other than the pleasures of simplicity and craving nothing. Sadness would come from losing something you love, so they sought to remain unattached. There are some similarities to Christianity in that they believe in a creator, gods determined one's destiny, and self-denial led to freedom. They did not believe in immortality of the soul or the existence of a spiritual world. Paul's quote in vs. 28 is from a Stoic philosopher. Brutus who killed Julius Caesar was a Stoic.

EPICUREANS [ACTS 17:18]

Followers of Epicurus [341-270 BC]. Their basic understanding was "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you will die." They believed that carnal pleasure was the greatest good. But they were not excessively hedonistic since they believed some actions should be avoided if they led to painful consequences like drunkenness. They were more rational and scientific in their approach to life's dilemmas, so they rejected most religions as irrational.

MODEL MESSAGE

Most scholars consider Paul's speech to the Areopagus a model sermon for evangelizing to Pagans. This sermon corresponds with the model sermon in Acts 13 to the Jews, and the upcoming model sermon to Christians in Acts 20 [for edification, not evangelism]. Paul's intent was not to include all of the truths about Jesus...just enough to dip their toes in the truth and whet their appetite for more.

KNOWING AND USING SCRIPTURE

In these three sections, we see Scripture being used to show truth to those who were living in ignorance. In Thessalonica Paul reasoned, explained, and proclaimed the truth of Jesus from the Scriptures [17:2-3]. In Berea Paul taught in a way that made the Bereans want to eagerly examine the Scriptures every day. In Athens Paul did not quote any Scripture directly, but he taught the truths of Scripture to an unbelieving audience. Likewise, we should know the Bible in such a way that we can teach it, quote, refer to it, paraphrase it, and reword it to be understandable to anyone.

ACTS 17:1-34 [NIV]

In Thessalonica

¹⁷ When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. ⁴ Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

⁵ But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶ But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” ⁸ When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. ⁹ Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

In Berea

¹⁰ As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ¹² As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

¹³ But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. ¹⁴ The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. ¹⁵ Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

In Athens

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?” ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

²⁹ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

³² When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” ³³ At that, Paul left the Council. ³⁴ Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

MARCH 27 - APRIL 2 | WEEK 25 | COMMON GROUND [ACTS 17:1-34]

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. What phone numbers can you still remember from the past?
2. What is something you still have memorized from your childhood? Recite it for the group.
3. What is something you had previously memorized but have now forgotten?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. What is an example where you needed to paraphrase or reword something you knew in order to explain it to someone else?
2. Read Acts 17:1-9. What 3 words are used in vs. 2-3 to describe how Paul used Scripture to proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah? Discuss how each of these words are useful when sharing your faith.
3. Read Acts 17:10-15. Why were the Berean Jews held in such high regard? Why do you think such a response to Scriptures resulted in noble character?

4. How can memorizing Scripture be a benefit when evangelizing? How can quoting Scripture to someone actually become a hindrance at times?
5. Read Acts 17:16-21. Why do you think they wanted to hear more from Paul? What can we learn from Paul's approach to evangelism in these verses?
6. Read Acts 17:22-34. What can we learn from Paul's approach when speaking to the Athenians in vs. 22-23? How did he find common ground?
7. What are some ways Christians can ruin opportunities to tell people about Jesus? What are some ways Christians can speak truth and still be asked to speak again, like Paul was in vs. 32?

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. When and how can you find common ground with someone this week and begin a spiritual conversation?
2. How can you seek to understand Scripture better so you can explain God's truths to others?
3. Who is one person you will have a spiritual conversation with 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 THE MISSION OF THE WEEK

Haitian Island Ministries: Steve & Terry Smith, WCC members

This organization operates medical programs providing free vitamins, medicine, and medical care and feeding programs which provide a daily meal for thousands of Haitian children each month. They also build schools and churches in some of the most remote areas of Haiti. Their medical program has served hundreds of thousands of Haitians. haitianislandministries.org

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“²As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead.”
[Acts 17:2-3a, NIV]

- ▶ Would you be able to reason, explain, and prove something about Jesus to someone with your knowledge of the Bible?

