

# Acts

A PICTURE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

# Acts 1

June 27

1. The purpose of Luke's first book was that Theophilus might have an "orderly account" and that he might "have certainty concerning the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1-4). What would you conclude after reading Acts 1:1-11 as to his purpose and themes in this second book?
2. What major similarities would you draw between the end of the gospel account (Luke 24:45-53) and the first events in Acts (Acts 1:4-11).
3. Jesus states that the apostles are to be witnesses "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Do you believe this has already been accomplished, or do you believe that disciples today still have a roll in this mission? Explain your answer.
4. Peter quotes from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. Why are these Psalms appropriate to their current situation?
5. Luke highlights the prayers of the apostles on two occasions (1:14, 24-25). In what specific circumstances would today's Christian benefit from similar prayers?





# Acts 3

July 11

1. Peter and John were anticipating an opportunity for prayer (3:1), but instead God granted them an opportunity to serve (3:2-8). How might you recognize the ministry opportunities God is giving you?
2. This passage is often quoted concerning giving money to those who beg (3:6). From experience and from Scripture, what habits should define healthy and helpful acts of generosity?
3. The people are indicted for asking for the release of Barabbas, rather than Jesus (3:14-15; Luke 23:18-25). What made this so ironic (or absurd) in Peter's mind?
4. According to Peter, what will happen as the result of repentance? (3:19-21)
5. The people would have well known the prophecy of Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). What about this reference (3:22-26) would have inspired the next two thousand people to be numbered among the believers (4:4)?

## Acts 4

July 18

1. Imagine that you were the disciples and you have been hauled in front of the ruling body of the Jews. They want to question you. What are you thinking or feeling as all their eyes are fixed on you?
2. Peter's words are often cited as the defining statement about the delineation of Christian civil disobedience (4:19; See also 5:29). What are the key factors in the Christian's relationship with the government?
3. The disciples and their friends used Psalm 2 as the basis for their prayer (4:24-30; Psalm 2). Why is this Psalm fitting for their situation?
4. Twice Luke records that the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit (4:8, 31). What happened on each of those occasions?
5. Despite the early turbulence filling Jerusalem, the early church was still filled with tremendous acts of generosity for each other (4:32-37). Christians still have a capacity to show incredible generosity. What is the greatest act of generosity among Christians to which you have been privy?

# Acts 5

July 25

1. The deception of Ananias and Sapphira was undoubtedly derived from a desire for comparison with Barnabas. How can comparison create an unhealthy dynamic in a church?
2. The actions of the early church (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37) have inspired some to conclude that the New Testament teaches a kind of faith-based socialism. How does the story of Ananias and Sapphira affirm or contradict that conclusion?
3. The growth of the church up until this point has been amazing (2:41, 47; 4:4). Now it can only be described as “more than ever” (5:14). In what way is that statement surprising and in what ways should it be expected?
4. Gamaliel recounted two examples in which the plan was an undertaking of man and therefore failed (5:36-37). With what examples could you prove that God’s plan succeeds despite contrary human efforts?
5. The apostles left their trial “rejoicing that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (5:41). Repeatedly the Scriptures teach that suffering is a necessary part of the Christian life (See Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:1-2; et al.). List the ways you should expect to suffer as a Christian today.

## Acts 6-7:53

August 1

1. The Hellenistic widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food (6:1). What problem does this illustrate in the early church?
2. The seven men who were chosen to serve were highly qualified (6:3), but they were willing to serve in a rather menial task. What can you do to prepare your heart to serve in ways that carry less esteem?
3. From what is said about him (6:3-5; 8-15), compose a description of Stephen. Who is he and what are his most noticeable attributes?
4. Stephen's message is a lesson from Bible history. List all the Biblical people mentioned in the speech.
5. Stephen concludes, "As your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7:51). What similarities would he connect between his audience and the historical Hebrews he has been describing?

## Acts 7:54-8

August 8

1. What is your first impression of Saul of Tarsus?
2. How would you answer the person who said, "I don't see how any good can come from the suffering and persecution of Christians?"
3. Compare the emotions of the devout men who buried Stephen (8:2) and those in the city of Samaria (8:8). Share a time in your life when God quickly turned your sorrow to joy.
4. How would you have evaluated Simon as a prospective Christian because of his profession? Because of his initial reaction? And because of his early sins in his Christian walk?
5. What attributes of a witness and a soul winner does Philip exhibit in this section (8:4-8; 26-40)?

