

DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ACTS



SUMMIT VIEW CHURCH

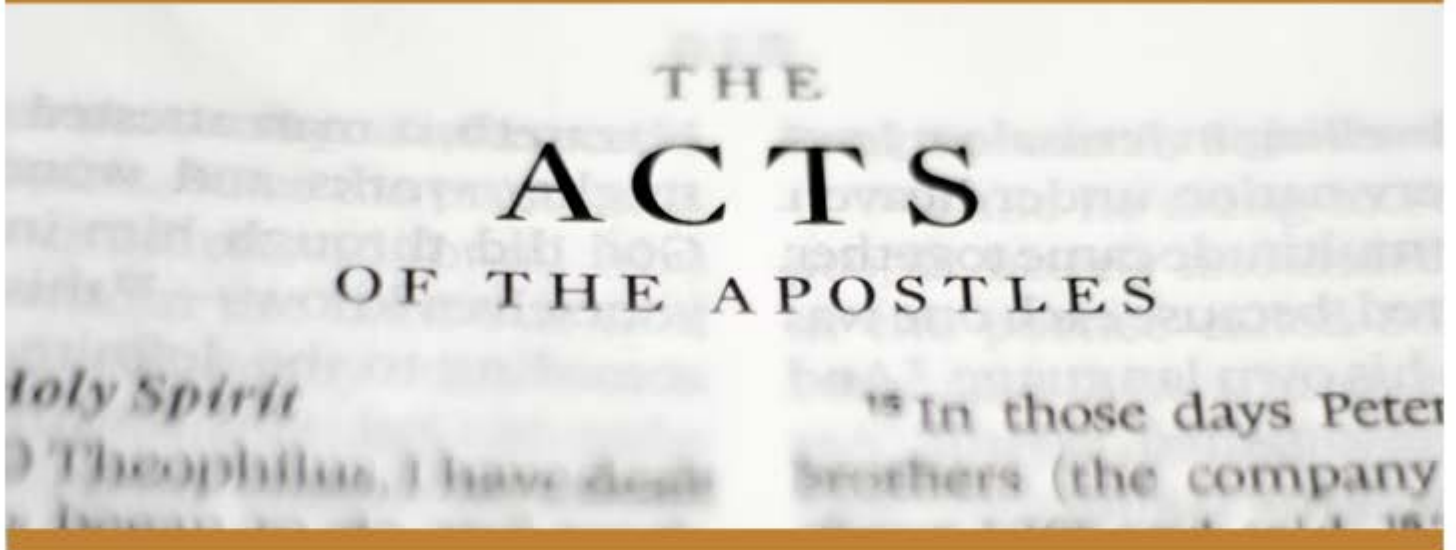


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WELCOME TO ACTS PART 2

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will **be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8*



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

This is the question we often ask, trying to figure out how exactly we arrived at our current situation. It seeks to discern the series of events that caused our present circumstances to unfold. It is a question we will seek to answer through this study, that we might all understand how the Gospel message, known by only a handful of Jews in Jerusalem over 2000 years ago, made its way across the world, all the way to us, here in the Pacific Northwest.

Acts picks up where the Gospels left off. In the Gospels we see Jesus' earthly ministry executed by our Savior Himself; in the book of Acts we find this ministry continued by His people and ultimately by us today. Within Acts is the story of the Church's birth, from seedlings to its rapid growth, expansion, and the ultimate advancement of the Gospel message. Without Acts, we would know very little about how God's people took up the Great Commission to where we are today.

In the book of Acts we encounter the beginning of Church history—with no mature believers, brand new systems just being figured out, and all the while, souls being saved. Throughout the text, one theme rises above the rest: Jesus' call, for all of us, to be a witness to who He is, what He's done, and to take that message, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the ends of the Earth.

AUTHOR

While the author does not directly identify himself in the text, it is almost certain that the author of Acts is the same as the Gospel of Luke. Besides the prevalence of this perspective passed down throughout Church history and Tradition, there are also similar prefaces between Luke and Acts as seen in Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1. We can also assume that the author of Acts would have been an eyewitness to some of the events recorded within the book, based upon the shift of tone in the letter when documenting the events in Acts 16, 20, and 27.

The authorship has been widely attributed to Luke as early as AD 180, where Irenaeus names Luke as the author; Tradition has firmly held this view ever since. Luke is known in the New Testament as the physician, friend, colleague, and travel companion of Paul as noted in Colossians 4:4, Philemon 24, and 2 Timothy 4:11.

DATE

Due to the contents within the book, it is most likely that Luke wrote this before AD 70 as there are no references to Nero or the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The book's abrupt conclusion suggests that it was finished while Paul was still under house arrest in Rome circa AD 62.

REASON FOR WRITING

Luke's intention for the Gospel of Luke, found within Luke 1:3-4, applies also to the book of Acts: to give an "orderly" account of the early church after Christ's resurrection. Luke sought to give certainty and confidence to his readers that the events recorded truly happened as recorded. He sought to document the expansion of the early church and the work of the Holy Spirit in the people of God, highlighting and emphasizing the global scale of the Gospel, while also edifying believers. By reading the book of Acts we can see how the foundation of the Church was laid, how believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit, and the work of the Church to build and expand the Kingdom of God.

The book of Acts records the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.



Map Courtesy of ESV.ORG – Bible Study

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

I.	The Foundation: The Church and Its Mission	1:1–2:13
II.	The Witness in Jerusalem	2:14–5:42
III.	The Witness beyond Jerusalem	6:1–12:25
IV.	The Witness in Cyprus and Southern Galatia	13:1–14:28
V.	The Jerusalem Council	15:1–35
VI.	The Witness in Greece	15:36–18:22
VII.	The Witness in Ephesus	18:23–21:16
VIII.	The Arrest in Jerusalem	21:17–23:35
IX.	The Witness in Caesarea	24:1–26:32
X.	The Witness in Rome	27:1–28:31

KEY THEMES

1. POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The book of Acts highlights the work of the Holy Spirit in the newly founded community of believers. We see the Holy Spirit empower the followers of Jesus to proclaim the Gospel, bring new life to those who heard it proclaimed, and ultimately form a new people with a new identity marked by knowing and loving God and others.

2. CENTRALITY OF THE MISSION

Acts establishes the mission of God as central and fundamental to the Church. We are given a depiction of all the early Christian leaders engaged in mission to ensure the Gospel went out to the ends of the earth. We also learn that the mission of God continued beyond the cross of Christ, given to His people to carry forth, both to the early believers and to us today.

3. THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

While all of Scripture ultimately points to Jesus and the Gospel, within the book of Acts, it is found on every page. Throughout Acts, we find ten unique sermons, presented from various perspectives and persons, all outlining a clear Gospel message; the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus is at the center of the preaching in Acts. This is the message Jesus commissioned His believers to share, and primary story arc of the book of Acts centers around its spread.

4. INCLUSION OF THE GENTILES

Luke takes great lengths throughout the book of Acts to help us understand that non-Jews were now to be included in the people of God. As the narrative follows the missionaries further out from Jerusalem, we clearly see that salvation has nothing to do with ethnicity or social status, but simply faith in Christ's sufficiency alone.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Name of Resource	Link to Resource
Forgotten God by Francis Chan (<i>book</i>)	https://amzn.to/3BNb2l7
Before You Share Your Faith by Matt Smethurst (<i>book</i>)	https://amzn.to/3WdwvM4 https://amzn.to/3WdwvM4
Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus by Mack Stiles (<i>book</i>)	https://amzn.to/3YuFMB7
Knowing Faith – Series of Acts (<i>podcast</i>)	https://www.trainingthechurch.com/episodes/category/Acts
Bible Project – Acts 1–12 (<i>video</i>)	https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/acts-1-12/
Knowing the Bible: Acts (<i>study</i>)	https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowning-bible-acts/
Exalting Jesus in Acts (<i>commentary</i>)	https://a.co/d/bVkgzil

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION BY MONTH

When you memorize Scripture, not only do you reflect on the Word of God in that time and moment, you also store it away for the Holy Spirit to bring it to your attention when you need it most. Paul encourages us in Colossians 3:2 to set our minds on the things above, and Scripture memorization allows us to do just that. Over the next two months as we study Acts, we invite you to join us in committing to memorize the following verses:

MONTH 1:

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

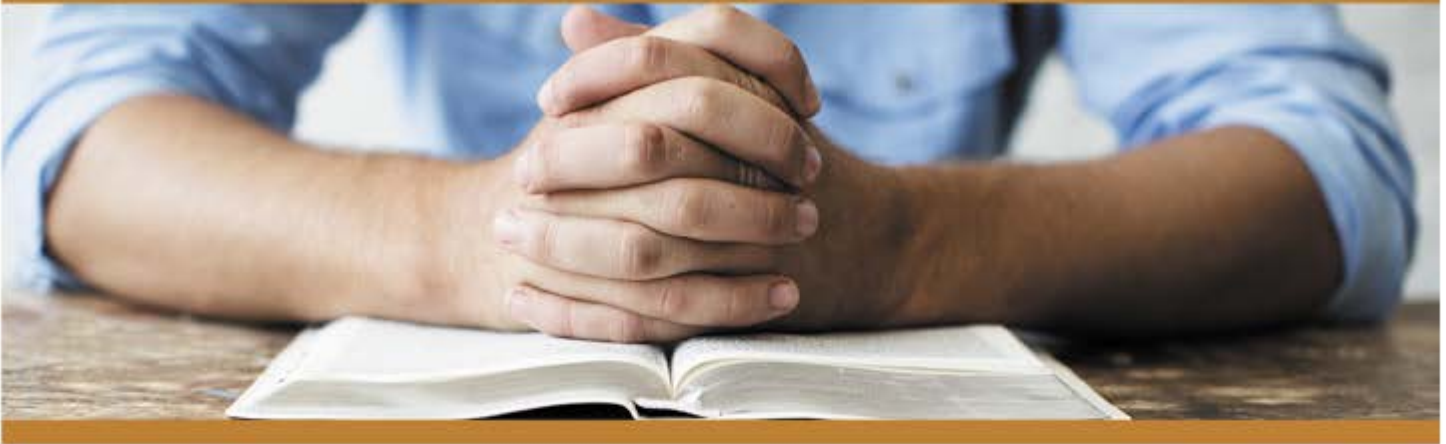
And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ Acts 2:21

MONTH 2:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” Acts 4:19–20

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



This guide has been specifically and prayerfully created with you in mind. It is designed to complement your personal time with God, Sunday service engagement, and Life Group gatherings. Each week also includes unique content for students and our SV Kids; if you are a parent, we encourage you to go through this discipleship guide together as a family!

This resource is designed to function as a guide, not a straitjacket. You may not get through every question with your Life Group. This Discipleship Guide is designed to support your personal growth and spiritual community — not replace them. We also encourage you to find and incorporate supplementary resources throughout our study. Our desire is that this Guide might be used to facilitate a firmer grasp of Scripture, a stronger connection to Christ, and a hunger for spiritual growth.

BIBLE READING PLAN

Engagement with the Bible is one of the greatest sources of spiritual growth. During our Acts series, we have put together a suggested reading guide that will help you further understand the passage we are studying each week. Our plan is for delight not duty. We pray it is a helpful guide that points you to Christ each and every day.

LIFE GROUPS

The Life Group Questions are designed to generate conversation with those in your community also engaging with Acts. If you are not currently in a Life Group, we would highly recommend you join one! We were never meant to do life alone, and we don't want you to miss what God has for you in this season.

Learn more at www.summitview.net/groups.

SV KIDS

Here at Summit View, we are passionate about the spiritual development of all ages. Each week's study concludes with age-appropriate prompts from SV Kids for family discussion.

These sections have been specifically prepared for families and are designed to help parents build family discipleship time. Learning about family discipleship and keeping it as a regular part of your family's rhythm can be challenging; one way to begin is with intentional family Bible reading time.

Each week there is a Session Starter followed by a Big Ideas teaching section, wrapping up with a Things to Think About section for going deeper with your older kids, or inquiring minds.

We've included questions for you to ask your kids (and the answers for your convenience) along with reading excerpts, and helpful Tips for Parents in suggestion boxes.

You do not have to use every question. Just like with the study guide, pick the ones that would work best for you and your family. Our hope is that by participating in this study, a vibrant family discipleship can take root and grow into the rhythm of family life.

YOUTH

Additionally, our Youth Pastoral Team has prepared a Bible Reading Plan for student participation, as well as questions for our Middle School and High School students to engage during their weekly small group discussions.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people contributed to the development and creation of this Discipleship Guide.

