

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 1:1-11

Read Acts 1:1-11.

1. The gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were both written by Luke to a man named Theophilus. What was the purpose of Luke's gospel? (vv. 1-2; Lk. 1:1-4)
2. All Jesus did and said was done through the Holy Spirit. How do we see this pattern continue? (v. 2)
3. Why was it vital for Jesus to give the disciples "convincing proofs that he was alive" (v. 3) after he suffered and died? (Acts 10:39-42; 1 Cor. 15:14-15, 17)
4. The kingdom the disciples have heard Jesus teach about (v. 3) is significantly different from the one the disciples are expecting (v. 6). Use the chart below to see some of these contrasts.

God's Kingdom	Misconceptions about	True Nature of
Lk. 17:20-21		
Mk. 10:42-45		
Jn. 18:33-37		

5. What final instructions does Jesus give his disciples? (v. 4)

Why must they do this? (vv. 4-5)

6. What have the disciples been told to expect when the Spirit comes?

Lk. 24:49

Jn. 14:16-17, 26

Jn. 15:26, 27

Jn. 16:13-15

7. The disciples are still looking for an earthly Jewish monarchy (v. 6). How does Jesus redirect them?
v. 7

v. 8

8. On the map, following the progression in Acts 1:8, draw concentric circles around each region to see how Christ's kingdom would grow and spread through the witness of the apostles.

9. The disciples are only concerned about the nation of Israel. Why would Jesus' description in verse 8 of the kingdom's expansion be more than they could ever have imagined?

How does this challenge you to move outside your comfort zone (crossing geographical, class, cultural, or racial barriers)?



http://www.bible-history.com/maps/palestine_nt_times.html

10. Why do you think Jesus chooses to have his disciples present when he is "taken up" (v. 9) into heaven?

11. What happens as the disciples are "looking intently up into the sky" (v. 10)? (vv. 10-11a)

12. What promise do these angels give the disciples? (v. 11b)

Read Luke 21:27-28 and John 14:1-3. How is the promise of his return encouraging to you?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 1:12-26

Read Acts 1:12-26.

1. There is a slight overlap between Luke's gospel and his account in Acts. Look at verses 12-14 and Luke 24:51-53. Describe what these believers are doing while they wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

2. How has the way the disciples communicate with Jesus changed since he ascended to heaven? (v. 14a)

3. What three groups are assembled in the upper room?
v. 13

v. 14a

v. 14b (📖* Mk. 6:3)

4. What transformation has taken place in Jesus' family members since his death and resurrection? (Mk. 3:21; Jn. 7:5)

5. In the ten-day period between Jesus' ascension and the giving of the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:1), a group gathers of at least 120 believers.
 - a. Who do we see taking a role of leadership right away? (v. 15)

 - b. By what authority does he step into this role? (Mt. 16:15-19; Jn. 21:15-17; 📖 Lk. 22:31)

6. When Peter speaks, he addresses the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot, a fellow disciple. Though Judas should have been a guide for those seeking the Savior, whom did he guide instead? (v. 16; 📖 Jn. 18:2-3, 12)

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

3. How does the coming of the Holy Spirit confirm who Jesus is? (Lk.3:15–16; Jn. 14: 16–18; * Jn. 20:21–22)

4. How is the coming of the Holy Spirit to the believers at Pentecost the fulfillment of God’s overarching plan? (Lev. 26:11–12; Zech. 2:10–11)

5. There were many pilgrims in Jerusalem for the festival.
 - a. What do we know about them? (vv. 5, 8–11a)

 - b. What surprising thing did they experience? (vv. 6, 8, 11b)

6. What is the significance of this linguistic miracle at Pentecost? (Mt. 28:18–20; Lk. 24:45–48; Acts 1:8;  Gen. 11:1–9)

7. In what four ways does Luke describe the crowd’s reaction to this supernatural event? (vv. 6, 7a, 12, 13)

Why do you think some people responded negatively? ( Acts 7:51)

8. After the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost, the believers begin to courageously testify to “the wonders of God” (v.11). What do you think are “the wonders of God”?

9. When do all Christians receive the indwelling Holy Spirit? (Acts 2:38; 2 Cor. 1:21–22; Eph. 1:13–14)

If you’ve believed, share your story with your group.

Share a time when you were enabled to testify to “the wonders of God.” Do you realize that your testimony was evidence of the powerful filling of the Holy Spirit?

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Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 2:14–41

Review Acts 2:1–13. Then read Acts 2:14–41.

1. Less than two months ago, Peter was quaking in his sandals at the thought of a servant girl finding out he was associated with Jesus. How has he suddenly become bold enough to address this large crowd? (1:8; 2:4)
2. What phrase does Peter use to label the era in which he and his listeners are living? (v. 17a)

What event sets off this era from the one before it? (Heb. 1:1–2; 1 Pet. 1:18–20)

What is the distinguishing feature of this new age—the age in which we still live today? (vv. 17–18, in which Peter quotes the Old Testament prophet Joel; Is. 32:14–17; Ezek. 36:25–27; 39:28–29)

3. In verse 22 Peter turns to the heart of his speech: Jesus. How does he sum up Jesus' ministry in this verse?
4. Peter then walks the crowd through the culminating events in Jesus' work. List them below.
 - a. v. 23:
 - b. vv. 24–32:
 - c. vv. 33–35:
5. What is now possible for humanity as a result of these events that took place in accordance with "God's set purpose and foreknowledge" (v. 23)? (v. 21; Titus 3:3–7; * Rev. 7:9–10)
6. The Old Testament law stipulated that "A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (Deut. 19:15b). To what two witnesses does Peter appeal to establish the matter of Jesus' resurrection? (vv. 25–28, 32)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

7. Why was it “impossible for death to keep its hold on [Jesus]” (v. 24)? (vv. 24–28)

Why will it be equally impossible for death to hold anyone who believes in Jesus? (Rom. 6:3–5; 8:11;  1 Cor. 15:16–26)

8. Peter portrays Jesus as not only the greater descendant of King David who reigns on the throne of Israel (v. 30), but as the cosmic “Lord and Christ” (v. 36) who has been “exalted to the right hand of God” (v. 33) and whose enemies will be made his footstool (v. 35).

a. What response do Peter’s listeners have to this portrayal of the man they have helped crucify? (v. 37)

b. What is your response to this picture of Jesus?

c. What is the only hope for Peter’s listeners—and for us? (v. 38)

9. What has Jesus’ exaltation to the right hand of God the Father made possible? (vv. 33b, 38b;  Jn. 16:7)

10. In 1:8 Jesus told his disciples that they would be his witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Though the crowd in this passage is made up of Jews and converts to Judaism, where do you see hints that this message of salvation will spread across all geographic, ethnic, class, age, and gender lines? (vv. 17–18, 21, 39)

11. The Feast of Pentecost was a time to celebrate the first fruits of the harvest.

a. What was the result of the Holy Spirit’s work on this Pentecost? (v. 41)

b. Why do you think this was the perfect time for the Holy Spirit to come?