## Acts 9

August 15

1. Saul had been persecuting Christians; how do you explain why Jesus said, “persecuting me” (9:4)?
2. Knowing Ananias apprehension (9:13-14), the words, “Brother Saul,” (9:17) may have felt foreign. Has there ever been a Christian that you struggled to regard as a brother or sister? What advice do you think Ananias would give you?
3. Barnabas means “son of encouragement” (4:36). What does Barnabas teach about the actions of an encourager in his interactions with Saul (9:26-28)?
4. The story of Peter raising Tabitha is remarkably similar to Jesus’ raising of Jarius’ daughter (Mark 5:35-43). How are these similarities significant?
5. Peter made a point to give Jesus glory for healing Aeneas and pray before raising Tabitha. Why is it important for Peter to do this?

# Acts 10

August 22

1. Given the details included by Luke (10:1-8), write a description of a modern-day Cornelius.
2. Peter was repulsed by the command to violate Kosher Law (10:14; Leviticus 11), the Jewish practice of distinguishing clean and unclean foods. He concludes from this vision that, "God shows no partiality" (10:34-35). What does this dissolution of Kosher teach about the initial purpose for the law?
3. Peter gives this short speech in his opportunity to share the Gospel (10:34-43). Which of the same major themes would you address should you get the opportunity to share the good news about Jesus?
4. How would you answer the person who contended from this section (10:44-48) that a person must receive the Holy Spirit before being baptized?

# Acts 11

August 29

1. Peter is immediately met with criticism (11:2). What can you learn from Peter's response about how to better handle when you are criticized?
2. At what point in Peter's recounting would you have been convinced of God's desire for all men?
3. Compare Peter's conviction in this passage to his compliance in Galatians 2:11-14. Why do you think Peter changed his practice of fellowship with Gentiles?
4. If Barnabas had not gone to get Saul, Barnabas would not have had to share the credit for what was accomplished in Antioch. What does the decision to include Saul reveal about Barnabas?
5. Collection for the relief of Jewish brethren becomes a task to which Paul will exhibit immense effort (Acts 11:27-30; Galatians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15). He will even argue that it is Gentile Christian's moral imperative to do so (Romans 15:25-31). Should the modern believer continue to give special attention to Jewish Christians? Explain your answer.

# Acts 12

September 5

1. What seems to have motivated Herod's violence against the church?
2. At least one year has passed since Jesus' death and resurrection (12:3; likely many more) at which point Jesus promised that Peter would go to prison and to death (John 21:18-19). Therefore, it is entirely possible that this will be Peter's final night. But Peter has also been miraculously released from prison by an angel once (5:17-21). Put yourself in Peter's sandals. What do you anticipate will happen over the next twenty-four hours? What thoughts and emotions are you experiencing?
3. The prayers made on behalf of Peter were "earnest" (12:5 ESV), "without ceasing" (KJV), and "fervent" (NASB). Yet, reactions to God's response are met with disbelief (12:14-17). What lessons can you apply from this text to your own prayer life?
4. Contrast the outcome for Herod with the outcome for the word of God (12:20-24).

# Acts 13

September 12

1. From its brief introduction in 13:1-3, use five adjectives to describe the church at Antioch?
2. As with Elymas and so often is the case, some endeavor “making crooked the straight paths of the Lord” (13:10). How do you handle those who stand in opposition to your sharing the good news of Jesus?
3. Imagine that Paul was in our pulpit giving this sermon (13:16-43) and you were taking notes. What would you write down wanting to remember from this message?
4. Compare Acts 13:44-52 and Romans 9:30-10:4. From these two texts, explain why the Jews rejected the gospel and the Gentiles embraced it.
5. What did the apostles signify when they “shook off the dust from their feet”? When is it appropriate to do so?

# Acts 14

September 19

1. Despite great opposition, why do you think the apostles stayed “for a long time” (14:3)?
2. Put yourself in Paul and Barnabas’ sandals: how would you have felt after seeing those at Lystra react to the miracle?
3. Paul’s next message to the churches was, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (14:22). He lived his message. Which actions of Paul give you greater courage to encounter tribulations?
4. Read Titus 1:5-11 and 1 Peter 5:1-5. Why would the work of elders have been especially important in the cities where Paul established churches? How important are elders to the work of our congregation?
5. Imagine that you were to recount the events of the journey to the church at Antioch (14:24-28). What aspects of the trip would you have emphasized?