WRITERS

Sarah Glassett | Kyle Wetzler | Debra Biaggi

KIDS

LeAnn Ashton | Crystal Kawai | Anna Palmer | Erica Soto

YOUTH

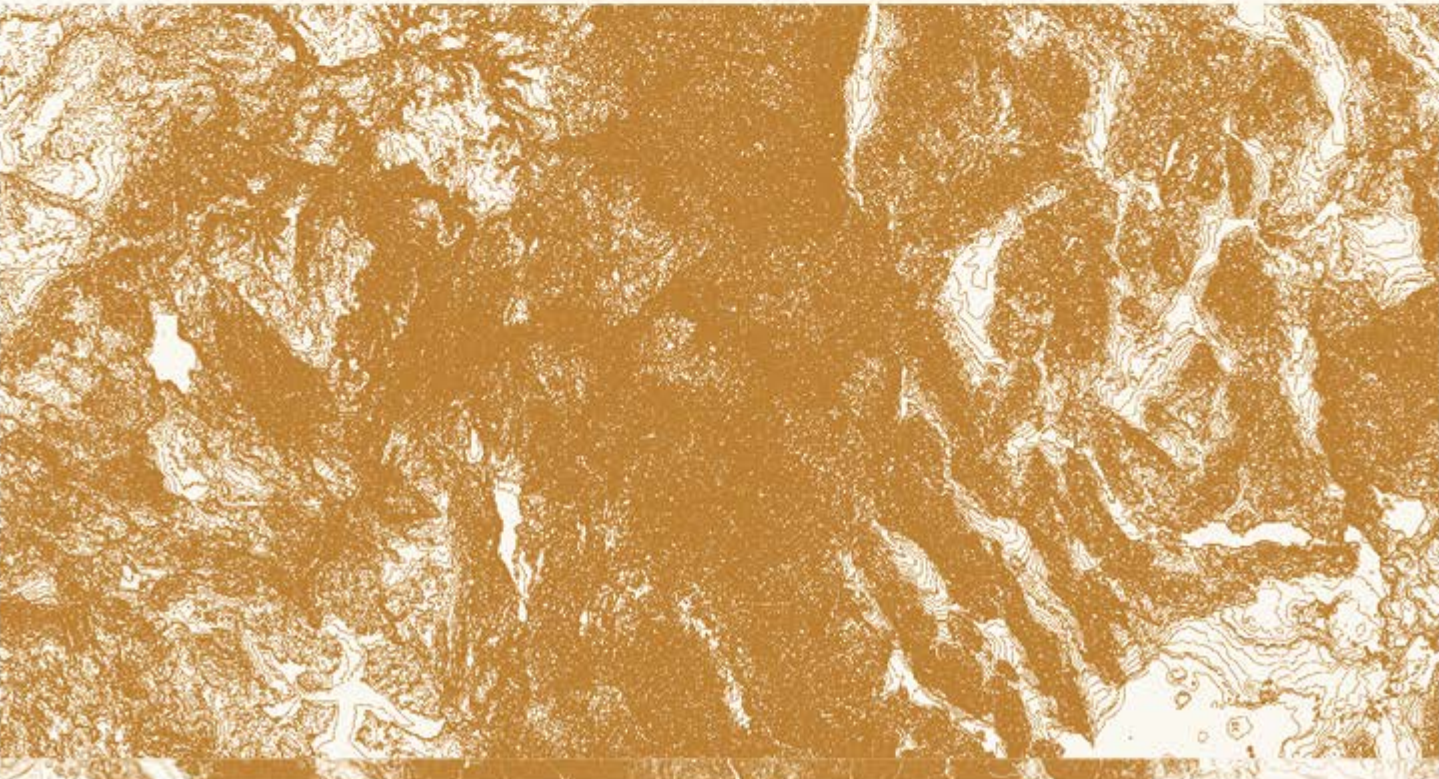
Marc Arima | Erin Caswell | Amy Hildebrand | Drew Whithorn

EDITORS

Roberta Monroe | Lauren Salazar | Nicky Ernsting | Candice Wetzler

DESIGN

Sarah Allport | Amber Burhyte



MAIN IDEA

Gospel growth produces problems and opportunities.

MEMORY VERSES

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. Acts 5:30-32 (ESV)

In its infancy, the early church, as expected, experienced some hiccups. Anytime God starts a new work, there are things to discover, work out, and experiment with. Between the growing opposition and growing needs within this newly formed community, the Gospel's impact continued to spread and grow in Jerusalem. More and more people were coming to faith, and more and more needs were beginning to arise. An internal conflict began to brew; how do the leaders meet all the needs before them, while continuing the mission of preaching the Gospel? Within these verses, we see the Apostles step in to resolve the conflict at hand by calling others to use their God-given abilities to step into God-given opportunities. At the same time, they never lost sight of their ultimate mission to spread the Gospel. Today, as we seek to balance meeting the needs of the body with our call to go out and be a witness, we can learn from their example.

BIBLE READING

- ☐ **Acts 6:1-7**
Gospel growth produces problems and opportunities.
- ☐ **Luke 10:1-12 | Acts 1:8**
Jesus empowers His followers with opportunities to do what He did—proclaiming the Gospel and caring for the needy.
- ☐ **Romans 12:1-8**
God has empowered every Christian with gifts to be used to build up the church.
- ☐ **1 Corinthians 12:4-13**
God has given many diverse gifts to His people for the building up of the church.
- ☐ **1 Corinthians 12:12-26**
Each of the different gifts, and the people to whom God has given them, is essential for the church to be healthy and thriving.
- ☐ **1 Corinthians 12:13 | Galatians 3:23-29 | Colossians 3:5-11**
Through faith in Christ, we are brought into the diverse, multi-ethnic family of God in which there is no favoritism.
- ☐ **Deuteronomy 10:17-19 | Isaiah 1:16-17 | James 1:26-27**
God provides His followers with opportunities to care for the needy as He does.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse, Acts 5:30-32. Consider what Peter says about Jesus as leader and savior. As you read this verse to yourself each day, ask Jesus to lead you by the power of His Spirit and to give you the courage to follow Him.
- As you read the daily reading passages, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the gifts He has entrusted to you and how best you can use them for the building up of the church.



CONNECTED TO:

- CHRIST
- COMMUNITY
- CALLING
- OUTREACH
- CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- NATIONS

Here at Summit View Church, in addition to our Mission & Vision, we structure our ministries and opportunities around our Strategies, or ***Connected To*** statements.

Each area of connection builds on the others and reflects a life rooted in the Gospel, ultimately connecting us as a church to a movement of God. Each week we invite you to explore with us the practical ways we can apply the text in one of our areas of connection.

CONNECTED TO CALLING

The church is best served when each member of the body loves, serves, and commits to one another. When this happens, we can more fully demonstrate and declare the Gospel to others. For us to go and do what Jesus has commanded us to do, we must go together and act together. As we see in this week's text, the demands are always present and best met by men and women stepping up and into Gospel opportunities. If you haven't done so already, consider joining a serving team here at Summit View!
www.summitview.net/startserving

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

How do you tend to deal with problems? Do you dive in, or do you avoid them?

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 2:42. How were they living?

QUESTION TWO:

According to Acts 6:1, what was the problem? Disciples were _____ and the widows were being _____

QUESTION THREE:

What was the solution?

Follow Up: According to verse 3, why was it important for the church to identify men of good reputation and be full of the Spirit of wisdom?

Follow Up: How have you seen this played out in the church?

QUESTION FOUR:

The disciples' solution was to partner with other gifted men in the body. We can tend to approach tasks with an "I can do it all" individualistic mentality. How do verses 2-4 push against that tendency?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Verses 3-4 shows us God cares about our physical and spiritual needs; how is this a comfort to you? How have you experienced God's care? Physically? Spiritually?

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Follow Up: Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:25-33 that God is intimately aware of our needs. How does this truth help you trust Him more?

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QUESTION SIX:

In this week's passage we see God using people to meet both physical and spiritual needs—God loves to partner with people! How has God called you to meet the needs of others in the body?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

According to Acts 2:42 and 6:1-6, how might the early church have looked?

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QUESTION EIGHT

In verse 7 what are the results of faith proclaimed in word and deed?

Follow Up: Which needs more emphasis in your life? What steps will you take to cultivate a balanced practice in your life?

APPLICATION

It is always exciting to see the Gospel change people's lives as they are transformed into Christlikeness. However, because sanctification is a process that lasts our lifetime, we will not be perfected this side of heaven. Thankfully, God does not ask us to pursue perfection, but righteousness as we live in harmony with other believers. What do you need to be doing in your daily life to see this happen? Are you actively serving the body of Christ where God has placed you? After reviewing this week's passage, we can see that God uses each of us to meet the needs—both spiritual and physical—of others. How might the church be strengthened if we all participated? How might it be hindered if we don't? Take time this week to pray about how God wants to use you in the church.



KEY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

We are continuing our study of the book of Acts. So far, we have learned how Jesus called his disciples to preach the gospel. We also saw the start of the first Jesus believing church and the works they did through the power of the Holy Spirit. Today we will discover that the first church wasn't perfect; they had problems and arguments just like us!

1. A DIVERSE CHURCH BODY

Read Acts 6:1 out loud.

Question: What problem do we see happening here in this verse?

Answer: The Greek-speaking widows were not being taken care of like the Hebrew-speaking widows were.

We see here that not all of the early followers of Jesus were the same. Some of them followed Jewish culture and traditions and some followed Greek culture and traditions. Instead of celebrating their differences and the diverse family that God had created, some of the people were being treated differently. Today the family of God is even more diverse with people from different countries and cultures all over the world!

Question: How do you think God wants us to treat other Christians that are culturally different from us?

***TIPS FOR PARENTS:** Answers will vary. Explain to kids that what is important is that Christians believe what the Bible says is true. It doesn't matter what language someone uses or country they are from. God loves all people the same and so should we.*

2. SHARING THE WORK

Read Acts 6:2-7 aloud.

Question: How did the "Twelve" (the Apostles) solve their problem?

Answer: They chose 7 men to be in charge of caring for the widows of the church.

Question: How did they decide who would have this responsibility?

Answer: They chose people who were respected and full of the Spirit and wisdom.

The Apostles knew that if they tried to meet all the physical needs of the early church, they wouldn't have time to do the work God had called them to, which was to teach the Good News of Jesus. They knew that if there were trustworthy people in charge of taking care of the physical needs of people in the church, then they could focus on teaching the word of God.

NOTES



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 out loud.

The family of believers is often called the body of Christ. A human body has different parts, and each has a unique job. Every part is special, but they all work together. An ear is useless without the rest of body! And a body without a heart couldn't function! In a church, God calls each of us to a unique role that serves to help the whole body. The Holy Spirit gives us different gifts so that we can support one another and make one complete, healthy body.

CONNECTED TO CALLING

This story in Acts is often considered to be where the idea of “deacons” began. God has called people to serve as deacons in our church as well. Let’s pray together for them to be able to take care of others well and that God would call more to serve in this role.

Consider writing or creating a thank you card for a deacon at your church to give them a word of encouragement. A complete list of our deacons can be found on Summit View's website.





YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

Gospel growth
produces problems
and opportunities.



QUESTION ONE

Read Acts 6:1-7 and underline anything that stands out to you.

Think about your life: school, extra curriculars, time with family and friends, time relaxing, etc. There are a lot of things to do in a day, and while they may even be all good, healthy things to do, like our passage of scripture this week, we need to make sure that the sharing of our faith and development of our walk with Jesus are on that list of priorities too!

Follow up: What is one thing you could cut back on this week to make more time to spend with Jesus in prayer? To read your Bible? To share your faith with a friend, peer, or even stranger?

Example: This week I could cut back on 10 minutes of my evening social media scrolling time to pick up my Bible and read a few chapters of scripture before I end my day.





BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 6:1-7, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 6:1-7**
Gospel growth produces problems and opportunities.
- ☐ **Romans 12:1-8**
God has empowered every Christian with gifts to be used to build up the church.
- ☐ **1 Corinthians 12-13 | Galatians 3:23-29 | Colossians 3:5-11**
Through faith in Christ, we are brought into the diverse, multi-ethnic family of God in which there is no favoritism.

PRAYER

In this passage, the church flourished because each person was able to fully lean into their God-given gifts and responsibilities. Each of you is also uniquely built to be a part of bringing God's Kingdom. Pray that God would reveal the spiritual gifts He has blessed you with. Thank Him for the specific ways He has made you. Pray for guidance that you would recognize the opportunities you have to use your gifts. Pray for your friends, family, and the Christians around you that they would also recognize their gifts and that the Kingdom of God would increase because of their faithfulness.

ACTION STEP

Have you been called to serve in a specific way? The church was growing so much that the apostles didn't have enough time to tend to people that needed help. So, the apostles called everyone together and asked if anyone would be willing to serve by taking care of these people that were being neglected. Seven men came forward and answered the call. Will you answer?

- PRAY that the Lord would reveal where you can serve.
- ASK your parents, small group leader, and mentors where they think you are gifted to serve in the church and community.
- GO and seek out opportunities to serve with your gifts. If it is serving in kids ministry, go talk to the SV Kids director! If it is starting a Bible Study with friends that don't know Jesus, invite them and read the Bible together. Whatever it is, don't sit on the sidelines; the Lord has beautiful ways for all of us to bring life through serving.

NOTES:

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MAIN IDEA

Stephen's life, ministry, and words were all in service to being a faithful witness for Jesus.