12. Through the work of the Spirit, Peter’s message struck his listeners deeply. Which part of his message strikes you particularly? Why?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 2:42–3:10

Read Acts 2:42-47.

1. Who are “they” in verse 42? (Acts 1:15; 2:41)

2. To what four things does this new community devote itself? (v. 42)

3. The signs and wonders mentioned in verse 43 confirm the apostles’ authority. What are they teaching? (Mt. 28:18–20; Lk. 24:45–48; * 1 Cor. 15:3-5)

4. Fellowship, from the Greek word “koinonia,” means “common.”
 - a. What have the believers received in common that unites them? (Acts 2:36–38)

 - b. What is the practical outworking of this unity? (vv. 44–47)

 - c. What model of Christian fellowship have the apostles learned first-hand that they now pass along to the new believers? (Jn. 13:1, 12–17)

5. The believers are also devoted to worshipping together, both formally in the temple courts and informally in individual homes, through “the breaking of bread” and “prayer” (v. 42).
 - a. What does the breaking of bread signify? (1 Cor. 11:23–26)

 - b. Jesus taught the apostles how to pray both by his example and by his instruction. Why do you think prayer becomes such an important part of the life of this new community?

6. Teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread (communion), and prayer are essential to the growth of both individual believers and the community. How have you found this to be true? Encourage one another with examples from your own experience.

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

7. As non-believers see the believers' devotion to Jesus and to one another, what is the glorious result? (v. 47)

By whose power is this accomplished?

Read Acts 3:1-10.

8. What does Luke tell us about the man Peter and John encounter on their way to the temple for prayer? (v. 2)

What do you suppose is his demeanor?

9. Peter and John look intently at the lame man. Why do you think Peter commands the lame man to give him his attention in return?

10. The lame man is "expecting to get something from them" (v. 5). Does the gift he receives meet his expectations? Explain. (📖 Eph. 3:20)

11. When the lame man meets Peter and John that afternoon, whom else does he encounter? (v. 6)

Describe his demeanor now. (vv. 8-9)

12. As the early church gathered, and as many miracles were performed through the apostles, everyone was astonished at the power of the Holy Spirit. Look again at today's passage and jot down other words that describe people's responses to the Spirit's work.

13. Sometimes we get bogged down with the routine of life and miss what the Spirit is doing all around us and the opportunities he's giving us. How could getting more involved in the community of believers help you?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 3:11-26

Review Acts 3:1-10. Read Acts 3:11-20.

1. Why are the people surprised and staring at Peter and John? (vv. 11–12)

2. What does Peter give as the true cause for the healing of the lame beggar? (v. 16)

3. Peter uses this healing to proclaim Jesus to the crowd that has gathered. How does Peter describe him?
v. 13

v. 14

v. 15

v. 16

vv. 18, 20

4. Which description of Jesus stands out to you most? Why?

5. What does Peter tell the people they are guilty of? (vv. 13b–15)

6. God planned and foretold that the Christ, the Messiah, would suffer (v. 18). Why was his suffering necessary? (Isa. 53:5–6, 10a; Rom. 3:23; 1 Pet. 3:18)

7. What blessings will come to those who repent and turn to God?

v. 19a (Acts 2:38a)

v. 19b (Acts 2:38b; 1 Pet. 1:3–5, 8–9)

v. 20 (Jn. 14:1–3)

Read Acts 3:21-26.

8. What does God promise to do when Jesus returns? (v. 21; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:3–5)

9. Even though Peter's listeners committed a heinous crime in rebellion against God and his Son, Peter gives them hope. No matter what horrible things you have done, when you turn to God, your sins are wiped out. How do you respond to this good news? (📖*Consider Psalm 103.)

10. Peter compares Jesus to Moses. What similarity is Peter emphasizing? (v. 22; Deut. 18:18; 📖 Jn. 12:49-50)

11. The people are given a specific command of how to respond to this Prophet. What is the command? (v. 22)

What will happen to those who don't obey this command? (v. 23; Deut. 18:19)

12. Who are the people God intends to bless through Abraham's offspring, Jesus? (vv. 25–26; Rom. 1:16)

How does God intend to bless them? (v. 26b; Rom. 6:22)

13. Who is one person in your life that would be blessed by the good news offered in Jesus' name? Take some time to pray for that person. Look for an opportunity to share what repentance and forgiveness has meant in your life and what it could mean in his or hers.

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 4:1–22

Read Acts 4:1–22.

1. Peter and John are speaking to the people after the healing of the crippled beggar. Who interrupts them? (v. 1)

2. Why are the officials “greatly disturbed” (v. 2)?

3. Why do they feel threatened?
Mt. 27:62–64; 28:5-6, 11–15

Lk. 20:46–47a

Jn. 11:47–48

Acts 23:8a

4. What else happens as a result of the message Peter and John preach?
v. 3

v. 4

5. Peter and John now appear before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council (vv. 7–12).
 - a. What does the council ask them? (v. 7)

 - b. As Peter testifies before this influential group of men, what power and name does he point to? (v. 10)

 - c. What was accomplished through this power and name? (v. 10b)

6. Peter and John saw what this same group of religious leaders did to Jesus. Now they have been thrown into jail for preaching and healing in Jesus’ name.
 - a. What do you think would be a natural response to their circumstances?