# Acts 15

September 26

1. What was at stake in the controversy over circumcision?
2. James quotes from Amos 9:11-12. What bearing does this passage have on the issue at hand?
3. Why would James lay these four “burdens” on the Gentiles?
4. What principles from this passage should be applied when a church decision is not unanimously applauded?
5. What kind of disagreements are comparable to the one between Paul and Barnabas?

6. This disagreement did not permanently sour the relationship between the affected parties. What attitude did Paul express concerning Barnabas and John Mark in his epistles? (I Corinthians 9:6; Colossians 4:10; II Timothy 4:11)

7. Why would leaders like Barnabas and Paul chose to take inexperienced youths, like John Mark and Timothy to participate in the work?

# Acts 16

October 3

1. After all of the debating concerning the necessity of circumcision, why do you think Paul had Timothy circumcised before joining the work (16:3)?
2. The companions' experience (16:6-8) could have results in frustration, discouragement, or both. What kind of roadblocks have you faced in doing the Lord's work? How does the example from this text help you prepare for those moments?
3. Lydia is one of the four people Luke describes as believed with her "household" (11:14; 16:15, 34, 18:8). Many Christians dream of having a believing "household." What wise actions can today's Christian do to be an influence on the whole family?
4. The slave-girl's owners rejected the gospel, because they preferred material gain (16:19). What reasons have you seen for people rejecting the gospel?

5. Bloody, battered and locked in stocks, Paul and Silas spent the night singing and praying (16:25). Why do you think they did this?

6. Like most new converts, the jailor “rejoiced... that he had believed in God” (16:34). Do you still have the joy you first had when you became a Christian? If so, how are you expressing that joy? If not, how will you recapture the joy of believing in Christ?

# Acts 17

October 10

1. From which Old Testament Scriptures would you argue to prove “it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead” (17:2-3)?
2. Paul and Silas “turned the world upside down” (17:6). What kind of things would Christians today be doing if this were still the goal?
3. Because of the misunderstanding of the subject of Luke’s comment in 17:11, the Thessalonians often get a bad reputation; however, this is a church Paul loved and praised. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 and describe why Paul loved and praised this faithful band of believers?
4. What benefits are afforded to those who, like the Berean Jews, “search the Scriptures daily” (17:11)?

5. For Paul to be provoked meant he was angry because of the widespread idolatry (17:16). What makes you angry about society's sins? How are you allowing this anger to provoke you to take action?
  
6. What strategy did Paul use to connect with his audience (17:22-31)?
  
7. With this audience, Paul preaches on a basic level, trying to give them a picture of the "Unknown God." List the key points he tried to get across to them.

## Acts 18-19:7

October 24

1. What encouragement and difficulties does Paul experience during his year and half at Corinth?
2. The city of Corinth had a reputation of wickedness and immorality (ref. 1 Cor. 6:9-14). Yet Jesus said, "I have many in this city" (18:9-11). How does this encourage you as you and your congregation work to share Jesus with those in your community?
3. With Paul's departure from Ephesus and his arrival back in Antioch, his 2nd missionary journey has come to an end. In your own words, sum up the success and trials Paul faced on this trip.
4. What theme is contained both in the story of Apollos (18:24-28) and the twelve disciples (19:1-7)?

5. Compare the baptism of John (Luke 3:1-17) with the baptism of Jesus (Acts 2:37-41).

6. Why was it appropriate for the twelve disciples to be baptized again?

## Acts 19:8-41

October 31

1. Paul and his companions stopped teaching in the synagogue after three weeks and continued to speak in the School of Tyrannus for two years (19:8-10). What decisions does this encourage you to make in serving the Lord and spreading the gospel?
2. Why do you think the humiliation of the sons of Sceva (19:13-17), had such an impact on those in Ephesus?
3. What could have caused the disciples at Ephesus to transform from radically repentant believers (19:18-20) to the church found in Revelation 2:1-7?
4. What are the real reasons for the disturbance caused by the silversmiths (19:23-28)?
5. After what happened in Ephesus and Corinth (18:12-17), explain why Peter and Paul urge Christians to submit to governing authorities. (Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17)

## Acts 20

November 7

1. Luke pays special attention to telling the story of Paul at Troas, including the incident with Eutychus (20:1-16). What function does this story play in the larger context of Paul's road to Jerusalem?
2. The first part of Paul's speech to the elders is not about Ephesus, but about his own defense (20:17-27). What benefit should this section have for the one reading the book of Acts?
3. List the trials that would threaten the Ephesians (20:28-31).
4. Paul considered it the word of the shepherds to protect the churches (20:28-31). What do you believe are the greatest dangers for which church shepherds today should be on guard?