MEMORY VERSES

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. Acts 5:30-32 (ESV)

Among the seven chosen to serve the church as deacons, there is one we learn more about in this week's passage. Stephen was not only an individual concerned with meeting the physical needs of the community but sought to proclaim the Gospel as he served. These actions lead Stephen to be arrested and put on trial. At his trial, Stephen gave a powerful defense of the faith and provided a history lesson of the age-old cycle of God's unrelenting care for His people and their consistent rejection of Him. He then boldly addressed the resistance of religious leaders of that day, continuing the cycle of rejecting the prophets of old through their rejection of Jesus Himself. While Acts contains many speeches given by many different individuals, this passage contains the longest recorded, illustrating its importance to the early church. With Stephen's final words, he exalted Jesus Christ regardless the price it would cost him.

- ☐ **Acts 6:8-7:53**
Stephen's life, ministry, and words were all in service to being a faithful witness to Jesus.
- ☐ **Matthew 28:18-20 | Acts 6:8-15**
By the power of the Spirit, Jesus' followers have been transformed to look like Jesus Himself.
- ☐ **John 1:14-18 | John 2:18-22**
Jesus' body was greater than the temple, as the vehicle for God living among His people.
- ☐ **Deuteronomy 18:15-19 | Acts 3:17-26**
Jesus is the prophet, like Moses, through whom God has spoken and to whom all must listen.
- ☐ **Hebrews 3:1-19**
Since Jesus is greater than Moses, we must take care to listen to Him and faithfully follow His leading.
- ☐ **Judges 2:16-17 | Daniel 9:4-15 | Acts 7:51-53**
God's people have repeatedly failed to keep the law that God gave through Moses.
- ☐ **Acts 7:51-53 | Jeremiah 31:31-34**
Through the work of Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we have been empowered to live like Him and follow His instruction.



PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Recite this month's memory verse (Acts 5:30-32). Consider both the continuity and the change from Acts 1:8 to Acts 5:32. No longer is this a future reality of something that will be, but a present reality of what is. Take a moment each day as you recite the verse to rest in the fact that the Holy Spirit witnesses to you and through you about the risen and exalted Jesus.

CONNECTED TO CALLING

In this week's passage, Stephen addressed his accusers with a clear, bold presentation of the Gospel. He clearly knew it inside and out! Would you be ready at a moment's notice to share if someone asked you? We never know when that moment might arise, but we can prepare for it now.

Take time this week to:

1. Develop a plan to grow in your understanding of the Gospel—considering joining us for one of our School of Discipleship Classes (www.summitview.net/school)
2. Pray for boldness and opportunities to share your faith.

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Have you ever been so impacted by a story that it changed you? What was it?

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 6:8. What does it say about Stephen. He was full of ____ and _____. Look at verses 3, 5, and 8. What else does it say about him?

FOLLOW UP: Why might Luke want us to know this about him?

QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 6:11 & 13-14. What are the three charges against Stephen?

QUESTION THREE:

Stephen knew his Old Testament well! He was able to recite and interpret its meaning. How well do you know the story? Who was Abraham? Did he live to see God's promise fulfilled? See Genesis 12:1-3, 13:14-17, and Hebrews 10:8-13 for background on Abraham.

FOLLOW UP: Stephen was accused of blaspheming the temple, but he showed God was working before the temple was constructed—it didn't even exist when Abraham was alive. Why might he want them to understand that particular detail?

QUESTION FOUR:

In Acts 7:9 Stephen begins to use the examples of Joseph and Moses to point out Israel has a history of opposing the leaders God gives them. Why do you think he does this?

QUESTION FIVE:

Read Acts 7:17-34. In this passage, Stephen shifted his focus to Moses, reiterating his prior points: God reveals himself outside of Israel (to Abraham in Mesopotamia and Moses in Egypt) and Israel once again rejects their deliverers. Look back at Acts 6:11 & 13-14. Can you see how he's answering their charges?

FOLLOW UP: Read Acts 6:10. How did Stephen answer? Who helped him?

QUESTION SIX:

Read Acts 7:35-38. Stephen repeats the phrase "this one" four times. What point do you think he's driving home? Why?

FOLLOW UP: Focus on Acts 7:37. How will the prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18:18 be like Moses?



QUESTION SEVEN:

Read Acts 7:51-53. Stephen didn't hold back! His aim was not to save himself but his hearers. What does this teach you about Stephen?

FOLLOW UP: Has there ever been a time in your life where you were more concerned for those you were with than yourself?





APPLICATION

It's easy to sit here and judge the men accusing Stephen, but truth be told, we are all guilty of stubbornness, resisting the Holy Spirit, and not keeping God's word. Stephen's argument is formed to help his accusers understand three things:

1. There is progress and change in God's program.
2. The blessings of God are not limited to the land of Israel and the temple area.
3. Israel in its past and present evidenced a pattern of opposition to God's plans and those he sent.

Which of these three do you feel you struggle with the most? Do you try to keep God in a box because of how He has worked in the past? Do you think that the Gospel is for some, but not others because of who they are or where they live? Or do you oppose the message of grace found in the Gospel? Take time to prayerfully consider and confess where your heart is today. Ask for a soft heart toward God's plan.



KEY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Have you ever been in trouble for something that you didn't do? How did it make you feel? It can feel so frustrating and unfair, especially if someone is just trying to get us in to trouble!

Last week we learned how God called some men who were full of the Spirit to serve within the church family. Today we are going to learn more about one of those men. His name was Stephen. Some people didn't like him and lied about him to get him into trouble!

BIG IDEAS

1. STEPHEN ARRESTED

Read Acts 6:8-10 out loud.

The truth of Jesus was spreading. In addition to serving the poor, Stephen preached the Gospel and by the power of the Spirit he even did miracles. However, some people didn't like that. They tried to argue with Stephen about Jesus, but they could never win; Stephen always had an answer.

Read Acts 6:11-14 aloud.

Question: What did the men who didn't like Stephen decide to do?

Answer: They lied about Stephen saying untrue things about God and Moses to get other people upset with him too.

Question: What did they accuse Stephen of? What did they say he was speaking against?

Answer: They accused Stephen of speaking against/destroying the Temple, or holy place, and against/changing the law of Moses.

2. STEPHEN'S SPEECH

After Stephen is lied about and arrested, the high priest asked him if these things were true. Stephen didn't give him an answer. Instead, he began by telling the story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and his brothers. Did any of them have the temple? No! It wasn't even built yet. However, Stephen showed that God was with His people and did great things before a temple even existed.

Stephen told the story of Moses from when he was a little baby all the way to when God gave Moses the law on Mount Sinai.

Read Acts 7:39-43 out loud.



Question: What does Stephen say happened after Moses was on Mount Sinai?

Answer: The people refused to obey. Instead of following Moses they wanted to go back to Egypt and built a golden calf to worship instead of God.

Stephen was showing that their ancestors broke the law of Moses from the very beginning and continued to do so to the point that God allowed them to be taken into exile.

3. STEPHEN'S CLOSING STATEMENT

Read Acts 7:51-53 aloud.

Question: Who does Stephen say these men and their ancestors always resisted?

Answer: The Holy Spirit

Question: What do you think "persecuted" means?

Answer: treat someone cruelly or unfairly

Question: Who did Stephen say their ancestors always persecuted?

Answer: the prophets

Question: Who is the Righteous One that Stephen mentions?

Answer: Jesus

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Read Luke 16:10 aloud.

Just like this verse says, Stephen started out by being faithful in little to being faithful in much. When we first learned about Stephen, he was chosen to feed hungry widows. This week we saw how he became faithful in much more (doing great wonders and miraculous signs) to ultimately standing before the temple leaders to share the truth of Jesus.

- Think about where and how you serve Jesus. It may seem like something small, but if you are faithful in the small things God will later use you to do big things!



CONNECTED TO CALLING

Stephen was a man that was filled with the Spirit. He knew that the most important thing in life is to be a faithful witness for Jesus. He showed his love for Jesus by what he did and by what he said.

Take time as a family to pray for the Holy Spirit to empower you to love and serve Jesus with the same wisdom and boldness as Stephen did.

YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

*Stephen's life, ministry,
and words were all in service
to being a faithful witness
for Jesus.*



Read Acts 6:8-7:53. Underline anything that stands out to you.

In this passage, Stephen was doing the work of God, preaching the gospel, and performing signs and wonders for good in Jesus' name, until the arguments and oppositions of non-Jesus following folks became upset that they could "not stand up against the wisdom the spirit gave [Stephen] as he spoke." (Acts 6:10) in their arguments against his service. Then, out of their wickedness, they began to spread rumors and lies about Stephen to get rid of him to prove themselves 'right'. Spoiler alert: they weren't right.

QUESTION ONE:

Have you ever had rumors spread about you? How did it feel? Did you stick up for the truth and try to set the record straight?

QUESTION TWO:

Have you ever been in a situation where the people around you were dissing Christianity or God? What did you do? What might you have done if you were to relive the situation? After this, Stephen stands up and gives a speech that looks an awful lot like some of the sermons we hear today. In this speech he stood up for himself and the God-empowered wisdom and truth of the Spirit spoke through him—all for Christ's sake! Stephen did the right thing by being bold enough to stand up for the Gospel, even in a time where this could put him in some serious danger.

QUESTION THREE:

Just like Stephen, why is it important for us to stand up for our faith?

BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 6:8-7:53, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

☐ **Acts 6:8-7:53**

Stephen's life, ministry, and words were all in service to being a faithful witness to Jesus.

☐ **Hebrews 3:1-19**

Since Jesus is greater than Moses, we must take care to listen to Him and faithfully follow His leading.

☐ **Acts 7:51-53 | Jeremiah 31:31-34**

Through the work of Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we have been empowered to live like Him and follow His instruction.

PRAYER

Stephen showed great bravery in the face of persecution. Why? Because he was filled with the Holy Spirit and knew in the deepest part of his soul that the Gospel he preached was the truth! Pray that you would also be filled with the Holy Spirit, so much so that even when people look at you they would see that you belong to God. Pray for a brave faith that can stand up for the truth of the Gospel in the midst of persecution. Pray that God would give you the words to say when your friends or family tease you or pick on you for your trust in Jesus. Pray and trust that the truth will be revealed through you even when people twist your words or lie about what you've said.



ACTION STEP

Is everything you say a testimony to Jesus? Stephen was doing signs and wonders and the religious leaders of the day could not defeat Stephen in a debate or defame him because of a lack of character. It says in verse 10 that nobody could stand against the “wisdom and the Spirit” that Stephen was speaking with. When everything about us is aligned with Jesus, amazing things happen. Literally everything that Stephen said and did was a testimony to Jesus.

This week let's follow Stephen's example and have the “face of an angel” by allowing our words to be a testimony for Jesus.

- Every day at the beginning of the day write down a reminder on your hand, maybe use your phone lock screen, or have a note card to help you remember to make your words a testimony to Jesus.

Examples: Choose to refocus your conversations if the subjects begin to stray towards negativity or speaking poorly of someone. Try to sprinkle in conversations about what you have been learning about Jesus recently. Speak encouragements and speak kindly about others. Shut down the gossip rather than join in. Avoid complaining. Be intentional even with the things you say over texts, messages, and threads.

- At the end of each day prayerfully reflect on how your words were a testimony for Jesus and message your leader to tell them how it went.

NOTES:

MAIN IDEA

Opposition doesn't detract from God's mission but rather advances it where He wants it to go.

MEMORY VERSES

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. Acts 5:30-32 (ESV)

The New Testament was predominantly written in the Greek language. And in this week's passage, the Greek word for "witness" is the word *martyrs*. It should not be surprising to see the connection between the two words—someone who dies for the witness they bear. This is exactly what we see take place here. In Stephen's speech, he bears witness to who Jesus is and what He's done and faces the punishment of the angry mob and is killed for his faith. It is in this event we are introduced to the Apostle Paul—prior to his conversion—as part of that murderous mob. While it would be quick and easy to feel that all hope is lost for this growing Gospel community, this event became a turning point in the spread of the Gospel. The persecution scattered believers to the neighboring regions, where God wanted them to go all along.

BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 7:54-8:3**

Opposition doesn't detract God's mission but advances it where He wants it to go.

☐ **Luke 12:4-12**

God cares for His people and empowers them to proclaim the Gospel despite persecution.

☐ **Luke 24:36-49**

Jesus was opposed by those around Him, and eventually even put to death for the Gospel. God used that opposition to accomplish His mission.

☐ **Daniel 3:1-30**

God cares for His people and powerfully makes Himself known through their persecution.

☐ **1 Peter 5:6-11**

God is sovereign over all things and cares for His people who suffer in His name.

☐ **Phil 1:12-26**

Opposition to the Gospel advances its influence.

☐ **Acts 1:8 | Acts 7:54-8:3 | Acts 8:4-5**

God's people were opposed to the death for the gospel they preached, but God used their sufferings to accomplish his mission.



PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Recite this month's memory verse (Acts 5:30-32). Consider the statement "We are witnesses of these things." Take some time to imagine the scene of Stephen witnessing for Jesus. Imagine yourself in his shoes. Write down how you feel imagining yourself in that scene. For the rest of the week, pray about those feelings and ask God to help you imagine yourself boldly proclaiming Jesus the way Stephen did.