 - b. What attitude do you see instead? (vv. 8–12)

7. What stands out to the religious leaders as they examine Peter and John? (v. 13)

8. What accounts for such boldness and courage? (vv. 8, 13c; * Mt. 10:18–20; Lk. 21:12–15)

9. In verse 11, Peter quotes Psalm 118. What does this quotation say about the religious officials (“builders”) and Jesus (“the stone”)? (v. 11)

10. The healed cripple standing before the court is a beautiful picture of a man totally dependent on another to save him. How is our great need and only hope the same as this man’s? (v. 12; Jn. 3:17–18)

11. What can the religious leaders not deny? (vv. 14-16, 22)

12. The small word “But” at the beginning of verse 17 is one of the saddest in the passage. After witnessing an “outstanding miracle” (v. 16), what do these men seek? (v. 17; consider the contrast with v. 4)

13. This ruling council is flexing all its authoritative muscle to get this situation under control. These officials “commanded [Peter and John] not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (v. 18).
 - a. Why? (v.17)

 - b. Why are Peter and John undaunted by the authority of the high council? (v. 19)

14. In the gospels, Peter often speaks in ways that are not in keeping with God’s priorities. Now in Acts, what can Peter not help speaking about? (v. 20; 2:31–32; 3:15)

15. This passage demonstrates how the Holy Spirit empowered Peter to speak with boldness. Have you experienced the Holy Spirit empowering you to witness to what you’ve seen and heard? Share a word of encouragement from your own experience or from what you’ve seen the Spirit accomplish through someone else.

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The Book of Acts

Acts 4:23–35

Review Acts 4:1–22.

1. As the believers listened to the report Peter and John gave them about their interaction with the chief priests and elders (v. 23), what do you think they might have been feeling?

Read Acts 4:23–30.

2. What do the believers immediately choose to do in response to Peter and John's report? (v. 24)
3. Acts 4:24b–30 records the believers' prayer. Given the experience the apostles have just had with the religious rulers, why is it significant that the believers address God as Sovereign Lord?
4. Read Psalm 2.
 - a. How is the quotation from this Psalm relevant to the report the believers have just heard?
 - b. What "kings of the earth...and rulers" (v. 26) united against Jesus in fulfillment of David's prophesy? (v. 27)
 - c. Why are the raging, plotting, and standing against God and his Anointed One in vain? (vv. 24, 27–28; Ps. 2:4–6)
 - d. The cross demonstrates that God uses even the murderous acts of evil men to accomplish his purposes. How would this serve as an encouragement to these believers?
5. It would have been understandable if the believers had asked God in their prayer for protection from harm, but what two things do they ask for instead? (vv. 29–30)

Read Acts 4:31–35.

6. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, there was a "sound like the blowing of a violent wind" (2:2).
 - a. What happens in this passage after the believers finish praying? (v. 31)

- b. Why does God cause these physical signs? (2:18–19, 22; * Ps. 99:1-3)
7. What characterizes the community of believers? (v. 32; 2:44–45)
8. The unity of the believers brought about by the Holy Spirit’s presence and power works itself out in practical ways.
- a. What are some of those ways? (vv. 32b–35)
- b. How does this challenge you?
9. Read Acts 2:24, 32–33, 36; 3:15; Eph. 1:19b–23.
- a. What was the main theme of the apostles’ testimony? (v. 33)
- b. Why?
10. Consider a difficult situation in your life. Using the pattern of the believers’ prayer in this passage, write out your own prayer to the Lord.

Worship

*Acknowledge God’ sovereignty and right to rule.
Acknowledge God’s power as revealed in his creation.*

Acknowledge Your Need

*Recognize that God’s plan cannot be thwarted either by you or others (best evidenced by the death and resurrection of Jesus).
Tell God about your problem.*

Make Your Request

*Ask for courage to speak and live boldly in the midst of the situation in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Ask God to show you how he would have you respond to the situation and people in your life.*

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Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 4:36—5:16

Read Acts 4:36—5:11.

1. Barnabas will be a prominent figure in the mission and teaching ministry of the early church.
 - a. What does this introduction reveal about him? (vv. 36–37)

 - b. In the early church people would occasionally sell their property and bring the money to the apostles. Why? (4:34–35)

2. How is what Ananias and Sapphira do different from what Barnabas did? (v. 2)

What do you think motivated this couple?

3. This couple's actions are contrary to the unity the Holy Spirit has brought about in the young church. Who is trying to undermine God's work? (v. 3a)

4. What sin does Peter rebuke Ananias for committing? (vv. 3–4)

5. Sapphira is given a chance to be honest about the price they received for the land. What does she do with this opportunity? (vv. 8–9a)

6. God's judgment of Ananias and Sapphira's sin seems harsh. Why does sin deserve such a serious consequence? (Ps. 51:4; Rom. 1:32, 2:4–6; Gal. 6:7–8)

7. What impact does God's swift judgment have on those who hear about it? (vv. 5, 11)

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 5:17–42

Review Acts 5:12–16. Read Acts 5:17–42.

1. The Sadducees' jealousy is not merely envy of the disciples' popularity; it also contains elements of a "fervent but misguided" zeal for God's honor.¹ What does this jealousy lead them to do? (v. 18)

2. What unexpected event follows the apostles' imprisonment? (v. 19)

3. The angel commands the apostles to go to the temple courts and continue to teach and preach. Why do you think the angel refers to the gospel as "the full message of this new life" (v. 20)? (Lk. 18:29–30; Jn. 8:12; 10:10b, 28)

4. In what almost comical situation do the religious leaders find themselves? (vv. 21b–25)

5. How do the officers of the temple guard treat the apostles, and why? (v. 26)

6. What does the high priest accuse the apostles of? (v. 28)

7. The high priest commanded the apostles "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (4:18).
 - a. What would obeying this command mean for the apostles? (v. 29; 4:19)

 - b. How have you felt intimidated when you have had the opportunity to share your faith?

¹ William J. Larkin, *Acts*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2006), 421.

8. In answer to the high priest’s accusations, the apostles give a brief speech that presents the central truths of their preaching so far in Acts. Fill in these truths in the table below.

Verses	Truths
v. 30b (📖* 2:23; 3:13b–15a; 4:10)	
v. 30a (📖 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10)	
v. 31a (📖 2:33, 36)	
v. 31b (📖 2:38a; 3:19; 4:12)	
v. 32 (📖 2:16–17, 33, 38b)	

9. In verse 30, the apostles refer to God as “the God of our fathers.” Why do you think they emphasize this? (📖 3:13a)
10. We often think that we repent and God forgives, but verse 31 says that both repentance and forgiveness come from God. (📖 11:18) Why is this significant? (Titus 3:3–5a)
11. Why do you think the apostles’ little speech makes the Sanhedrin so murderously angry?
12. How does Gamaliel persuade the Sanhedrin to leave the apostles alone? (vv. 38–39)
13. The apostles have been imprisoned, tried, and flogged, yet they leave rejoicing. How do they then spend their freedom? (v. 42)
14. Notice how the gospel the apostles preach centers on who Jesus is (see verse 42 and the chart above). Why must Jesus always be the center of our gospel message, even two thousand years later?