- ▶ How can you increase your knowledge, wisdom, and obedience of God’s Word this week? For your sake? For the sake of others?

DAY 2:

“So that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.”
[Titus 2:10, NIV]

- ▶ How can you be sure your lifestyle makes the teaching of Jesus attractive to those who know you are a Christian?

- ▶ How can you be sure your attitude makes the teaching of Jesus attractive to those who know you are a Christian?

DAY 3:

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”
[1 Peter 3:15, NIV]

- ▶ How can you be more prepared with your knowledge of the Bible so you can be ready to tell others about Jesus?

- ▶ How can you show gentleness and respect when talking to those who disagree with you?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”
[Colossians 4:6, NIV]

- ▶ Which do you think is more important: the content of your conversations or the manner in which you present to someone?

- ▶ How can you be full of grace in your conversations but also hold fast to biblical truths? Who do you need to do this with this week?

DAY 5:

“Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”
[Acts 17:11, NIV]

- ▶ Be honest and rate your eagerness to study Scripture on a scale of 1-10. What steps could you take to increase your eagerness?

- ▶ Be honest and rate your understanding of the Bible on a scale of 1-10. What steps could you take to increase your understanding?

DAY 6:

“When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, ‘We want to hear you again on this subject.’”
[Acts 17:32, NIV]

- ▶ When have you had a negative reaction to something you said about your faith? How did you respond?

- ▶ Who can you find common ground with to start a spiritual conversation with this week? Pray about that conversation now.



UNLEASHED

A STUDY OF ACTS

April 3 | Week 26 | Discipleship Unleashed

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ACTS 18:1-28

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA [Acts 18:1-4; 18:26]

This dynamic duo were extremely helpful to Paul's ministry. They are sort of contrasted with the destructive duo of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. Aquila was a tentmaker like Paul, which was one reason for their close partnership. A tentmaker was likely a catch-all term for someone who dealt with all sorts of leather and woven goods. Paul mentions Priscilla and Aquila multiple times in his letters, which means they remained close associates and ministry partners [1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:19, Prisca was Priscilla's formal name]. The fact that Priscilla's name is often mentioned first shows that she played a significant role in the ministry of the early church.

ASKING FOR HELP [Acts 18:5]

Paul was very willing to ask for help in major ways. It is difficult to overstate the logistical and financial burdens of Paul's missionary journeys. Travel was expensive, slow, and dangerous. Paul and his team sought to devote as much of their time as possible to preaching the Gospel and support new congregations, but it was a challenge. They struggled to find venues where they could teach and safe places where they could stay for lengthy periods. Paul and his team needed friends in the community to help them and there were very few seasoned Christians at this point.

God orchestrated friendships for Paul with a handful of especially influential individuals. Many people placed their trust in Christ and partnered with Paul in substantial ways throughout his journeys. Paul was not afraid to ask for help or receive help in his ministry, but he was also cautious to not over-ask and become a burden. [See 2 Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 4:19]

PAID PASTORS [Acts 18:5]

There are times when Paul would use his trade as a tentmaker to provide for himself and support his own ministry. But there were other times he would gladly accept and even ask for support from others. There is neither a right or wrong approach. Throughout the New Testament we see many examples of pastors or ministers being paid and supported. This echoes the support God instituted for the Priests and Levites in the Old Testament [Numbers 18:8-32]. In Acts 18:5 we see that the support from the Macedonian church allowed Paul to focus on his primary calling and giftedness: preaching. [See also 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10; 1 Corinthians 9:9-14; Philippians 4:16-19; Acts 6:2; 1 Timothy 5:17-18.]

ACTS 18:1-28 [NIV]

In Corinth

18¹After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³ and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴ Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵ When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. ⁶ But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

⁷ Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. ⁸ Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

⁹ One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” ¹¹ So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

¹² While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment. ¹³ “This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.”

¹⁴ Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to them, “If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. ¹⁵ But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.” ¹⁶ So he drove them off. ¹⁷ Then the crowd there turned on Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the proconsul; and Gallio showed no concern whatever.

Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos

¹⁸ Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. ¹⁹ They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰ When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹ But as he left, he promised, “I will come back if it is God’s will.” Then he set sail from Ephesus. ²² When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

²³ After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

²⁴ Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor[a] and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

²⁷ When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸ For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

APRIL 3-9 | WEEK 26 | DISCIPLESHIP UNLEASHED [ACTS 18:1-28]

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. Who are some people with a lot of skill but their morals or beliefs are compromised?
2. When has someone seen potential in you and helped you develop?
3. When have you felt like you were capable of a job/task/opportunity but were overlooked?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Read Acts 18:1-8. How does Luke's description of Paul being a tentmaker [vs. 3] relate to Silas and Timothy's arrival [vs. 5]?
2. What leadership lesson can we learn from Paul being able to devote himself exclusively to preaching in Acts 18:5? [See "Asking for Help" and "Paid Pastors" on pg. 14]
3. Read Acts 18:9-17. How does this vision from Jesus allow Paul to continue focusing on his ministry?

- 4. Read Acts 18:18-28. What descriptions does Luke include about Apollos? Even though he was extremely skilled and effective, how was he failing as an evangelist?**
- 5. What are some benefits of delegating/empowering leadership to others? What are some cautions we need to look out for?**
- 6. Why do you think Priscilla and Aquila approached Apollos the way that they did in vs. 26? What can we learn from this as we lead and disciple people today?**
- 7. Why does poor theology need to be corrected today? What can happen if it is allowed to continue?**

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. How can you offer support to someone who is doing ministry in a way you are not gifted at?
2. How can you help to develop others through delegating and empowering?
3. How can you correct the beliefs of others with kindness and respect?

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 THE MISSIONS OF THE WEEK

Show-Me Christian Youth Home

This faith-based organization seeks to improve the lives of children struggling because of circumstances in their current home environment. showmehelpingkids.com

Shiloh Christian Children's Ranch

Located in Kahoka and Clarence, MO, Shiloh is a safe haven for abused and neglected children, and includes six homes for children, two relief homes, and an onsite school. shilohranch.org

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“**“Teach these things and insist that everyone learn them. “Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.”**
[1 Timothy 4:11-12, NLT]

- ▶ Why would Paul give these instructions to a young person he was empowering to lead a church? Why would Paul need to support young leaders in various churches?

- ▶ Why is the example of a leader so important? Words? Lifestyle? Love? Faith? Purity?

DAY 2:

“**Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them.”**
[1 Timothy 4:13, NLT]

- ▶ How important is the reading of Scripture to you? Encouraging other believers? Teaching/empowering others?

- ▶ In what ways can you focus on these three commands this week? What will you do to turn these into habits?

DAY 3:

“**Do not neglect the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you.”**
[1 Timothy 4:14, NLT]

- ▶ What gifts do you think have been given to you so you can use them for the benefit of the Kingdom of God? How are you using them?

- ▶ What can get in the way and make you neglect or forget about the callings and gifts you have received from God?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress.”
[1 Timothy 4:15, NLT]

- ▶ Why would Paul want Timothy, a young leader in a new church, to be completely devoted and focused on obeying Scripture?

- ▶ Why would Paul want Timothy to show his growth, devotion, and obedience in public? How is this important for discipleship, empowerment, and delegation of leadership?

DAY 5:

“Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you.”
[1 Timothy 4:16, NLT]

- ▶ Why would Paul tell Timothy to keep a close watch on his teaching AND the way he lives? Which do you think is more important?

- ▶ What can happen to leaders and followers if there is a breakdown in biblical lifestyles and/or theology?

DAY 6:

“For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.”
[Acts 18:28, NLT]

- ▶ What kind of debates do you find yourself getting into? What is usually the result of those debates?

- ▶ How would you use the Scriptures to prove Jesus was the Messiah? How would you use your life and testimony to show Jesus is your Savior?



UNLEASHED

A STUDY OF ACTS

April 10 | Week 27 | Third Missionary Journey

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ACTS 19:1-41

WRONG BAPTISM [Acts 19:1-7]

Yes, there are wrong ways to be baptized. Yes, there are wrong reasons to be baptized. This passage is proof. It seems as though the entire reason Luke includes this story is to show the importance of Christian baptism. This story is also connected to what comes immediately before in Acts 18:24-26. In that passage from last week, the entire point of that story is that Apollos was a gifted communicator and evangelist...but his theology was wrong and incomplete. These were sincere mistakes in theology, but they had to be corrected.