CONNECTED TO CALLING

It is unlikely that we will ever find ourselves facing a martyr's death. Yet, the Bible calls all of us to sacrifice our natural tendencies and sin nature to God daily. The lifestyle of a Christ-follower is a counter-cultural one; inviting us to pursue Jesus, whatever the cost, instead of comfort and convenience like the rest of the world.

This week, spend some time assessing your heart and taking an inventory of your life. As you engage the Word, take some time to read through and reflect on Romans 12:1-2 and Matthew 16:24-25. What areas of your life are out of alignment with the values of God? Invite Him to reveal them to you.

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

What is your natural reaction when facing opposition?

QUESTION ONE:

Look back at Acts 7:51-53 to refresh your memory from last week's lesson. Who is being accused, and what is Stephen accusing them of?

FOLLOW UP: What is their response? Why are they so angry?

QUESTION TWO:

Acts 7:55-56 uses some imagery and phrases they would have been familiar with. Look up Daniel 7:13-14 and Psalm 110:1. What conclusion is Luke trying to have us reach?

FOLLOW UP: What significance is Christ's position in verse 55? Look up 1 Timothy 2:5 for a hint.



QUESTION THREE:

Stephen attested that God's plan progressed through time to include all people, that those blessings were not limited to a people group or a place, such as the temple in Jerusalem, and that Israel often resisted God's anointed. Why would the statement about Christ's deity in Acts 7:56 enrage them so?

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QUESTION FOUR:

What did the Jewish leaders do to Stephen?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Stephen's response should shock us all. What does he say in Acts 7:59? Do these words sound familiar to you; who do they sound like? Read Psalm 31:5 and Luke 23:34,46.

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FOLLOW UP: Reflect on Psalm 31:1-5. Read it aloud. Use your knowledge of salvation and God's saving work as you observe what Stephen is doing to help you walk through these verses.

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QUESTION SIX:

According to Acts 8:1, what happened to the remaining Jews after Stephen's death?

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APPLICATION

We believe that God is both sovereign (in complete control) over everything and wholly good. How do you see Him exercise His sovereignty amid evil in the early church? See Matthew 28:19-20 for reference. What happened with the Gospel in Acts as a result? What did Saul do and to whom?

God using evil to bring about good can be a tough pill to swallow; it can cause a lot of tension in us, and that is okay! We can use this tension to allow the Holy Spirit to help us build our trust of God. God's character is perfect, there is no darkness in Him. So, we can always trust Him! How can you use this week's passage, combined with your knowledge of what Christ asked of his followers, to build your trust in Him in the face of hardships?



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Last week we learned about a godly man named Stephen who was arrested.

Question: Do you remember why?

Answer: People didn't like what he said about Jesus and lied about him so he would get arrested.

Question: When he was asked if what everyone was saying about him was true do you remember what he did? Did he say that everyone was lying about him?

Answer: No, he preached the truth of Jesus.

Today we are going to pick up our story where we left off and see what happened after Stephen finished his speech.

BIG IDEAS

1. THE STONING OF STEPHEN

Read Acts 7:54-60 aloud.

Question: How did the Sanhedrin feel after Stephen finished his speech?

Answer: They were angry/furious/enraged, gnashed/ground their teeth.

Question: What did Stephen see?

Answer: Heaven; the Son of Man at the right hand of God.

The leaders were so furious they snarled and gnashed their teeth! They rushed at Stephen and dragged him out of the city. They threw large stones at Stephen. As they stoned Stephen, he fell to his knees, prayed for those who were hurting him, and died.

Read Mark 14:61-64 aloud.

Question: Who is the "Son of Man"?

Answer: Jesus

Question: What similarities do you see between Jesus and Stephen in Mark 14 and Acts 7?

Answer: Both said that Jesus is the Son of Man; both were sentenced to death for saying Jesus is the Son of Man.

Why was saying Jesus is the Son of Man such a big deal? Why did it make people angry enough to kill the person? It is because saying Jesus is the Son of Man is the same as saying Jesus is equal with God—which He is! Jesus is both God and man. Jesus fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament and now sits at the right hand of God.

2. THE CHURCH PERSECUTED AND SCATTERED

Read Acts 8:1-3 aloud.

Question: On the day of Stephen's death, what happened to the church in Jerusalem?

Answer: Great persecution started, meaning people began trying to hurt the church in Jerusalem and make it suffer.

Question: We learn of a man named Saul who thought it was good that Stephen was killed. What does he decide to do to persecute the church of Jesus?

Answer: Take people to prison.

Question: Why do you think people in the church started to leave Jerusalem?

Answer: They didn't want to be killed or thrown in prison.

On the day of Stephen's death, people began trying to hurt the early church and Jesus' followers. The people in the early church began to leave Jerusalem because they didn't want to be killed or thrown in prison.

A man named Saul was at the stoning of Stephen. He thought it was good that Stephen was killed. We will see that Saul became one of the major persecutors of the church. He wanted to destroy the church and kill believers.

Saul really believed that persecuting the church was one way of serving God! He, like many Jewish people, still followed the Old Testament law and rituals. They saw Jesus as the enemy, not understanding that when Jesus came, the old law went away and a new law came to be. Jesus changed it all (and for the better!). Later, in 1 Timothy 1:13, Saul said he "acted ignorantly in unbelief".



CONNECTED TO CHRIST

There are Christians today who are being thrown in prison or killed because they say they believe in Jesus. Devote some time to praying for Christians around the world who are being persecuted for their faith.



Download this printable “Prayer Passport” from the OpenDoors ministry!

QR code: www.opendoorsuk.org.

YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

Opposition doesn't detract from God's mission but rather advances it where He wants it to go.



Read Acts 7:54-8:3. Underline anything that stands out to you.

Sometimes doing the right thing can be really scary. Sometimes this could look like standing up to a bully, confessing a hidden sin, or apologizing to someone you hurt. In our Scripture passage this week, we saw Stephen standing up for his faith, even when it was really scary.

QUESTION ONE:

Think of a time when you knew what the right thing to do was, but it was really scary. What did you do? What should you have done?

BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 7:54-8:3, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 7:54-8:3**
Opposition doesn't detract God's mission but advances it where He wants it to go.
- ☐ **Daniel 3:1-30**
God cares for His people and powerfully makes Himself known through their persecution.
- ☐ **Philippians 1:12-26**
Opposition to the Gospel advances its influence.

PRAYER

With Stephen's final words, he asked for forgiveness for the people who killed him. It would have been easy for him to curse them, but he kept his eyes on Jesus and it was forgiveness that poured out. Who in your life are you having a hard time forgiving? Pray that God would soften your heart and that you would be able to forgive them. Pray a blessing over the people that you have the hardest time with. Pray that they would experience the love of God. Pray that God would forgive them (and you!) for doing the wrong things.

ACTION STEP

Stephen was faithful and stood up for what he believed in. Most of us will probably never face the same type of persecution; however, we still need to be faithful with our actions. Our actions show all the people around us a testimony of who Jesus truly is. This week we are going to build off the Action Step of last week and focus on our actions being a testimony for Jesus.

- Every day at the beginning of the day write down a reminder on your hand, maybe use your phone lock screen, or have a note card to help you remember to make your actions a testimony to Jesus.

Examples: Find acts of service to do for others. Smile at people. Hold open doors. Work hard. Sit with those sitting alone who don't have a lot of friends. Let others go first. Obey, follow the rules, and do the right thing.

- Then at the end of each day prayerfully reflect on how your actions were a testimony for Jesus and message your leader with how it went.



MAIN IDEA

When the Gospel is proclaimed to a new place people respond and the culture changes.

MEMORY VERSES

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Acts 9:31 (ESV)

When you hear the word evangelist what, or who, comes to mind? Perhaps it is someone you know who loves sharing the Gospel with others, able to redirect any conversation toward spiritual matters; regardless the setting or conversation, they have that uncanny ability to call unbelievers to repentance and faith.

In Acts 8, we are introduced to one of those individuals: Philip, one of the seven chosen in Acts 6, later referred to as “the evangelist” in Acts 21. In light of the rampant persecution in Jerusalem, Philip traveled to Samaria and many people responded to his message and believed in Jesus. It was through Philip’s time with the Samaritans that the Gospel began to expand beyond Jerusalem and the Jewish community, to display the power of the Gospel to transform people and cultures far from God.

BIBLE READING

- ☐ **Acts 8:4-25**
When the gospel is proclaimed to a new place people respond and the culture changes.
- ☐ **Colossians 3:1-17**
The Gospel transforms our individual lives.
- ☐ **Ephesians 4:17-5:2**
The Gospel transformation in our individual lives is seen most clearly in the church community.
- ☐ **Acts 19:8-20**
When Gospel communities follow Jesus with their lives, the culture around them begins to be challenged and shaped by the Gospel.
- ☐ **Isaiah 60:1-7**
God has always desired for His people to be a source of transformation in the whole world through the Good News that He has spoken to them.
- ☐ **Romans 10:10-15**
We have a responsibility to bring this Gospel message to the world.
- ☐ **Acts 1:8 | Matthew 28:18-20**
We are to make disciples of Jesus, who will make disciples of Jesus, so that the world can be transformed by the message of the Gospel.



PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read and recite this month's memory verse: Acts 9:31. Consider the movement that took place from the initial call of Acts 1:8 to the spread of the Gospel in Acts 9; the Gospel reach expanded despite persecution! Each day as you recite the verse to yourself, take time to pray for those who are bringing the Gospel to places it is unknown or where believers experience persecution today. Ask God to bring them peace and build them up in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

CONNECTED TO CHRIST

We all struggle at times with the temptation to either:

1. Try to gain God's favor through our own efforts.
2. Seek to control God.

For many of us it can be an unconscious attitude displayed through anxiety-driven service to God or a transactional prayer-life. Yet, as we see on display in this week's passage, God cannot be bought or controlled by anything we do. Because of Christ's sacrifice, we are called to simply receive the multitude of benefits and blessings—for free! You and I do not need to pay. Christ has already done that for us. And like Simon, when we find ourselves struggling to manipulate God or earn His favor, we too are called to repent. This week, where do you need to relinquish control to God? Where do you need to renew your faith in the sufficiency of Christ?

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Who is responsible for sharing the Gospel with you?

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 8:4-8. Looking back at 8:1, who exactly was scattered? Who stayed put? Where did the scattered people go?

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QUESTION TWO:

Up until this point, despite Christ's command in Acts 1:8, the Apostles and disciples stayed in Jerusalem. How do you see God's providence moving sovereignly amid the horrors of His persecuted church in this week's passage?

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FOLLOW UP: Have you been able to identify God's sovereign hand working providentially in your own life? If not, ask God to shift your perspective that you might see the ways He has, and currently is, working in your life.

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QUESTION THREE:

Paying special attention to how it was received, what was the result of the spread of the Gospel according to verse 8?

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QUESTION FOUR:

Read Acts 8:9-13. Explain with as much detail as to what happened as the Gospel began to spread throughout Samaria.

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FOLLOW UP: This man Simon was impressive and able to do incredible works! It's easy to be persuaded to follow someone who is powerful and can influence a crowd. Have you ever found yourself following someone for the good they appear to be doing?

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FOLLOW UP: What does Scripture tell us about false teachers? Take some time to look up passages that address this issue, starting with Jeremiah 23:16, Matthew 24:24, and 2 Timothy 4: 3-4.

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QUESTION FIVE:

Read Acts 8:14-17. Who heard the word of God was received in verse 14? Where were they when they heard this and who did they send? According to verse 15, what did they do when they got there?

The Jews and Samaritans had been separated by a religious rift for hundreds of years. The Jews looked down on Samaritans as less than, half-breed Jews, removed from the favor of God.

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QUESTION SIX:

Who you send to do a job often brings legitimacy to the work being done. Not one but two Apostles, Peter and John, who had been with Jesus throughout His ministry, witnessed His resurrection, and were commissioned to share the Good News, travelled all the way from Jerusalem to Samaria to ensure these new believers had the same guarantee of the Holy Spirit. What would this have communicated to both the Jews and Samaritans about their faith?

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FOLLOW UP: Knowing there had been such a chasm between the Jews and Samaritans, why would it be so important for the foundation of their beliefs to be the same?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

The Holy Spirit was given to the Samaritan believers by the Apostles to show that both Jews and non-Jews were fully integrated into the New Covenant. Read Ephesians 2:11-22. What do we learn about God's redemptive plan? How does this impact us today?

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QUESTION EIGHT:

On the tail end of what was surely a time of spiritual elation, Peter and John didn't lose sight of the work yet to be done. According to Acts 8:25, what did they do next? Why is that significant?