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Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 6:1-15

Read Acts 6:1-7.

1. A glimpse back to Acts 2:5–11 gives us a taste of the diversity of people coming into the early church. The Hebraic Jews in today's passage are from Israel; their primary language is Aramaic. The Grecian Jews are from outside the land of Israel; their primary language is Greek. Both groups are deeply influenced by the culture and traditions from which they come.
 - a. What two positive things can you see going on in the church? (v. 1)
 - b. What problem has developed? (v. 1)
 - c. What does this problem threaten to destroy? (Acts 2:44, 46; 4:32)
2. Since its birth at Pentecost, this young church has faced numerous challenges. How do the apostles handle this new challenge? (vv. 2-3)
3. Why do you think it is important for the men called to this practical ministry to be "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (v. 3)? (Consider 1 Tim. 3:8–10.)
4. What does the commissioning of these men by prayer and the laying on of hands say about the responsibilities they have been given?
5. The apostles demonstrate wisdom as they solve this problem. What are the results?
 - vv. 3–4
 - v. 5a
 - v. 7a–b
6. What surprising group of people become "obedient to the faith" (v. 7) as a result of God's granting them "repentance and forgiveness of sins" (5:31)? (v. 7c)
7. What important principle of church life does the appointment of the seven men model? (Rom. 12:4–8)

Read Acts 6:8-15.

8. Luke puts together a little “resume” for Stephen in verse 8. Instead of trying to impress his readers with Stephen’s education, job experience, and accomplishments, what information does he include about him?

9. As the kingdom of God advances through Stephen’s ministry, what pattern continues that we’ve seen before in Acts? (v. 9)

10. Why can’t Stephen’s adversaries stand up to him? (v. 10; 📖* 5:39)

11. What do they (the adversaries) resort to in their attempt to silence Stephen?
v. 11

v. 12a

v. 12b

vv. 13–14

12. How is Stephen’s experience like that of Jesus? (Mt. 26:57–61)

13. How could the example and teaching of Jesus be an encouragement to Stephen in the midst of such injustice? (Mt. 5:11–12; Jn. 15:18–16:4; 1 Pet. 2:21–23)

14. As the Sanhedrin seek to undermine Stephen’s credibility and turn people against him, how does this man who is full of faith and the Holy Spirit appear? (v. 15)

15. Stephen seems to be the main character of this chapter, yet the Spirit of Jesus is really the one who is front and center, filling his people, giving them wisdom, courage, faith, and peace in the midst of suffering. How does this encourage you?

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The Book of Acts

Acts 7:1–19

Read Acts 6:8-15.

1. Summarize the charges that are brought against Stephen. (6:11, 13, 14)
2. Define blasphemy. Why do you think the Sanhedrin accuses Stephen of blasphemy?

Read Acts 7:1-19.

This is the first part of a very long speech that Stephen gives before the Sanhedrin: the Jewish ruling council. It may be helpful for context to go ahead and read the whole speech (7:1–53). As you do, notice how Stephen highlights the way Israel has rejected the deliverers and prophets God has sent to them.

3. Because of the way Stephen retells the story, by the end of the speech his listeners are furious (7:54, 57-60). What is his demeanor as he begins to speak? (6:15; 7:1–2a)
4. Stephen begins his history with a seldom used description of God. What is it and how does this immediately show the charge of blasphemy to be false? (v. 2;  * Ps. 29:1–3)
5. What promise of God to Abraham does Stephen highlight? (v. 5b;  Gen. 12:7; 17:8)
6. What obstacles prevent this promise from being fulfilled quickly? (vv. 5–6;  Gen. 15:1–8; 13–15)

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7. Circumcision (v. 8) was an outward physical sign of the special covenantal relationship between God and Abraham and his descendants (📖 Gen. 17:1–14). It reminded them of God’s promises and their relationship with him. What else is it to remind them of? (Gen. 17:1, 9; Deut. 6:4–6)

8. After reviewing God’s covenant with Abraham, Stephen continues with the story of Joseph, who is the first in a long line of rejected rescuers.
 - a. Why was he rejected? (v. 9a)

 - b. How did this also happen to Jesus? (Jn. 11:45–48, 53; 12:9–11, 17–19)

9. How did Joseph rescue his people? (vv. 9b–15)

How does Jesus rescue his people? (Col. 1:13–14)

10. The descendants of Abraham were enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. What did God promise them? (v. 7)

11. In this first section (vv. 1–19), how is Stephen reminding his listeners that their God is not restricted to just one place?

12. What do we learn about God’s character throughout this portion of history, from the calling of Abraham up to the birth of Moses?

13. Think back over your own personal history. How does having a relationship with God, through Jesus, change the way you retell your personal history?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 7:20–43

The first part of Stephen’s sermon (Acts 7:1–19) covers centuries of Israel’s national history. The second part of his sermon covers a mere eighty years of one man’s life: the life of Moses.

Read Acts 7:20–43.

1. One of the charges against Stephen is “blasphemy against Moses” (6:11). While Stephen’s purpose is not to defend himself, how do his words show his respect for Moses?

Stephen gives significant attention to the life of Moses to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of Moses’ prophesy, “God will send you a prophet like me from your own people” (v. 37).

2. Use the chart below to see how God uses the life and ministry of Moses, Israel’s deliverer, to point forward to Jesus, the ultimate deliverer.

	Moses	Jesus Christ
Into what political situation was the deliverer born?	7:18	Lk. 2:1–5
How does God feel about his people and their situation?	7:34	Gal. 4:4–7
Surprisingly, “out of” what country did the deliverer come?	7:17, 20-22	Mt. 2:13-15
What horrific event threatened the life of the newborn deliverer?	7:19	Mt. 2:13–18
How was the deliverer uniquely prepared for his role?	7:20b–22	Luke 2:39-41, 52

	Moses	Jesus Christ
Where did the deliverer have to go to be prepared for his ministry?	7:29–30	Mt. 4:1–2
What redemption was the deliverer to bring?	7:34, 36	Gal. 4:4–7; Col. 1:13–14
What accompanied the deliverer’s ministry that verified he was sent by God?	7:36	Acts 2:22
What did the deliverer bring to the people?	7:38	Jn. 6:63, 68
What kind of reception did the deliverer receive when he stepped into his role?	7:25–28, 35, 39	Jn. 1:11
How did Israel mistreat and reject the deliverer?	7:38–41; Ex. 32:7-9	Acts 7:51-53

3. Moses fulfilled his role as deliverer. What spiritual problem does Stephen highlight that shows the need for an ultimate deliverer? (vv. 39-43; Jn. 7:19a)

4. In the lives of both Moses and Jesus, we see God fulfilling his promises and working out his plan in the midst of painful/tragic circumstances, serious failure, and overwhelming odds. In hindsight we can see that God used the very things that looked like deterrents to his plan to actually bring it about. How do these stories about God’s faithfulness encourage you in your own story?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 7:44—8:1a

Review Acts 7:1–43. Read Acts 7:44—8:1a.