JOHN'S BAPTISM [Acts 19:4-6]

John the Baptist was the cousin of Jesus [Luke 1], an extremely successful preacher [Luke 3:1-20], and the fulfillment of prophecy to prepare the way for Jesus [Luke 3:4-6]. He preached in the wilderness outside of Jerusalem in order to usher in the ministry of Jesus. He personally baptized Jesus, but was soon killed because he spoke out against King Herod the Tetrarch [Luke 3:19-20].

Ephesus was 800 miles from Jerusalem where John the Baptist had preached and this event in Acts was happening decades later. So John's influence in the region was enormous. John's baptism was not sufficient for salvation; it was a precursor to show that something greater was coming [Luke 3:16]. John's baptism and Christian baptism are both tied to repentance, but Christian baptism involves so much more. This story unites belief/faith, repentance, water baptism, the Holy Spirit, and salvation.

EXORCISMS [Acts 19:13-16]

This is something we should be very cautious of. Movies, books, and folklore perpetuate many myths and misconceptions about demonic activity. Christians and non-Christians may get caught up in thinking they can understand and control the spiritual world, either for good or bad intentions. This can be very, very dangerous. Exorcisms, or any miracle for that matter, can only be performed through the power and permission of God/Jesus/Spirit. We cannot copy the actions, words, or procedures of anyone else and use them as a formula to freely wield the power of God/Jesus/Spirit. [See Mark 9:28-29 for another example of a failed exorcism.]

ARTEMIS/DIANA [Acts 19:24, 35]

Artemis is the Greek rendition of the Roman goddess Diana. She is portrayed as a virgin huntress and is the goddess of wild animals. She is often portrayed as a grotesque figure with many nodules protruding from her chest which can be understood as fertility symbols.

ACTS 19:1-22 [NIV]

Paul in Ephesus

19¹ While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

³ So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

⁴ Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

⁸ Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

¹¹ God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

¹³ Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” ¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵ One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

¹⁷ When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. ¹⁸ Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. ¹⁹ A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. ²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

²¹ After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.” ²² He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

APRIL 10-16 | WEEK 27 | THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY [ACTS 19:1-41]

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. What is something you did not know until you were older but should have known sooner?
 - a. [Example: The famous painting “American Gothic” shows a farmer with a pitchfork and his daughter...not wife. The pitchfork is to scare off her suitors.]
2. Have someone search for “30 Secret Messages Hidden in Popular Logos” and give a few examples to discuss as a group.
 - a. [Example: The Wendy’s logo says “MOM” in her collar.]

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Read Acts 19:1-7. How does this passage relate to the correction of Apollos’ theology in 18:25-26?
2. Why do our beliefs in the Holy Spirit, baptism, and Jesus matter so much? [See “Wrong Baptism” and “John’s Baptism” on pg. 22]
3. Read Acts 19:8-12. What kinds of success did Paul have in Ephesus? What actions led to his success and what can we learn from this?

4. Read Acts 19:13-16. How does Paul's success [vs. 11-12] contrast with the failure of the sons of Sceva [vs. 13-16]? What does this story show us about having a healthy approach to demonic activity? [See "Exorcisms" on pg. 22]
5. Read Acts 19:17-20. How do the contrasting stories in vs. 11-16 lead to the results in these verses?
6. Read Acts 19:23-41. Have someone summarize the story. Why were the Ephesians so upset?
7. What are some idols in our culture today which may conflict with the truths of Scripture?

CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. How can you have and help others have a healthy theology of baptism and salvation?
2. How can you have and help others have a healthy approach to spiritual matters?
3. How can you have and help others have a healthy approach to cultural realities?

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 THE MISSION OF THE WEEK

Outreach International - Mexico | Josh & Susan Sanchez

This mission, called Me & My House Ministries, is a church plant in Colima City. Their goal is to begin a church planting movement within the region. Their first church plant in Manzanillo is currently being led by a member of the church that stepped in to lead so Josh & Susan could plant the new church in Colima.