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APPLICATION

The Gospel has the power to change lives, groups of people, and cultures. Pause for a moment to reflect on what it must have been like for the outcast Samaritans to be brought back into the fold of God's people. They were once far off and had been brought near. They were once not a people but were now a people (1 Peter 2:10). The same is true for us! We are recipients of the Gospel spreading beyond Jerusalem and are now charged with taking the Gospel into our neighborhoods and workplaces. Who around you needs Christ? Who will you commit to praying for during this series? Write their name(s) in your Discipleship Guide and share them with your friends, family, and Life Group. Commit to praying for their salvation weekly.

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KEY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Last week, we learned that the early followers of Jesus fled from the city Jerusalem.

Question: Why did the early believers leave Jerusalem?

Answer: Persecution—people being mean to the followers of Jesus.

So far in the book of Acts, we've seen the Good News about Jesus being spread throughout the city. But, because of the persecution, believers were scattered to the nearby countries (to Judea and Samaria)! Just like Jesus said in our key verse; nothing can stop God's plan!

BIG IDEAS

1. PHILIP TELLS PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS IN SAMARIA

Read Acts 8:4-8 aloud.

Question: Who was telling others about Jesus (verse 4)?

Answer: Those who were scattered.

Question: In this passage, which Apostle went to Samaria? What did he do?

Answer: Philip; told others about Jesus.

Question: What was the result?

Answer: The people in the crowds paid attention to what Philip was saying, saw him perform miracles, and there was much joy.

Because of the persecution in the city Jerusalem, many believers fled to the nearby countries, and one of them was Samaria. Philip told the people in Samaria about Jesus. The crowds paid attention to what was being said by Philip. They saw the signs that he did. Many who were paralyzed or crippled were healed. More importantly, they heard the Good News and believed, so they were rescued from their sins! There was much joy in that city.

2. SIMON THE SORCERER

Read Acts 8:9-13 aloud.

Question: Who amazed the people of Samaria?

Answer: Simon the Sorcerer.

Question: What did he say about himself?

Answer: That he was somebody great.

Question: What was the result?

Answer: The people paid attention to him. They were amazed by his sorcery.

Question: What false assumption did they have (verse 10b)?

Answer: He must have the power of God.

Question: When people began listening to Philip, believing and being baptized, what did Simon do?

Answer: He also believed, was baptized, and continued with Philip.

Read Acts 8:9-13 aloud.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people in Samaria had heard the Good News and believed, they sent Peter and John.

Question: What did Peter and John do in verses 15 & 17? What happened?

Answer: Laid hands on the Samaritan believers, prayed for them. The Samaritans received the Holy Spirit.

Question: When Simon saw this, what did he want?

Answer: He wanted the apostles to lay hands on him so he might receive the Holy Spirit.

Question: What did he want to do with this power?

Answer: Lay hands on others for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Question: Where did he go wrong? How did what was truly in his heart show?

Answer: He offered the apostles money.

Question: When Simon's true intentions were evident, he was given the chance to repent. Did he?

Answer: No.

What seemed at first like a genuine belief in Jesus, Simon's actions showed what was truly in his heart. Simon continued with Philip not to hear and learn more about Jesus, but most likely to learn how the miracles were done. Simon was willing to pay for the power to perform miracles. By doing so, he could glorify himself. The apostles did miracles to show God's power and to glorify God. When Simon's true intentions were evident, he was given the chance to repent. But he did not. He was more worried about avoiding judgement than with getting right with God.



APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Disciples Who Make Disciples

SUPPLIES: a box of dominos, masking tape and a marker.

1. Make a face on one of the dominos, line up the dominos, and add a face on the last domino. Explain that the first domino represents the “disciple”.
2. Explain that each domino represents another person sharing what they heard. Tip the first domino to cause the full line to fall over.
3. Ask the child(ren) what happened. Explain to them that this is the effect of sharing the Good News. While the first and last dominos never touched each other, the effect of one person led to a (literal) domino effect of reaching all the way to the last “person” (domino).

CONNECTED TO CHRIST

The people of Samaria were half Jews and half Gentiles. They were considered “less than” by the first century Jews who did not believe God’s promises were for the Samaritans too. But God is not bound to one place or people! God is for all those who truly believe.



YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

When the Gospel is proclaimed to a new place people respond and the culture changes.



Read Acts 8:4-25. Underline anything that stands out to you.

Evangelism is a fancy word that we use to explain the act of sharing the Gospel with others.

QUESTION ONE:

If applicable, think back to the time you decided to give your life to follow Jesus. Who was there with you? What did they do to help lead you to follow Jesus? What kind of person were they?

QUESTION TWO:

Now think about how you could be that for someone else. What is one way you could step into your evangelistic call as a believer to help bring someone else to know and love Jesus?

QUESTION THREE:

If you haven't yet given your life to follow Jesus, what is holding you back?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 8:4-25, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

☐ **Acts 8:4-25**

When the gospel is proclaimed to a new place, people respond and the culture changes.

☐ **Acts 19:8-20**

When Gospel communities follow Jesus with their lives, the culture around them begins to be challenged and shaped by the Gospel.

☐ **Acts 1:8 | Matthew 28:18-20**

We are to make disciples of Jesus, who will make disciples of Jesus, so that the world can be transformed by the message of the Gospel.

PRAYER

Simon was interested in the Gospel and the Holy Spirit not because he wanted glory for Jesus but because he wanted glory for himself. As God uses you and the Holy Spirit moves through you, it can be easy to confuse His work with our own power. Pray that your intentions would be aligned with God's intentions. Pray that if you ever start to feel boastful or proud in your own power that you would be moved back towards a place of humility. Pray that everything you do would give glory to Jesus!

ACTION STEP

Simon the Magician loved the applause and praise of the crowd as he practiced magic. As he began to follow Jesus that love of people's affection still resided in his heart. Distractions pulled Simon away from what Jesus was truly about and that can happen to us too. What are the things that distract you? Social media? Video games? TV? The affection or approval of other people?

This week choose something to set aside for the week to focus more on the Lord. Every time you have a desire to reengage your distractions, read some Scripture or take some time to pray. During the week keep your small group leader or accountability partner updated with how it's going.



MAIN IDEA

There are divine appointments waiting for you.

MEMORY VERSES

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Acts 9:31 (ESV)

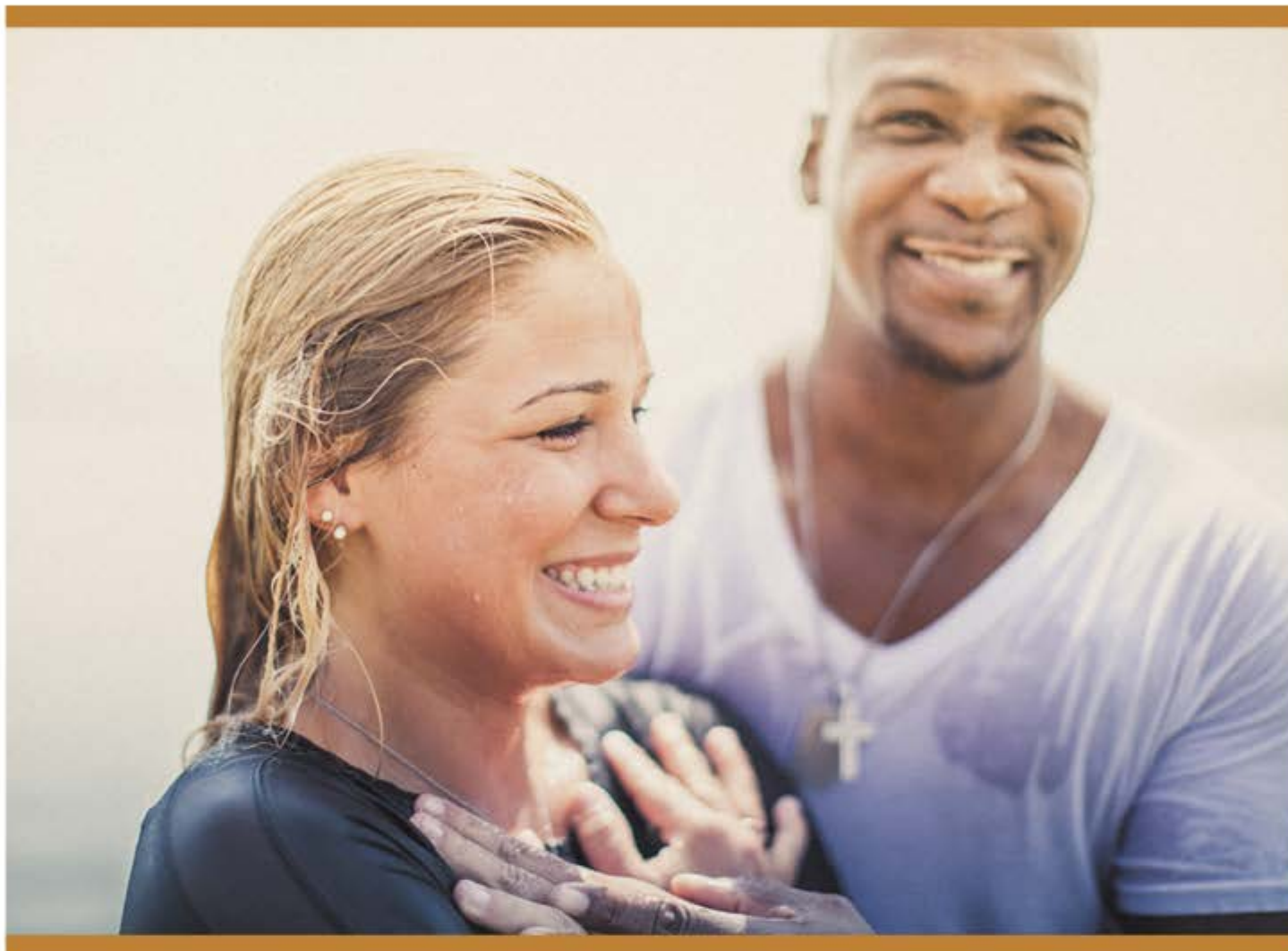
Have you ever had a moment in your life that you would consider to be a divine appointment? It's more than a simple coincidence or being at the right place at the right time; it's a time where looking back you can see the encounter was clearly orchestrated by God. These events often bring us, or others, closer to God and help further the Gospel. In Acts 8:26-40, Philip, being faithful in his ministry and listening to the prompting of the Spirit, met someone in a divine appointment. They examined the Scriptures together and Philip explained everything to him, and how it all pointed to Jesus. In the end, Philip led the Ethiopian official to faith and baptized him. Yet again we are given an opportunity to see the Gospel advance beyond the confines of Jerusalem and reach a foreigner from far away. Today, God is still in the business of inviting us to lead others to faith; are you ready to answer the call?

BIBLE READING

- ☐ **Acts 8:26-40**
There are divine appointments waiting for you.
- ☐ **Ephesians 2:4-10**
God has created us to do good works that he has prepared for us to do.
- ☐ **Isaiah 53:1-12**
God promised to send His messiah to suffer for our sin.
- ☐ **Acts 8:26-40**
We need to make it known that God's promise has been fulfilled in Jesus.
- ☐ **Psalm 22:22-31 | Acts 1:8**
God wants us to declare His good news to the whole world.
- ☐ **Matthew 28:18-20 | Acts 2:37-41 | Acts 8:4-12**
Baptism is the first step of obedience in following Jesus once we believe.
- ☐ **Acts 8:26-40**
There is a divine appointment waiting for you.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

- Read Acts 8:26-40 and Ephesians 2:4-10. Take time each day this week to ask God to reveal to you what good works or divine appointments He has prepared for you, and for the courage and boldness to step into them when they come.



CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS

Baptism is a powerful outward symbol of an inward change brought about by Jesus in our lives. The Bible teaches that everyone who places their trust in Christ for salvation should take the step of obedience to be baptized, just as illustrated in this week's passage. Do you consider yourself a follower of Jesus but haven't yet been baptized? Do you have questions about baptism? Do you already know you want to get baptized but aren't sure what to do next? If you answered yes to any of those questions, visit www.summitview.net/baptism for more information and next steps.

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Have you ever felt prompted to do something out of the ordinary but didn't know why until later?

QUESTION ONE:

As followers of Christ, we are promised the power of the Holy Spirit. Look at John 14:26 and 15:26. For what are we invited to rely on the Holy Spirit?

FOLLOW UP: Most of us try to live in our own strength; where do you need to grow in your reliance on the Spirit?

QUESTION TWO:

Who instructed Philip to go to Gaza in Acts 8:26? According to verse 29, who told him what to say?

QUESTION THREE:

How are we to know if we, as believers, are being led by the Spirit like Philip?

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FOLLOW UP: Look at Ephesians 5:15-20 and Galatians 5:16-17. What do you learn about submitting yourself to the Holy Spirit?

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FOLLOW UP: Where do you need to step out in faith and trust Him to lead you?

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QUESTION FOUR:

Luke, the author of Acts, explained the background of the man Philip was to meet in Acts 8:27-28; it is clear he was not a Jew! What evidence is given to assert his ethnic background? What does the passage say about his receptivity to the Gospel?