1. Throughout redemptive history God has met with his people and has been worshiped by them in various locations. What places does Stephen refer to in his speech in Acts 7? (vv. 2, 9, 29–33, 44–45)

2. Wherever his people are—from the time of Moses to beyond the time of Solomon—God has had the same desire. What is it? (Ex. 29:42–46; Lev. 26:11–12)

3. Read the accusations against Stephen in 6:13–14. Behind these accusations is the belief that the temple is the only place to meet with God.
 - a. Based on these accusations, what do you think the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council) fears?

 - b. In verses 49–50, Stephen quotes the prophet Isaiah. How does this challenge the Sanhedrin’s view of the temple? (📖 * 1 Kgs. 8:27–30; 2 Chr. 2:5–6)

4. The members of the Sanhedrin put Stephen on trial so they could accuse him and find him guilty. Instead, it is Stephen, full of the Spirit, who accuses them and finds them guilty.
 - a. What sins of their fathers are they repeating? (vv. 51–52b; 📖 Lk. 11:47–51)

 - b. What ultimate sin are they guilty of? (v. 52c)

5. Peter also accused his listeners of crucifying the Lord (Acts 2:22–24).
 - a. How is the response of Peter's listeners dramatically different from that of the Sanhedrin? (v. 54; Acts 2:37, 41)

 - b. Why do you think there is such a difference?

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 8:1b–25

Read Acts 8:1b–25.

1. What immediately follows the stoning of Stephen? (vv. 1b–2)

2. We last saw Saul approving of Stephen's death (8:1a). What is he doing now? (v. 3; 9:1; 26:10; * 1 Tim. 1:13)

Such persecution continues even today in other parts of the world. Pray for these suffering believers.

3. Up to now, only the leaders of the church have experienced persecution. Now it extends to all the believers.
 - a. What do the scattered believers do? (v. 4)

 - b. Compare 8:1b with 1:8. What do you notice?

4. Who is this Philip who goes to Samaria and is referred to in Acts 21:8 as "Philip the evangelist"? (6:3–5)

5. What does Philip's ministry look like? (vv. 5–7)

What is the specific content of his preaching? (v. 12)

6. What is the result of Philip's ministry of word and deed? (vv. 6, 8, 12)

7. What do we learn about Simon in verses 9–11?

8. Philip performs astonishing signs and miracles. Why do you think miracles would be an especially significant part of ministry in this particular town? (Consider verses 9–11.)

What vital role do miracles play here and elsewhere in the New Testament? (2:22; 14:3; Heb. 2:3–4)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

Background on the Jews and the Samaritans: About a thousand years prior to this passage, the northern tribes of Israel split off and formed their own kingdom with Samaria as its capital. The inhabitants of the northern kingdom turned away from God and worshiped idols. Most were eventually sent into exile by the Assyrians. Those who remained in the land intermarried with foreigners put there by the Assyrians. Ultimately, the remaining Samaritans rejected all of the Jewish scriptures except the five books of Moses and built their own temple, which the Jews later destroyed. As Bruce Milne writes, “By the time of Jesus, the Samaritans were despised as unfaithful, defecting half-breeds.”¹ Thus, in preaching to the Samaritans, Philip is breaking through a longstanding barrier.

9. Who is now sent to Samaria, and why? (v. 14)

10. In his speech at Pentecost, Peter promises that those who repent and are baptized will receive the Holy Spirit (2:38). Yet although the Samaritans in this passage have believed and been baptized, they have not received the Holy Spirit.
 - a. What unusual step is needed for these particular believers to receive the Holy Spirit? (vv. 15, 17)

 - b. Why do you think it’s significant that it is the apostles from Jerusalem who must lay hands on them? (Consider the following passages, bearing in mind that the Jews regarded the Samaritans as almost worse than Gentiles: 15:7–9;  Eph. 2:11–22; 4:3–6.)

11. Impressed by what Peter and John do, Simon “offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit’” (vv. 18–19, ESV).
 - a. How does Peter respond? (vv. 20–23)

 - b. Why do you think he is so harsh?

 - c. What is Simon’s only hope? (v. 22)

12. How do Peter and John spend their return trip? (v. 25;  9:31)

13. This passage is largely about power. In particular, we see the power of the Holy Spirit defeating the powers of darkness: Philip performs healings and casts out evil spirits, putting the “Great Power” of Simon the Sorcerer to shame (v. 10); the people of Samaria believe the “good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus” (v. 12); and the “dividing wall of hostility” between Jews and Samaritans is smashed (Eph. 2:14).
How have you seen this same powerful Holy Spirit at work in your life and in the lives of others around you?

¹ *The Acts of the Apostles: Witnesses to Him...to the Ends of the Earth* (London: Christian Focus, 2010), 183.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 8:26–40

Read Acts 8:26–40.

1. God has been leading and empowering his people through the Holy Spirit. Whom does he now use to direct Philip? (v. 26)
2. Scan back over verses 4–25. Why might Philip have been reluctant to move on from Samaria?
3. Though unsure of what his next mission will be, how does Philip respond to the angel? (v. 27)
4. Describe the man Philip meets. (v. 27)
5. As a foreigner and a eunuch, this man was forbidden by the Law from entering the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:1). Read Isaiah 56:1–8.
 - a. What has God promised to a man like this?
 - b. As you go through this lesson, observe how this promise is being fulfilled.
6. What brings Philip and the Ethiopian together? (vv. 29–31)
7. What is the Ethiopian perplexed about as he reads the Scripture? (v. 34)
8. This passage from Isaiah 53 is clearly an open door for Philip to begin to share the good news that Jesus is the fulfillment of these prophecies. Read Luke 22:47–23:46 and record some of the ways they were fulfilled.