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”
[Acts 19:10, NIV]

▶ What are some of your favorite viral videos? What made them go viral, and what benefit do they bring to the people who watch them?

▶ Stop and consider the significance of Paul’s ministry in the entire region of Asia! How can you be a part of a viral ministry in our region?

DAY 2:

“When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.”
[Acts 19:17, NIV]

▶ When you think about God, what brings you fear? How is fear related to respect and honor?

▶ How could having fear of God lead you to love Jesus more? In what ways can you hold Jesus in high honor today? This week?

DAY 3:

“Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done.”
[Acts 19:18, NIV]

▶ At what points in your life have you openly confessed your sins to someone else? What led up to these moments?

▶ Why is confessing to God so important? Why is confessing to other believers beneficial? [See James 5:16]

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.”
[Acts 19:19, NIV]

- ▶ What is something from your previous way of life that you have gotten rid of because it was not appropriate for a Christian lifestyle?

- ▶ Why do you think Luke includes the enormous value of these scrolls? What does this show you about the importance of repentance?

DAY 5:

“The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there.”
[Acts 19:32, NIV]

- ▶ This verse shows the dangers of mob-mentality and cancel-culture where people decide to join the crowd and tear someone down. When have you seen this happen before?

- ▶ How can you avoid the confusion of culture and the crowds around you and seek to understand God’s truths better?

DAY 6:

“¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”
[Ephesians 6:10-11, NIV]

- ▶ Why does Paul say we should be strong in God’s mighty power...not our own? When have you tried to stand strong on your own power?

- ▶ Where have you seen the devil’s schemes in your life? How can you recognize them in the future and stand up against them?

A STUDY OF ACTS

PLEASE NOTE WE DO NOT HAVE GROUPS THE WEEK OF EASTER

COMPELLED BY THE SPIRIT [ACTS 20:1-21:16]

FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK [Acts 20:7]

Luke includes the small but significant detail that Christians would meet together on the first day of the week to break bread together. The first day of the week was Sunday, which was the day Jesus was resurrected from the dead. It was the law, custom, and tradition of the Jews to meet as congregations in the synagogues on the Sabbath which was Saturday. This first-person account from Luke confirms that the new custom for Christian congregations was to meet on Sundays to celebrate the Lord's Day. Also note the first person "we" which means Luke was present for this resurrection event. [See John 20:1; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10; gotquestions.org/Lords-day.html]

CHURCH IN EPHESUS [Acts 20:13-38]

Paul briefly established the church in Ephesus during his second missionary journey and left Priscilla and Aquila as leaders [Acts 18:19-21]. He promised he would come back, which he did between his second and third missionary journeys. Paul's extended stay in Ephesus lasted around three years, which is the longest recorded time Paul spent in one place [Acts 19:8-10; 20:31]. He saw tremendous success in this city; so much that the entire region and province of Asia heard about the Word of the Lord [Acts 19:10].

The book of Acts ends with Paul's imprisonment in Rome. It is during this time that he wrote the epistle of Ephesians to the church. This letter, especially the first chapter, shows the tremendous love and close relationship Paul had with the Ephesian church.

PAUL'S FINAL SERMON [Acts 20:18-35]

This is the last of Paul's three main sermons in Acts and the only one directed to believers. Paul stresses four major themes that summarize his entire ministry career: preaching the Gospel of Grace [vs. 21, 25-27, 31-32], suffering [vs. 19, 22-23], giving/working [vs. 18, 33-35], and leadership [vs. 28-31]. This is a message to the Church, not just one congregation. This sermon has two unique and interesting features. [1] Paul never cites Scripture. Rather, his "text" is the testimony of his own life of service and suffering for the believers. [2] Paul does quote Jesus, but it is a saying never recorded in the Gospels. This free-floating proverb is attached to Paul's sermon as its finale. How fitting that Jesus gets the last word in Paul's final sermon!

ACTS 20:16-38 [NIV]

*Due to space constraints, we have only included Acts 20:16-38 below. The entire passage for this week's message and study is Acts 20:1-21:16.

Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Elders

20 ¹⁶ Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰ You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

²² "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

²⁵ "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

³² "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. ³⁷ They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. ³⁸ What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

APRIL 24-30 | WEEK 28 | COMPELLED BY THE SPIRIT [ACTS 20:1-21:16]

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. When have you been happy to do something you did not enjoy because it was beneficial for others?
2. When have you made a big commitment not knowing exactly what you were getting yourself into?
3. Do you tend to count the cost before you make a commitment, or do you jump right in and figure it out as you go? Why?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Read Acts 20:7-12. Why do you think Luke included the detail of breaking bread twice in this story? [See “First Day of the Week” on pg. 30]
2. Read Acts 20:16-38. What stands out to you about the relationship Paul had with the Ephesian church? [See “Church in Ephesus” on pg. 30]
3. Paul knew he was about to face prison and hardship. How does what he talks about in the speech to the Ephesian leaders surprise you?

4. Read Acts 20:22-24 again. What is shocking about how the Holy Spirit compels Paul? How does this compare to what many people think the Holy Spirit may be leading them to do?
5. Read Acts 20:25-31 again. Why is the imagery of sheep, shepherds, and wolves appropriate for the leaders and overseers of the church?
6. Read Acts 20:32-35. Why do you think Paul ended his speech by encouraging the leaders to be generous? What can we learn from this?
7. Have 3 people read the following passages: Acts 21:4; 21:10-11; 21:12-14. What do each of these have in common and how do they contrast with what Paul thought the Spirit was compelling him to do?

CHANGE QUESTIONS

[These questions are for personal application. They can be answered out-loud if someone wants to share, but do not force it. Ask each question and give time for personal reflection.]

1. **How can you develop close relationships with those in our church like Paul did with the Ephesians?**
2. **When have you sought comfort and convenience instead of answering the call to surrender?**
3. **Where do you think the Holy Spirit is leading you? What do you think you are being called to do?**

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: Tim & Amy Maxson

The Maxsons work at Fellowship Dubai church in the Middle East and are making disciples of migrant workers. Tim & their ministry are where we first learned of the 3-Circle Method of telling others about Jesus. The Maxson family has five children. teamexpansion.org

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 1-3]

DAY 1:

“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ^aWhat is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.”

[Philippians 3:7-8, NIV]

- ▶ What is the most valuable possession you have? What would it take for you to throw it in the garbage?

- ▶ What are some things of this world which you find difficult to give up? What do you need to get rid of [literally or metaphorically] in order to know Jesus Christ better?

DAY 2:

“Then Paul answered, ‘Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’”

[Acts 21:13, NIV]

- ▶ What are some movies or stories of real people who have been willing to put their lives on the line for something they believe? What did they all have in common?

- ▶ If you are being honest... what are you willing to give up for the name of Jesus? Would you be bound? Beaten? Killed?

DAY 3:

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

[Galatians 6:10, NIV]

- ▶ In Acts 20:35, Paul quotes Jesus “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” When have you seen this to be true?

- ▶ What are some opportunities where you can do good to someone who is not a believer? Someone who is a believer?

DAILY DEVOTION [DAYS 4-6]

DAY 4:

“When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. ²He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people”
[Acts 20:1-2, NLT]

- ▶ Why do you think Luke says that Paul encouraged the people two different times? When have you received some much needed encouragement?

- ▶ What kind of encouragement is most encouraging to you? Write down the names of 3 people you will encourage this week.

DAY 5:

“²²And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.”
[Acts 20:22-23, NIV]

- ▶ When have you felt the Holy Spirit leading you to go somewhere or do something? How did it turn out?

- ▶ Why is this an odd prompting of the Holy Spirit? What hardship do you think the Holy Spirit may be compelling you to endure?

DAY 6:

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”
[2 Corinthians 4:17, NIV]

- ▶ When have you or someone you know gone through something very terrible, but there was a silver lining in that it led to something much better in the end?

- ▶ What do you think our eternal glory will be like? How can you keep that in perspective when you go through difficulties here on earth?