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QUESTION FIVE:

In obedience to the Spirit, Philip asked the man a simple question, "do you understand what you are reading?" Like many of us, the Ethiopian did not. Read verses 32-33, a reference to Isaiah 53:7-8; if you have time, read all of Isaiah 53. Take time in your group to explain the Gospel using these Scriptures as your starting point, just like Philip did in verse 35.

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QUESTION SIX:

Read John 5:39 and 1 Peter 3:15. We are called to know the Scriptures well enough to be able to share when asked the Gospel—the reason for our hope. Should God put a divine opportunity in front of you, how prepared would you be to explain? What steps will you take to grow here?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

We see three responses to Philip's obedient evangelism:

1. Conversion—"what prevents me from being baptized" (verse 36)
2. Joy—"[he] went on his way rejoicing" (verse 39)
3. The Gospel expanded beyond Jews—this guy is an Ethiopian, a Gentile!

Remembering Christ's command in Acts 1:8, why do you think this story of the Ethiopian is important enough to be included in the Bible?

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FOLLOW UP: If you remember, what was your response to receiving the Gospel? Do you currently live with the kind of joy the Ethiopian man experienced after receiving this life-giving news?

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QUESTION EIGHT:

Take some time to read through Acts 8:39-40. Philip continues his obedience to the Lord and is submitted to the Spirit's leading as he is carried on to the next place. If you lived your life like Philip, what would look different than it does today?

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APPLICATION

We are constantly surrounded by people in need of hearing the good news of the Gospel. Some of us will be called to the nations to preach and teach this great truth. All of us are called to share it with the people we encounter every day. As you close your time, ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see and ears to hear the opportunities surrounding you everywhere you go. Ask the Spirit to strengthen your hands to do the work He has called you to do, and to bless it. Ask for an obedient and willing heart to put yourself out there for God's glory and the good of others.





KEY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Last week we learned about Philip. He traveled to Samaria, told others about Jesus, and many believed. We can see the Gospel move from Jerusalem to neighboring countries, just like our key verse tells us.

Philip and the apostles then returned to Jerusalem, telling more Samaritans about Jesus as they traveled through the villages on their return trip. In our story today, we learn about an encounter Philip has as he traveled home.



1. PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

Read Acts 8:26-31 aloud.

Question: An angel of the Lord gave Philip a command and he obeyed it. What did he do?

Answer: Philip went south to a desert place.

Question: Who did he find?

Answer: An Ethiopian; a court official who was in charge of his queen's treasure.

Question: Why did the man come to Jerusalem?

Answer: To worship.

Question: What was the man doing?

Answer: He was reading the Scriptures in his chariot on his journey home.

Question: This time, the Holy Spirit commanded Philip. What did He say?

Answer: "Go and join the chariot."

Question: What was the man's problem?

Answer: He could not understand the Scriptures he was reading.

Obeying the command of an angel, Philip went south to a desert place. He saw an Ethiopian man there. This man was a court official who was in charge of his queen's treasure. The man had come to Jerusalem to worship. He was returning home, and while seated in his chariot, he was reading the Scriptures. Following the Holy Spirit's prompting, Philip went over to the man, heard about his problem, and was invited to join the man in the chariot.

Read Acts 8:32-40 aloud.

Question: The Scripture passage the man was reading was about a sheep, or lamb, whose life was taken away. Do you have any guesses on who this sheep/lamb was?

Answer: Answers will vary.

Question: What did Philip do?

Answer: Told the man the Good News about Jesus.

Question: Because of this man's job, how could his decision to believe in God affect those he worked with?

Answer: He was a treasurer for the queen which allowed him to have a bigger influence on those around him.

The Ethiopian man was confused about a certain Scripture passage that talked about a sheep, or lamb, whose life was taken away. We know that this passage is about Jesus who was willing to be our sacrifice, to die for our sins. Philip told him the Good News about Jesus. The man even insisted on being baptized, which Philip did! Then, Philip went on his way and as he passed through villages and towns, he told more people the Good News about Jesus. After the man from Ethiopia was baptized, he continued his own journey, rejoicing all the way.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

The Scripture the Ethiopian man was reading was Isaiah 53. Take some time reading through it with your family. You might choose to use a different translation for younger kids! The passage can be broken down into three parts: Jesus's life and ministry, the crucifixion, and His resurrection.

CONNECTED TO THE NATIONS

The Gospel is for everyone regardless of their background, position, or beliefs. We can sometimes think people are too far from God, too sinful, or that they might not need the Gospel because they are wealthy, respected, and good by the world's standards. The Bible tells us differently. And the Gospel is not for just one people—no matter their race, tribe, color or language. The Gospel is for everyone and should be preached to everyone.

While our job is to go out and speak the Gospel, it is the Holy Spirit who works in the hearts of those we are sharing it with. Philip could have stayed in Samaria. He could have just passed the Ethiopian man, but the Holy Spirit led him to the right place at the right time. Look for ways God is providing opportunities for you to share the Gospel.



YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

There are divine appointments waiting for you.



Read Acts 8:26-40. Underline anything that stands out to you.

As a believer, hearing from God is one of the coolest parts about being in a relationship with Him. God is moving around us at all times; He is working, moving, healing, preparing—even when we don't see it or feel it

QUESTION ONE:

Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit speak to you? How did you know?

QUESTION TWO:

How often do you listen for God's voice in your life?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 8:26-40, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 8:26-40**
There are divine appointments waiting for you.
- ☐ **Ephesians 2:4-10**
God has created us to do good works that he has prepared for us to do.
- ☐ **Matthew 28:18-20 | Acts 2:37-41 | Acts 8:4-12**
Baptism is the first step of obedience in following Jesus once we believe.

PRAYER

Philip responded to the Holy Spirit's prompting to go over and speak to the Ethiopian eunuch. What do you think this was like for Philip? Audible words from God? Maybe a strong feeling, vision, or inability to think about anything else? People hear from the Holy Spirit in all different kinds of ways. Pray that the Spirit would speak clearly to you. Pray that as you learn more about God, you would have the wisdom to recognize that it's His "voice". Pray for boldness to act when you do hear from the Spirit. Is there anyone in your life that is wondering what Jesus is like? Pray for them, now, that they would meet Jesus and receive His Gospel. Pray also for the opportunity to have a conversation with them and the wisdom to say the right words when it comes.

ACTION STEP

Our God is a God who speaks to us. Sometimes to hear him, all we have to do is open our ears and listen a little better.

- Take 5 minutes to put away distractions, close your eyes, and pray to God. Ask him to speak to you, and then simply listen.
- Share with your small group leader what He says to you!

MAIN IDEA

God goes to great lengths and shows great grace to save even the most unlikely.

MEMORY VERSES

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Acts 9:31 (ESV)

If we're being honest, there are people, at times, that come to mind we feel are too far gone for God to ever reach, let alone love! Perhaps we know in our minds God's love is great enough, but in our hearts, we don't really believe it. Yet, time and time again God loves to take the most unlovable people and surprise us. In the Scriptures, we are given a glimpse into God's heart, and we see those we might deem most unworthy and irredeemable as the chosen recipients of God's great love. In Acts 9 we are presented with the conversion and transformation of Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle. This story of salvation reminds us that no one is so far gone that they are beyond the reach of God. God can take the most sinful, broken soul and transform them into a child of God, equipped and empowered for His mission. The most formidable opponents of the Gospel can become its greatest champion through the transformative power of God.

BIBLE READING

☐ **Acts 9:1-19**

God goes to great lengths and shows great grace to save even the most unlikely.

☐ **Galatians 1:11-24**

We should glorify God when, by His grace, He brings people to Himself who once stood in opposition to Him.

☐ **Luke 5:17-32**

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance.

☐ **Matthew 4:18-25**

Jesus called the outsiders of society to follow Him.

☐ **John 8:1-11**

Jesus calls sinners to repentance.

☐ **Luke 7:36-50**

Jesus calls sinners to repentance.

☐ **Acts 9:11-16 | Philipians 1:12-26**

God transforms the lives of those who follow Him by His grace.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

Recite this month's memory verse (Acts 9:31). Each day as you recite it, consider two things:

1. The implications of the persecuted church walking in the fear of the Lord, rather than the fear of those who are persecuting them—ask God to give you eyes to see His power, majesty, and sovereignty over all things.
2. The implications of the persecuted church walking in the comfort of the Holy Spirit—ask God to help you feel more deeply the comfort of the right relationship you have with Him and the goodness of His presence in and with you.



CONNECTED TO CHRIST

This week's passage tells the story of Saul's conversion—an event he shares multiple times throughout the book of Acts and his other letters. He understood his own story and was ready to share it at a moment's notice. What about you? Are you prepared to share what God has done in your life if asked?

This week, take some time to write out your testimony—how you came to know and follow Jesus. The purpose of preparing a testimony is not to memorize it or recite it on command, but to help you articulate some of the important and interesting details of your conversion.

Here are a few prompts to help you create your testimony:

1. What was your life like before you were a Christ-follower? (See Romans 3:23)
2. When and how did you come to faith in Jesus Christ?
3. Were there special or interesting circumstances surrounding your “conversion”?
4. Be sure to state that you have committed your life to Jesus.
5. Write down the names of those who helped you begin a relationship with Christ.

If you are not currently a follower of Jesus, identify one friend this week who is and ask them to share their testimony with you!

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

There are countless shows and movies that talk about great transformation in an individual's lives. Why do you think we find these narratives so attractive? Can you think of one that has impacted you?

QUESTION ONE:

Read 1 Corinthians 15:9, Ephesians 3:8, 1 Timothy 1:12-17, and Philippians 3:4-5. What do these passages tell us about who Saul was before his conversion?

QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 9:1-19. What is the significance of Jesus saying to Saul that he was persecuting Him?

FOLLOW UP: Do you think Saul knew that he was persecuting Jesus? What does this indicate about a person's mindset before conversion?

Saul likely did not consider his persecution of Christians as a persecution of Jesus; he likely thought of it as a defense of his religion from false teaching. He was so convinced he was right that he was willing to kill to defend it.

FOLLOW UP: Can you personally relate to this? What was your mindset before conversion? What has changed?

QUESTION THREE:

Examine the interaction that took place between Jesus and Saul. What elements of conversion were present in their conversation?

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FOLLOW UP: Take some time to reflect on your own conversion experience. What were the circumstances and who were the people involved?

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QUESTION FOUR :

Considering what Saul was seeking to do, is there any irony in what happens to him after coming face to face with Jesus? See Acts 9:2 & 8 for reference.

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QUESTION FIVE:

Consider the instructions that God gives to Ananias in verses 10-12. What do you think would have been going through his mind?

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FOLLOW UP: How do you think you would respond if God were to place you in a similar situation? Would there be reluctance? Quick obedience? Potential negotiation?

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FOLLOW UP: According to verses 15-17, how did God show grace to Ananias by responding to his potential fear?

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FOLLOW UP: How did the grace that was shown to Ananias impact the way he interacted with Saul? Is there any significance in Ananias calling Saul “brother”?

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QUESTION SIX:
How does the conversion of Saul, a pure enemy of the Gospel, give you confidence in the power of the Gospel?

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APPLICATION

Who do you know, either personally or through media, that you would consider to be an outspoken critic of Christianity? This could be someone within the culture at large, or someone a lot closer to home. Now take some time to consider what it would look like—the impact it might have—if that individual were to come into a right relationship with Jesus. Take time praying for them to come to a saving faith. If you don't know them personally, pray for God to send someone to them. If you are in relationship with them, ask God to open a door of opportunity for you to share the Gospel with them.

SV KIDS



KEY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Take a moment and think about the meanest kid in school, possibly a bully. Now imagine if the principle assigns this kid to do the best, most important job. Would you think that was fair? Why or why not?

We have already learned about Saul when he was at the stoning of Stephen. He thought it was good that Stephen was killed. He was a wicked man who hurt and persecuted the followers of Jesus.

1. THE CHANGE IN SAUL

Read Acts 9:1-9 aloud.

Question: Saul traveled to the town of Damascus to arrest believers. What happened suddenly?

Answer: A light from heaven shone around him.

Question: What did he hear?

Answer: A voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Question: Who was it?

Answer: The voice said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Question: When Saul stood up, what was wrong with him?

Answer: He could not see.

Saul traveled to the town of Damascus with the intent of arresting believers. Suddenly, he had a special encounter. A light from heaven shone around him! Saul fell to the ground. A voice said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" It was Jesus. Saul was told to go into the city and there, he would be told what to do. When he got up, he could not see. The men with him led him into town. He waited for three days—not eating or drinking, and still not seeing.

2. ANANIAS HELPS

Read Acts 9:10-19 aloud.

Question: Who did God call to pray over Saul?

Answer: Ananias

Question: What did God tell him to do?

Answer: God gave Ananias specific directions to find Saul.

Question: Did Ananias want to go? Why or why not?

Answer: He did not want to go. He had heard about Saul and the evil he did toward the early church and Jesus followers.

Question: Ananias obeyed. He found Saul. What two things did Ananias tell Saul he was there for?

Answer: So that Saul could regain his sight and so Saul could be filled with Holy Spirit.

Question: What happened next?