Led like a sheep to the slaughter	22:54, 66; 23:1
As a lamb...silent, so he did not open his mouth	23:8–9
In his humiliation	22:63–65; 23:2, 10–11, 33–39
He was deprived of justice	23:13–25
Who can speak of his descendants? His life was taken from the earth	23:33a, 44–46

9. How does the Ethiopian respond to Philip's message? (vv. 36–39)

10. How does the story of the Ethiopian eunuch clearly demonstrate God's unfolding plan? (Rom. 16:25–27, Eph. 3:4–6)

11. Just before Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch, he had been proclaiming Christ in Samaria. The differences between the Samaritans and this eunuch are striking. Use the chart to see the similarities in their stories.

	Samaritans	Ethiopian Eunuch
8:6, 8:31		
8:12a, 8:35		
8:12b, 8:36–38		
8:8, 8:39b		

12. What surprising thing happens after the baptism of the newly converted Ethiopian? (v. 39)

13. God's work of saving individuals is varied and gloriously creative. To the crowds gathered on Pentecost from many nations, he gives the ability to hear the “wonders of God in [their] own tongues!” (2:11). To the Samaritans who have been enthralled by the magic of Simon the Sorcerer, he brings Philip, who performs miraculous signs to get their attention. To the Ethiopian eunuch reading Old Testament prophecy, he sends Philip, who begins with “that very passage of Scripture” to tell him the good news (v. 35). Briefly share with the group who or what circumstances God has used to bring you the good news of Jesus.

Take time to marvel at God's creativity and mercy.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 9:1–19a

Read Acts 9:1–19a.

1. What have we already learned about Saul? (7:57–8:3)

2. How does Paul (previously Saul) later describe himself at this earlier time in his life? (Gal. 1:13–14; Phil. 3:4–6)

3. Stephen’s sermon and death have emboldened the opposition to the church. What drastic measures are the high priest and Saul now taking to destroy the church? (8:3; 9:1–2)

4. Damascus is in Syria, about 135 miles northeast of Jerusalem and is one of the ten cities known, at that time, as the Decapolis. How is it possible that there are followers of Jesus in Damascus? (Mk. 5:18–20; 7:31–37; Acts 8:1, 4)

5. The early church was being called “The Way” (v. 2). What does this name tell you about the message that these first Christians were preaching? (Jn. 14:6; Acts 16:17)

6. Saul has a dramatic experience on the way to Damascus.
 - a. What does he see and hear? (vv. 3–4)

 - b. Whom does he meet? (v. 5)

 - c. How are his companions affected? (vv. 7–9)

7. What does Saul realize about Jesus as a result of this meeting? (v. 5b; * Acts 2:32, 36)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

8. Saul is utterly humbled: physically, emotionally, and spiritually (vv. 4–9).
 - a. How does he spend the three days of blindness? (vv. 9, 11–12)

 - b. What do you think he might have realized about himself as he thought back on Stephen’s sermon? (Acts 7:51–56;  1 Tim. 1:15)

 9. Jesus gives Ananias a shocking command (v. 11). Why does Ananias struggle with this assignment? (vv. 13–14)

 10. How does Jesus seek to reassure Ananias every step of the way? (vv. 10–12, 15–16)

 11. a. What surprising thing does Ananias do when he meets Saul? (v. 17)

 - b. In what surprising way does he address him? (v. 17)

 - c. What encourages you about Ananias’ response to this frightening situation?

 - d. What truth is Jesus teaching Ananias (and us)? (2 Cor. 5:17)
-
12. What are the three signs of Saul’s conversion? (vv. 17–18)
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-
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-
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-
13. Read Paul’s later account of his conversion in Acts 26:9–18.
 - a. How does Paul describe God’s call on his life? (26:17–18)

 - b. How is Saul’s calling a continuation of Jesus’ ministry? (Lk. 4:14–21)

 - c. How is this your calling as well? (1 Pet. 2:9)

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 9:19b–31

Read Acts 9:19b–31

1. Acts chronicles Saul's travels after his conversion on the road to Damascus. On the map, trace Saul's 900-mile journey (for locations see 19b, 26, 30).
2. What do we know about Saul that makes the time he spent with the disciples in Damascus shocking? (8:3; 9:1–2)



3. After Saul's conversion he immediately begins preaching the gospel (9:20). Saul's earlier zeal for Judaism and contempt for Christians make him seem an unlikely candidate to do this, but how had God uniquely prepared Saul for just this purpose? (22:2b–5, 14–15; Phil. 3:3–6; * 17:2–3)
4. In verse 20 Saul preaches that Jesus is the Son of God; in verse 22 he proves that Jesus is the Christ. Why are these two proclamations central to his message?
Son of God (Rom. 1:1–4; Heb. 1:1–3)

Christ (13:21–23, 32–39)

5. How do people initially respond to Saul's message? (v. 21)
6. Saul's preaching becomes more and more powerful.
 - a. What is he able to do? (v. 22b)
 - b. What effect does this have on his listeners? (v. 22a)

*The symbol indicates verses for further study.

7. Saul has preached in Damascus for an extended period of time. Instead of believing his message, what do the Jews there plan to do? (v. 23)

8. How is the plot to kill Saul foiled? (vv. 24–25)

9. After his escape, Saul travels to Jerusalem to get to know Peter (Gal. 1:18).
 - a. What kind of reception does Saul get when he arrives? (v. 26a)

 - b. Why? (v. 26b)

10. How does Saul gain the acceptance of the Jerusalem disciples? (v. 27)

11. How does Barnabas live up to his name in befriending and defending Saul? (4:36–37)

12. How do the Grecian (Hellenistic or Greek-speaking) Jews respond to Saul's bold proclamation of the gospel? (v. 29)

13. How is the second threat to Saul's life averted? (v. 30)

14. Why is Saul willing to leave his new friends and travel over six hundred miles back to his hometown of Tarsus (21:39)? (22:17–21)

15. What characterizes the church after Saul is sent to Tarsus? (v. 31)

16. Saul experienced dramatic changes in his life when he became a Christian. List some of these changes.

17. What changes have you seen Christ make in your life?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 9:32–43

Read Acts 9:32–43.