## Acts 21:1-36

November 14

1. Put yourself in Paul's sandals. After hearing the pleas and prophecies from the brethren (20: 22-25; 21:1-16) Would you have continued going to Jerusalem? Why or why not?
2. Luke has only documented three times that Paul saw the brothers in Jerusalem (9:26-31; 15:1-35; 21:17-20). Describe Paul's relationship with the brethren at each visit.
3. After expressing concerns about the zealous Jews, the elders advise that Paul should participate in a specific Jewish vow (21:23-24). Was Paul right to participate in the Jewish rites? What Scriptural principles support your answer?
4. How is the accusation against Paul (21:28) like the accusation Paul had furthered against Stephen (6:11-14)?

## Acts 21:37-22:29

November 21

1. What credentials does Paul share (21:37-22:5) to establish credibility among the people?
2. Summarize Paul's defense.
3. What causes the Jews to stop listening and start demanding Paul's execution?
4. Concerning what topic(s) have you seen people passionately reject the gospel?
5. Paul will highlight his Roman citizenship on multiple occasions in this event (21:39; 22:25-29). How can being a US citizen help or hinder your efforts to spread the gospel?

## Acts 22:30-23:35

November 28

1. Paul said, “Brothers, I have lived in my life before God in all good conscience up to this day” (23:1). Rewrite this in your own words.
2. Paul causes a division concerning the resurrection (23:6-10). Is this a distraction or the heart of the issue? Explain your answer.
3. Once again, the Lord appears to Paul at a crucial point in his ministry (23:11). How does the Lord’s message encourage Paul to keep the faith?
4. The conspiracy reflects the Jews’ attitude towards Paul (23:12-22). How does Romans 9:3 reflect Paul’s attitude about them?
5. Are the actions of Claudius Lysias (23:23-34) actions of wisdom, providence or both?

## Acts 24:1-25:12

December 5

1. Paul now stands on trial before Felix. The accusers have assembled. After reading their statement (24:1-9), list the strategies they employ trying to tip the scales of justice.
2. Paul was falsely accused, saying that he “stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world” (24:4). Should Christians ever be rightly accused of disrupting public peace? Explain your answer.
3. How does Paul disarm the accusations made against him (24:10-21)?
4. Felix procrastinates, possibly because he is convicted by Paul’s message and, definitely, because he is greedy and corrupt (24:22-27). If you have ever seen someone keep the gospel at arm’s length, what motivated the delay?
5. Appealing to Caesar would require that Paul be transported to Rome to stand trial. It would require even more detainment and an uncertain verdict. What would motivate Paul to make such a drastic legal maneuver (25:1-12)?

## Acts 25:13-26:32

December 12

1. Do both summaries by Festus (25:13-22, 23-27) accurately reflect his first hearing with Paul (25:1-12)?
2. What points of comparison does Paul create between himself and his accusers in the first part of his speech (26:1-11)?
3. Paul recounts the story of his conversation (26:12-23). Even if it is not as dramatic as Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, what is the value of sharing personal testimony?
4. Festus accuses Paul of being out of his mind (26:24), but Paul asserts that he is being very rational (26:25). To what extent should a Christian expect to be rational and considered crazy for sharing the good news?
5. Would you consider Agrippa's response to Paul's message (26:28-32) tragic or hopeful?

## Acts 27:1-44

December 19

1. Imagine that you are Julius, and you are trying to keep a captain's log to record the events of the travel. What are some of your most notable entries of the journey?
2. Paul understood the risk of the voyage had risen, because of the time of year. Luke notes, "Even the Fast was already over" (27:9). Which fast does he mean? (Consult the NIV or a commentary to answer.)
3. Despite Paul's warnings, Julius "paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship" (27:11). How have you seen voices compete with and at times overpower the message of God?
4. Even though everyone else had given up hope, Paul was the voice of reason and calm (27:33-38). Why should a Christian be able to handle trials better than non-believers?

## Acts 28:1-31

December 26

1. How is God's providence evident throughout Paul's journey?
2. Paul found brethren in Puteoli and Rome (28:13-15). Where have you travelled and been pleased to find brethren there?
3. Paul invited the leaders of the Jews to meet with him (28:17). Are you brave enough to invite those in opposition to the table to have a conversation?
4. If you could have "boldness without hindrance" (28:31) for a whole day, what would you do for God?
5. Even if the ending seems abrupt (28:30-31), why is it a fitting place to conclude this book?