Answer: Something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again!

Ananias had a vision. It was of himself laying hands on Saul so that he might regain his sight. God gave Ananias specific directions to find Saul. Ananias did not want to go. He knew the bad things Saul had done. He had heard of Saul's persecution of Jesus followers. Ananias knew Saul was coming to Damascus to arrest any believers he could find. But Ananias obeyed. He found Saul and laid hands on him just as God directed him to do. Saul regained his sight and was baptized.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Saul's story is a great reminder for us. Nothing is impossible for God. He can change anyone—even someone like Paul; someone who seems like the worst sinner.

APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Encountering God Changes Everything

SUPPLIES: brownie mix, additional ingredients, mixing bowl & spoon, baking pan & oven.

1. Lay out the ingredients and supplies to make brownies. Allow children to examine the ingredients. Explain how each item on its own doesn't do much but together they make a treat.
2. Mix the ingredients together in a bowl. Explain how Saul alone was destructive, but God had a plan to mix up Saul's life up. With patience God was working on Saul's life, but in the end, it was worth it because he too was saved by the grace of God.
3. Follow the instructions on the box to bake the brownies. Explain how when we bake the brownie ingredients, the chemical reaction makes them into something completely different. In the same way, Saul's encounter with God changed his life forever!

CONNECTED TO OUTREACH

God is in the business of changing lives. Our rescue from sin reminds us that no one is too far from God for Him to reach. God can choose the unlikely for His good. Our job isn't to question God but rather to continue to share love with one another and pray for them.

YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

*Faith in Jesus Christ
brings power to our
lives and ministry.*



Read Acts 9:1-19. Underline anything that stands out to you.

God's love is bigger than any of our sin or shame. Believers and unbelievers are all sinful and broken without the love and grace of Christ.

QUESTION ONE:

What is one sin in your life that you need to ask forgiveness for?

QUESTION TWO:

Who is one person who could use a glimmer of hope in their life right now? How can you share the love and hope of Christ to them this week?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 9:1-19, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 9:1-19**
God goes to great lengths and shows great grace to save even the most unlikely.
- ☐ **Galatians 1:11-24**
We should glorify God when, by His grace, He brings people to Himself who once stood in opposition to Him.
- ☐ **John 8:1-11**
Jesus calls sinners to repentance.

PRAYER

Have you ever had a vision from the Lord? In Ananias' case, his vision from God was very specific and clear. Not every Christian will experience visions from the Lord, but it's important that we are always open and thirsty for new ways the Spirit may want to move in us or speak to us.

Find a quiet and comfortable place that you can be in for a few minutes. Close your eyes and begin to clear your mind of all the "extra" thoughts about friends, family, school, social media, etc. It can help if you try to mentally focus on an empty black box. Once you are in this space, pray that the Spirit would speak to you. Allow your thoughts to come to the surface as you continue praying for God's guidance. After a few minutes of this, write down anything that came to your mind. This can be specific pictures, people, words, anything—it's okay if nothing comes to mind! Thank God for being a God who loves to converse with us. If you wrote some things down, spend a couple minutes praying for more clarity and God's blessing over those things now.



ACTION STEP

Is someone ever too far from God? NO! Saul's conversion is an excellent example of this. It can be easy to want to take over for God when it comes to deciding who should and shouldn't be saved, but instead, let's participate in an activity that molds our hearts to become more like Jesus: Prayer.

Who is a person that you know that, in your mind, seems like they will never follow Jesus? This week pray for that person every single day to come to know the Lord and that, if the opportunity arises, the Lord would use you.



MAIN IDEA

God transforms our lives to bring about transformation in others.

MEMORY VERSES

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. Acts 9:31 (ESV)

Movements of God often start in the smallest and most surprising of ways. In this week's passage, we see God move through the unlikely character of Paul. After going through a radical transformation, Paul overcame his reputation and was used by God to build up, encourage, and advance the church. Reputations are sometimes hard to shake. No matter what one says or does, people have the tendency to hang onto predetermined opinions about someone or something regardless of new information that may come out. Yet God is greater and loves to rewrite our stories to advance His mission. Paul has a 180-degree turnaround in character, belief, and action. He went from a former Gospel persecutor to a sold-out Gospel proclaimer. It wasn't long after his conversion that he began to face the same trials he once subjected followers of Jesus to. It also took some convincing to be welcomed into the church—they knew who he used to be! Talk about a turn of events. But through all of this, the mission continued, the movement grew, and more disciples were made.

BIBLE READING

- ☐ **Acts 9:20-31**
God transforms our lives to bring about transformation in others.
- ☐ **Galatians 1:11-24**
We should glorify God when by His grace He brings people to Himself who once stood opposed to Him.
- ☐ **Mark 2:1-12**
The right response to the work of Jesus is to glorify God and tell others about Him.
- ☐ **John 20:1-18**
The right response to the work of Jesus is to glorify God and tell others about Him.
- ☐ **Mark 5:1-20**
Jesus wants us to tell those around us how much He has done for us and the mercy He has shown us.
- ☐ **Philippians 1:12-26**
God transforms our lives to bring about transformation in others.
- ☐ **Acts 9:20-31 | 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**
We should praise God for transforming the lives of others and using them to proclaim the Gospel to those around them.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

Recite this month's memory verse (Acts 9:31). Each day as you recite it, remember that it is both the power of God and intimacy with Him through the Holy Spirit that brings about a Gospel movement. Pray that these things would be hallmarks of our church, and the Church universally. Take a moment to imagine what it might look and feel like for us to see and experience the type of Kingdom advancement that was evident in Acts 9.



CONNECTED TO MOVEMENT

In pursuit of fulfilling our Vision, Summit View Church has partnered with East West Ministries and the Acts 29 Network. We believe that by partnering with these organizations, we'll be able to be a part of a movement of God where disciples are multiplied, churches are planted, the lost are reached, and human flourishing can take place on a global level.

Take some time this week to pray for these organizations and our partnership with them—that we too may see a movement of God. Want to know more about our partner ministries? Check out their websites below:

www.eastwest.org/2023vision
www.acts29.com/ar21

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

When someone uses the saying “a tiger never changes his stripes”, what is that person trying to say? Would you agree with that statement?

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 9:20-30. How did the events in Saul's life fulfill Jesus' promise to him in Acts 9:16?

FOLLOW UP: How do these events and the promise in Saul's life push against the popular view of God as a source of happiness, health, and prosperity? What do they tell us about the reality of following Jesus?

QUESTION TWO:

Read verses 20-22. Upon conversion, what does Saul immediately begins to do?

FOLLOW UP: He begins preaching about Jesus! How does this challenge the idea that you first have to know enough or have the right words when it comes to proclaiming Jesus?

QUESTION THREE:

Saul's behavior was quite shocking to everyone who knew about him. Read Acts 9:23-24. How did they initially respond to him?

FOLLOW UP: Read what Paul would later write in his ministry in 2 Corinthians 5:17. How does this verse help explain his behaviors in Acts 9:20-24?

QUESTION FOUR:

According to Acts 9:20-22 & 26-30, Paul's new aim and purpose in life was to preach Jesus. Twice in this text we see he preached boldly. See Ephesians 6:20 and 1 Thessalonians 2:2 for additional examples of Paul's boldness. In your own words, what does it mean to "preach boldly"?

FOLLOW UP: Based upon what we see in this text, and other places in Scripture, what are the typical responses to someone preaching boldly?

QUESTION FIVE:

In Acts 9:26-27 Saul comes to Jerusalem and we are reintroduced to Barnabas (see Acts 4:36). How does he act as an encouragement to both Saul and the disciples in Acts 9:26-27?



FOLLOW UP: Why was Barnabas willing to make a stand for Saul? What was he risking?

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FOLLOW UP: Who has taken a risk for you? Who has given you a chance to serve Jesus? What was the result?

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QUESTION SIX:

Read Acts 9:31 and describe, in your own words, what Luke is saying. What do you notice about the church?

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FOLLOW UP: Do you believe that God can do a similar work in our day? Why or why not?

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FOLLOW UP: What might this look like in the 21st century?

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APPLICATION

We often don't think of it, but much of Saul's future ministry could be contributed to the two people who invested in him and disciplined him upon his conversion (Ananias & Barnabas). As we conclude, take some time to thank God for those He has used to invest in you and help you grow. Make a plan to reach out to them this week, if possible, and thank them for their investment. But don't stop there! Take time to consider who in your life you might invest in and disciple; you never know what their future ministry might look like.



KEY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

Saul, later known as Paul, was a wicked man who hurt and persecuted believers of Jesus. As he traveled to the town of Damascus with the intent of arresting believers, he suddenly had a special encounter with God. Saul fell into a time of blindness which allowed him time to reflect. God called Ananias to pray over Saul. After he prayed, Saul could see again, and he was baptized. God's plan was to use Saul to reach out to others. He had an incredible story of the change God made in his life! God's amazing love can change the life of anyone. What a great reminder that the Good News is for everyone.

BIG IDEAS

1. SAUL'S DRAMATIC CHANGE

Read Acts 9:20-22 aloud.

Question: After Saul could see again, he immediately he began to proclaim Jesus. What did Saul say about Jesus?

Answer: "He is the Son of God."

Question: Why were the people in shock?

Answer: Not too long-ago Saul was persecuting others for what he was now proclaiming.

How we act and what we do leaves an impact on how others see us. Our reputations are sometimes hard to shake even when we are changed by God. But it is because of Saul's transformation that we can see how powerful God truly is! God changes lives to bring about change in others. Each person's individual story plays a part in spreading the Good News.

2. SAUL IN JERUSALEM

Read Acts 9:23-31 aloud.

Saul heard about a plan the Jews came up with to kill him. Since they were watching the city gates, he was lowered down at night from an opening in the wall.

Question: Saul went to Jerusalem to join the disciples there. Was he able to join them? Why or why not?

Answer: No, the disciples were afraid of him. They did not believe he had been changed.

Question: Who changed the Apostles' minds?

Answer: Barnabas

Question: What did Saul do?

Answer: He preached boldly in Jerusalem in the name of the Lord.

It's not hard to understand why the disciples were afraid of Saul. He had been the "baddest of the bad," arresting and killing followers of Jesus. It was reasonable for the disciples to think Saul was faking being a "good guy," so he could easily find the believers to arrest them.

It was Barnabas who helped change their minds. Barnabas brought Saul to the Apostles and shared Saul's story: on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and then at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. Saul was accepted by the disciples, and he went out with them to Jerusalem and preached boldly in the name of the Lord. The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria multiplied.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

Like Saul, we are sinners. And like Saul, God loves us. It is an undeserved love called grace. His grace makes our rescue from sin possible through Jesus. (Ephesians 1:7)

- God rescues sinners (you and me) not because we are good, but because He is good. We do not deserve anything apart from death. Our rescue is not of our own doing, not even a little bit.
- Redemption—the act of "buying out." Specifically used regarding the purchase of a person's freedom.
- Because of God's love for us, we can be redeemed. The benefits of redemption include eternal life (Revelation 5:9-10), forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7), righteousness (Romans 5:17), adoption into God's family (Galatians 4:5), deliverance from sin's hold (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:14-18), peace with God (Colossians 1:18-20), and the Holy Spirit coming to live in our hearts (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).



CONNECTED TO MOVEMENT

Our passage concludes with the statement, “The church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria multiplied.”

Read Matthews 28:19-20 aloud.

We have been given the Great Commission. We are all called to make disciples who make disciples. We can have peace knowing that God will be with us always.

YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

God transforms our lives to bring about transformation in others.



Read Acts 9:20-31. Underline anything that stands out to you.

God's mercy covers every bit of our sin and will turn it around for His glory. Past, present, and even future.

QUESTION ONE:

Can you believe this? Does this feel too good to be true?

Every person's experiences, whether sinful or not, bring opportunity to better minister to others they encounter, whether believers or those still needing to hear about the hope and truth we have.

QUESTION TWO:

Based on your experiences with God's grace and mercy, what is one way you can minister to someone this week?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 9:20-31, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 9:20-31**
God transforms our lives to bring about transformation in others.
- ☐ **Mark 2:1-12**
The right response to the work of Jesus is to glorify God and tell others about Him.
- ☐ **Mark 5:1-20**
Jesus wants us to tell those around us how much He has done for us and the mercy He has shown us.

PRAYER

There is no one who God does not want to come to Him, no matter who they are or what they have done. Saul used to make a job of killing people who preached Jesus' name and was known throughout the whole area for it. When he met Jesus, he experienced a miracle and his whole life was transformed! Is there someone in your life that it would take a miracle for them to become a believer in Jesus? Is there someone you know that has done so many terrible things that it's hard for you to believe that Jesus could ever transform or use them? Maybe that person is you! Pray for those people now. Pray that Jesus would transform their hearts and that they would experience the miracle of salvation!

ACTION STEP

Is your story worth sharing? In the last section Saul experiences Jesus and his life is forever transformed. He immediately begins to preach and teach about Jesus in the synagogues when not too long ago he was persecuting anyone who confessed Jesus as Lord. If you follow Jesus, your story is worth sharing.