1. During this time of peace (9:31), Peter travels around the country.
 - a. What motivates Peter’s travels? (Mt. 28:18–20; Jn. 21:15–17; Acts 1:8)
 - b. Whom does he visit? (v. 32)
 - c. In the Bible, the word “saint” refers to anyone who believes in Christ. What other words are used to describe believers? (4:29; 5:11; 6:2–3; 9:2, 14)
2. Try to go beyond the words in verse 33 to describe the paralytic man in Lydda. (Consider: What would it have been like for him on a daily basis? What were his prospects in life? What were his needs?)
3. Peter finds Aeneas the paralytic and heals him.
 - a. Read Mark 2:1–12, paying close attention to verse 11. What similarities do you see between these two miracles?
 - b. What is the main difference between these two miracles? (v. 34; Mk. 2:11; * Acts 3:12–16)
4. What effect does the healing have on the community? (v. 35)
5. Why do you think there is such a positive response to this healing? (You may want to consider Mk. 2:12 and Acts 3:6–11.)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

6. While in Lydda, Peter is summoned to Joppa.
 - a. Why? (vv. 36–38)

 - b. What do you think the saints there expected of Peter?

7. What kind of woman is Tabitha? (vv. 36, 39) Read a little between the lines to further describe her.

8. After praying, Peter commands the dead woman, Tabitha, to get up. What pattern do you see Peter following in this miracle? (Mk. 5:35–42)

9. What effect does the healing have on Tabitha’s community? (v. 42)

10. What miracle greater than physical healing is tucked into this week’s passage? (vv. 35, 42;  Jn. 5:24)

11. The preaching recorded in Acts is full of the language of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - a. Both people highlighted in this week’s passage are described as those who are physically “dead” in some way. How do the miracles they experienced illustrate what happens in our lives spiritually? (Eph. 2:1, 4–6; Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17)

 - b. These miracles also provide a foretaste of the salvation all believers will one day experience, the “full restoration of the whole person.”ⁱ Choose one of the following passages to meditate on: 1 Cor. 15:42–57; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 21:1–5. Jot down some of your thoughts about how Jesus’ resurrection gives you great hope for the future!

ⁱ William J. Larkin, *Acts, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2006), 466.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 10:1–23a

Read Acts 10:1–23a.

1. Luke introduces us to a centurion (an officer in charge of 100 men) named Cornelius.
 - a. How does Luke describe Cornelius? (vv. 1–2)

 - b. What kind of reputation does Cornelius have in the community? (v. 22)

2. Luke uses the term “God-fearing” (v. 2) to refer to “Gentiles who expressed interest in Judaism and attended worship in the synagogue but who, because they had not yet fully converted to Judaism by circumcision, had to sit in the back as observers rather than as full participants in the community.”¹ Nevertheless, Cornelius is faithful to observe certain Jewish disciplines and in this particular time of prayer has a most startling encounter (vv. 3–6).
 - a. How does Cornelius react when an “angel of God” (v. 3b) appears and calls him by name? (v. 4a)

 - b. How does the angel encourage Cornelius? (v. 4b; * Lev. 2:1–2)

 - c. What does the angel tell Cornelius to do? (vv. 5–6)

 - d. Why is he told to do this? (v. 22c)

3. How does Cornelius respond to the angel’s directive? (vv. 7–8)

What does his response tell you about his faith in God?

4. For what has God been preparing Cornelius? (Jn. 3:16; 5:24; Acts 4:11–12)

Review Acts 10:9-16.

5. The next day, thirty-some miles to the south in Joppa, Peter is praying. He, too, has a most startling encounter with God. Describe what he saw. (vv. 10–12)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Acts: An Expositional Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 174.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 10:23b–48

Read Acts 10:23b–48.

1. Peter and six other circumcised Jewish believers (11:12) begin the two-day journey to Cornelius's house in Caesarea.
 - a. How has God reassured Peter that he should go? (vv. 19–22)

 - b. Why was such reassurance necessary? (v. 28a; Lev. 20:26)

2. Peter had been wondering and thinking about his vision when the men from Cornelius arrived.
 - a. How does he now explain the meaning of his vision? (v. 28)

 - b. How does the shift in Peter's understanding affect his actions? (vv. 23, 25–27, 29)

3. How can we tell that Cornelius feels honored by this visit from Peter? (vv. 24–25, 33a)

4. What are Cornelius and those with him expecting? (v. 33b)

5. Cornelius is already a devout man who fears God; why is it still necessary for God to send Peter to him? (Rom. 10:12–15, 17)

6. Since Peter's vision on the roof, his thinking has changed dramatically. What has Peter become convinced of? (vv. 34–35)

7. When Peter speaks to the Gentiles at Cornelius's house, he does two things: (a) he tells them what the God Cornelius fears has done to save them, and (b) he introduces them to Jesus of Nazareth, the one God has sent.
 - a. What has God done?
 - v. 36

 - v. 38a

 - v. 38c

v. 40

v. 41

v. 42b

b. What does he say about Jesus of Nazareth?

v. 36b

v. 38

v. 39

v. 40

v. 41b

v. 42a

v. 42b

v. 43a

v. 43b

c. How does this description of Jesus help you to see him more clearly than you have in the past?

8. What does Peter say is required for sins to be forgiven? (v. 43; 15:7–11)

9. We have seen God actively involved throughout this story of Peter and Cornelius.

a. How does God show his eagerness to welcome the Gentiles into His family? (v. 44)

b. Why are the circumcised Jewish believers astonished? (vv. 45–46, 47b)

c. What does Peter do in response to what has just happened? (v. 48)

10. Peter's understanding that God welcomes all and declares no one unclean changed his actions. Is there someone in your midst whom you tolerate, feel superior to, or even despise? In what ways do you sense God correcting how you see him/her and calling you to interact with him/her differently?

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 11:1–18

Read Acts 11:1–18.

1. In response to Peter's presentation of the Gospel, Cornelius and his household believed, received the Holy Spirit and were baptized (10:43–44, 48). Where is Peter when this week's passage begins? (10:24, 48)

2. What rumor was spreading like wildfire throughout Judea and reached the apostles in Jerusalem before Peter's arrival? (v. 1)

3. Why is the rumor so unsettling? (10:28a)

4. When Peter arrives in Jerusalem, how do his fellow believers "greet" him? (vv. 2–3)

5. How does Peter address the criticisms of the circumcised believers? (v. 4)

6. A few days earlier, Peter had the same objections as those who are now criticizing him.
 - a. What new perspective has God given him?

 - b. How has God brought about this change in perspective?

 - c. Why do you think Peter is not defensive when he is criticized?

7. Acts 11:12 implies that Peter is not alone when he addresses the Jerusalem believers. How does the presence of "these six brothers" add credence to his defense? (10:44–48)

8. The inclusion of Gentiles in God's family along with Jews is revolutionary. How is God's sovereign activity evident in the following verses?
- | | |
|-------|-------|
| v. 5 | v. 12 |
| v. 7 | v. 13 |
| v. 9 | v. 15 |
| v. 10 | v. 16 |
| v. 11 | |
9. What is the most convincing proof that God has included the Gentiles in his plan? (vv. 15, 17–18)
10. What does Peter remember Jesus saying that further convinces him and his listeners of the truth? (v. 16)
11. Peter realizes that refusing to acknowledge God's acceptance of the Gentiles amounts to what? (v. 17)
12. Peter finishes re-telling his story.
- How do his listeners in Jerusalem respond? (v. 18a)
 - What conclusion do the Jewish believers reach that shows they are now on board with what God is doing? (v. 18b; * Rom. 10:11–13; 1 Cor. 12:12–13)
13. We are not so unlike these early believers at Jerusalem who brought into their new faith some old ways of thinking. How are your ideas about God and what he is doing being challenged as you grow in your understanding of the scope of his will and purpose?

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts
Acts 11:19–30

Read Acts 11:19-30.

1. Stephen's murder begins a terrible wave of persecution against the church in Jerusalem and almost everyone flees (8:1). Many of the Greek-speaking Jewish believers then go to Gentile cities in the north that already have established Jewish communities. Indicate on the map where they go. (v. 19)
2. These scattered believers preach the good news about the Lord Jesus everywhere they go (8:4). To whom do they exclusively preach? (v. 19)
3. So far in Acts, the only Gentiles who have become believers are "insiders." The Ethiopian eunuch (8:26–28) and Cornelius (10:1–2) were already seeking a relationship with the God of the Jews.
 - a. Who now comes across to Antioch? (v. 20)
 - b. What unprecedented thing do they do? (v. 20)
 - c. Why is it now okay that they preach to these Gentile "outsiders"? (v. 18; Eph. 3:4–6; * Eph. 2:14–17)
 - d. How is the bold decision to preach to these Gentiles confirmed? (v. 21)
4. It doesn't take long for the news to reach the believers in Jerusalem (v. 22), and they send a representative to investigate this new development. Whom do they send, and why is he the perfect choice for this job? (vv. 22–24; 4:36–37; 9:27)
5. Barnabas arrives in Antioch (vv. 23–24).
 - a. What does he find?
 - b. How does he respond?
 - c. What is the result of Barnabas' ministry there?



<http://www.generationword.com/notes/bible-information/acts-maps.html>

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

6. Barnabas decides to stay longer in Antioch to pastor this large and diverse group of believers. He recruits Saul, who is living in Tarsus (9:30), to help him. Why is Saul the right person for this job? (9:15, 26–30; Gal. 1:1)
7. Describe the ministry of Barnabas and Saul in Antioch. (v. 26b)
8. Before this, the followers of Jesus were seen as a small group within Judaism. What does the new name “Christians” (v. 26c) imply about the message being preached in Antioch? (v. 20c;  Gal. 3:26–28; 2 Cor. 5:17–21)
9. Prophets played an important role in the early church. They were gifted by the Holy Spirit to preach, exhort, explain, foretell, and warn. ( Acts 13:1; 15:32; 19:6; 21:9–10)
 - a. What message does Agabus have for the Christians in Antioch? (vv. 27–28)
 - b. How do they respond? (vv. 29–30)
 - c. What do you think this response reveals about the Gentile believers’ attitude toward the Jewish believers in Judea?
10. Read Matthew 28:18–20 and Acts 1:8. How is today’s passage a fulfillment of Jesus’ commands to his disciples?
11. Barnabas saw “evidence of the grace of God” (v. 23) at work in ordinary people in Antioch.
 - a. Name several ways you see God graciously at work in Antioch.
 - b. Name several ways you see the grace of God at work today.
12. This passage is an exciting picture of Christians growing and moving out beyond their comfort zones as they take risks, encourage one another, use their gifts, make commitments, and are open-minded and generous. How could growth in some of these areas better equip you to serve in the kingdom?

Pray for growth in these areas.

Power to Witness in Word and Deed

The Book of Acts

Acts 12:1–24

Read Acts 12:1–24.

1. The first part of Acts (chapters 1–12) focuses on the growth of the church in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (1:8).
 - a. What is the latest we have heard about how the church is doing in those places? (9:31)

 - b. What is happening to the church now? (vv. 1–2)

2. What is Peter's situation in verses 2–6?

3. This King Herod, also known as Agrippa I, is the grandson of Herod the Great (who was king when Jesus was born) and the nephew of Herod Antipas (who beheaded John the Baptist). Given the favorable reaction to James's execution, it appears that Herod has the same fate in mind for Peter (v. 11).
 - a. How do you think the other believers are feeling at this point?

 - b. Faced with the brutal power of Herod, to what do they turn? (vv. 5, 12)

4. List all of the things the angel of the Lord does to rescue Peter. (vv. 7–11)

5. Initially Peter thinks he is seeing a vision (v. 9). What does he come to realize? (v. 11)

6. Leaving the miraculously delivered Peter pounding at the door to get in, Rhoda, the servant girl, delivers the news of his release to the praying believers.
 - a. How do they respond? (v. 15)

 - b. Why is their disbelief ironic? (Consider what they have probably been praying for.)

 - c. Why is their disbelief not all that surprising?

 - d. How do you find their reaction encouraging?

7. After Peter is safely inside, what does he do? (v. 17¹)

8. Herod is in a position of power over the people of Tyre and Sidon. Since they depend on him for their food supply, they seek to make peace with him. How do they respond to Herod's address? (v. 22)

9. King Herod fails to do what he should have done in this situation.
 - a. What does verse 23 say he should have done? (📖* 10:26; 14:8–18)

 - b. How is he punished? (v. 23)

10. Review this chapter. From a human perspective, what power shift has taken place?

11. Acts records a pattern of opposition followed by the spread of the gospel. Trace a sampling of this pattern in the chart below.

Opposition	Spread of the gospel
4:18	4:31
5:17–18, 40	5:41–42
7:59–8:1	8:4; 11:19–21

12. Read Romans 8:28–39. God works all things together for the spread of his worldwide kingdom and for the salvation and growth of individual believers.
How have you seen this truth play out in this chapter of Acts?

How have you seen it play out in your life?

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

¹ The James in this verse is the brother of Jesus (Mk. 6:3). He will eventually become the leader of the church in Jerusalem.