This week write out your testimony. A testimony is the story of the transformational work that Jesus has done in your life.

- Testimonies include:
 1. Life before Jesus
 2. When Jesus became your Lord and Savior
 3. Your life now after receiving Jesus.
- If you have grown up going to church it is helpful to frame those 3 pieces as: what life was like growing up, when your faith became your own, and your life with Jesus now.

Share your testimony with at least 1 person this week.

NOTES:

MAIN IDEA

Miracles in ministry open the door for Gospel advancement.

MEMORY VERSES

So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. Acts 10:34-35 (ESV)

Countless stories pepper Scripture depicting the perfection of God's timing. From our finite and human standpoint, it can be difficult to agree with that statement—particularly in seasons of trial or uncertainty. This week's passage depicts two stories of vastly different yet equally heartbreaking situations. In both encounters the power of Jesus over disease and death is put on display. Both these situations were hopeless in the natural order—both needed supernatural intervention and divine hope. God provided for both. In the darkest of times, God is faithful to show up with a divine precision that meets our deepest needs. While the timing of healing came at different points for Aeneas and Dorcas, God was fully present and at work in both situations, using His people to meet their needs and propel the mission of God forward. As in Acts, today God's Church and God's people are on a mission to bring God's power and grace to a broken world.

BIBLE READING

- ☐ **Acts 9:32-43**
Miracles in ministry open the door for Gospel advancement.
- ☐ **Luke 4:16-19, 4:38-44, 7:22**
Jesus' ministry is one of word and deed—the proclaiming of the gospel, and the bringing of healing and deliverance.
- ☐ **Luke 5:17-26**
Jesus ministers in word and deed by declaring the good news of forgiveness of sins and healing.
- ☐ **Luke 10:1-20**
Jesus sent His disciples out to minister in word and deed—declaring the Good News and meeting the needs of those around them.
- ☐ **Luke 24:44-49 | Acts 1:8**
Jesus sent His disciples out to continue His ministry.
- ☐ **James 1:22-27 | James 2:14-20**
Our faith in Jesus must be lived out through real, intentional action to take care of the needs of those around us.
- ☐ **Acts 3:1-26**
Through faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit has empowered us to lead lives and ministries like that of Jesus.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

Read and recite this month's memory verses (Acts 10:34-35). Each day as you recite this passage, remember that God shows no partiality. Take time each day to thank Him for the grace He offers to us all.



CONNECTED TO CALLING & OUTREACH

If the church, our church, disappeared, would the community notice? Are we leaving a lasting impact on those we encounter? In this week's text, we see this take place not on a macro-level (church) but on a micro-level (individual member). Dorcas was well known as a servant in her community, and those who knew her were impacted by her passing.

If your Gospel presence was removed from your primary place of community, would people take note? This week, begin to identify where God might be calling you to make a difference in the community around you, taking into account your passions and the opportunities at hand. Invest and give of yourself that you also might leave a lasting impact on others.

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

NOTE: This week deals with the healing of two individuals. It is common to read these passages and be left feeling disheartened or disappointed in light of our own unhealed wounds or that of a loved one. If you are wrestling with feelings of discouragement or uncertainty, we encourage you to engage the following resource, addressing why God doesn't always heal the sick: www.samstorms.org/enjoying-god-blog/post/why-doesnt-god-always-heal-the-sick

GETTING STARTED:

Have you ever found yourself in a season of waiting? What were you waiting for? How long did you wait, or, if you're still waiting, how long have you waited?

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 9:32-43, John 5:2-9 and Mark 5:35-43. What similarities do you note between the healings found in this week's Acts passage and the healings of Jesus? What do these similarities tell you about the character of God?

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QUESTION TWO:

In Acts 9:34, Peter told Aeneas that it is "Jesus Christ" who heals him. Why would it be important for Aeneas to understand that?

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FOLLOW UP: Peter knew his role in ministry was to point others to Jesus. Does your ministry, work, and relationships point other people to Jesus? Or are you more prone to letting others assign you credit or taking it for yourself?

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QUESTION THREE:

Compare and contrast the descriptions of Aeneas and Dorcas in Acts 9:33 & 36-37. One was unable to do anything for himself, the other was "full of good works and acts of charity." What does this teach us about how God works?

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QUESTION FOUR:

Re-read Acts 9:38. Why was Peter called upon by the disciples in Joppa? What do you think they were hoping he would be able to do?

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FOLLOW UP: Can you think of a time you operated out of a similar faith?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Dorcas had quite the reputation and was seen as a valuable member of the community for the utilization of her gifts. Have you given any thought to what your reputation might be in your own community? How would you like to be described? What would you like to be known for?

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QUESTION SIX:

Re-read Acts 9:35 & 42. What was the ultimate purpose of the miracles recorded in this week's passage?

FOLLOW UP: Acts 9:42 makes it clear that not everyone responded favorably to the miraculous healings. How does this help temper our expectations for modern day miraculous works of God?

QUESTION SEVEN:

Through these healings—and others—we see that God has power over disease and death. Read Revelation 21:1-4. How might these truths give us hope for the future?



APPLICATION

As we conclude our study this week, we encourage you to keep God's Word open and allow the Scriptures to guide your time of prayer. Do you or someone you know need healing? Ask God for it. Do you need to repent of cynicism or unbelief? Ask for forgiveness. Do you lack awe for God's power and might at work in your life and the lives of others? Ask for God to give you the eyes to see His hand at work around you.

For further reflection, we invite you to use the following resource to guide your prayer time this week: www.crossway.org/articles/4-prayers-to-pray-for-the-sick

SV KIDS



KEY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

What were some of God's miracles in the Old Testament? What about some of Jesus' miracles in the New Testament?

In this lesson, we are going to see Peter participating in two miracles. Do you think he was able to do these miracles on his own? If not, by whose power?

BIG IDEAS

1. MIRACLE #1

Read 9:32-35 aloud.

Question: What was wrong with Aeneas?

Answer: He was paralyzed.

Question: How long had he been like this?

Answer: 8 years.

Question: How did Peter heal him?

Answer: By the power of the Holy Spirit; Peter said, "Rise and make your bed."

Question: What was the people's response?

Answer: They believed in Jesus.

We know very little about Aeneas other than he had been paralyzed for 8 years. He was helpless, reliant on others, and there was no chance he would ever get well. Peter simply said, "Rise and make your bed" and by the power of the Holy Spirit, Aeneas did! He was living, walking proof of the power of God. The people of the area were convinced when they saw him and believed.



2. MIRACLE #2

Read Acts 9:36-43 aloud.

Question: Who was Tabitha/Dorcas?

Answer: A disciple.

Question: How does the Bible describe her?

Answer: She was full of good works and acts of charity.

Question: What happened to her?

Answer: She became sick and died.

Question: What was the response of her fellow disciples?

Answer: They heard Peter was nearby and sent for him.

Question: When Peter arrived and came to Tabitha/Dorcas, what did he do next?

Answer: Knelt beside her, prayed, and then said, "Tabitha, arise."

Question: What was the people's response?

Answer: They believed in Jesus.

Peter simply said, "Tabitha, arise" and by the power of the Holy Spirit, Tabitha/Dorcas did! The people of the area heard what happened and believed.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He appeared to His disciples. During this time, Jesus commissioned Peter.

Read John 21:15-17 aloud.

Question: How many questions did Jesus ask Peter?

Answer: Three.

Peter denied Jesus three times at His crucifixion, so Jesus allowed Peter to affirm his love three times. This also reflects the Jewish custom of repeating something three times before witnesses to express a serious responsibility. Jesus commissioned Peter to a special shepherding task—to care for His sheep. Peter was dedicated to fulfil this commission.

YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

*Miracles in ministry
open the door for
Gospel advancement.*



Read Acts 9:32-43. Underline anything that stands out to you.

God can heal us in all kinds of ways—spiritual, emotional, mental, physical, etc.

QUESTION ONE:

What is one way God has healed you?

QUESTION TWO:

What is one way you are praying for God to heal you?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 9:32-43, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 9:32-43**
The miracles in ministry open the door for gospel advancement.
- ☐ **Luke 5:17-26**
Jesus ministers in word and deed by declaring the good news of forgiveness of sins and healing.
- ☐ **Luke 10:1-20**
Jesus sent His disciples out to minister in word and deed—declaring the Good News and meeting the needs of those around them.

PRAYER

God has the power to heal people, even from death! Peter did not lean on any power of his own to do these things, but he prayed and called on the Holy Spirit to come and perform a miracle. This shows us that God cares about our health. Pray for people in your life who need healing. Knowing that nothing is impossible for God, pray that the Holy Spirit would move and bring healing and comfort to them. Pray that whether the ailment leaves or stays, that God would be glorified, and that people would come to know Him and trust Him more through the experience.

ACTION STEP

The Lord heals people and answers our prayers. However, we sometimes do not see the Lord working and moving.

This week start a prayer journal in your small group or on your own.

- Write down all your prayer requests to the Lord with a time and date next to them.
- When the Lord answers a prayer request, go back to that entry, and write down how the Lord answered that prayer and when it happened.

Sometimes we need a wide-angle view to see how the Lord has been working in our lives and a prayer journal helps give us that lens.





MAIN IDEA

The Gospel is for everyone.

MEMORY VERSES

So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. Acts 10:34-35 (ESV)

Considering the moments and events that have made up your lifetime, how many of them would you classify as a “defining moment”? A moment so massive that it radically changed the course of history and the way you and others believed, lived, and interacted with one another? The events that take place within Acts 10 represent a turning point, a defining moment in redemptive history, with grand implications for us all. Acts 10 tells us of the story of transformation of the early church from a localized community to a multi-ethnic worldwide movement extending to the ends of the earth. From the seeds of the disciples’ obedience to Jesus’ call, to the scattering via persecution, the inclusion of the Samaritans, and then the conversion of Cornelius and the other Gentiles, the spread of the Gospel reached a turning point. Gentiles had become fully-fledged members of the Christian church, no longer seen as outsiders. Acts 10 opened the door for the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles and led to the expansion of the early Christian Church.

BIBLE READING

- ☐ **Acts 10**
The Gospel is for everyone.
- ☐ **Psalms 22:22-31 | Luke 24:44-49**
God's plan has always been for His people to preach the Gospel to the whole world.
- ☐ **Isaiah 52:6-10 | Isaiah 53:1-6**
God always intended His message of salvation, through the suffering of Jesus, to be preached to the whole world.
- ☐ **Isaiah 52:6-10 | Romans 10:8-15**
We need to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to all of those around us.
- ☐ **1 Corinthians 15:3-5**
We are to preach the Good News—that God has fulfilled His promises by sending Jesus to die for us and be raised from the dead.
- ☐ **Matthew 28:18-20 | Luke 24:46-49 | Acts 1:8**
Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples.
- ☐ **Matthew 28:18-20 | Deuteronomy 6:4-9**
Making disciples means training people to know, love, and obey God.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

Read Acts 10 and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 10:34-35). Each day as you recite the memory verse, take a moment to picture that scene and remember that God accepted those even Peter struggled to accept. Ask God to reveal to you if there is anyone you resist sharing the Gospel with because of fear or prejudice you hold.



CONNECTED TO OUTREACH & THE NATIONS

This week's reading includes a major turning point in the book of Acts. The interaction between Peter and Cornelius is the longest narrative in the entirety of the book of Acts—and for good reason! Peter obeyed God's prompting to reach out to the Gentile world, and we begin to see the heart of God for the nations. Jesus didn't just die for the Jewish people, He died for the nations—for every people group on the planet!

This week, we invite you to join us in praying for the nations. Visit the Joshua Project website and pick an unreached group each day. Pray that God would send a messenger to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to them

www.joshuaproject.net

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

When have your foundations been shaken because you couldn't tell what God was up to?

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 10:1-8. Describe Cornelius. Was he a Christian yet? Why or why not?

QUESTION TWO:

Read Acts 10:9-16. Imagine that, like Peter, you're a Jew whose cultural identity revolved around being set apart from everyone else. Imagine that the same God who originally gave your people their distinctive, daily-life-defining dietary laws is now telling you something that seems totally contradictory! What would you think?

QUESTION THREE:

Does God contradict Himself? Read Acts 13:38-39 and Romans 10:3-4. What actually happened?

FOLLOW UP: Was the deeper meaning of this vision a completely new concept? Read Isaiah 49:6 and Romans 4:9-10.

FOLLOW UP: How did God help Peter understand and trust this revelation?

QUESTION FOUR:

Read Acts 10:17-23. One mark of a maturing Christian is a growing quickness to obey. Within moments God's instruction, that struck at the foundation of Peter's identity and threatened his social construct (see Acts 10:28), he was presented an opportunity to obey and rose to the occasion! How long does it take you to obey a hard command from God?

FOLLOW UP: How can your previous experiences with God influence your reaction time when called to obey? If something comes to mind, write it down here.

QUESTION FIVE:

Read Acts 10:23. Jewish tradition required two or three witnesses to establish truth, but Peter wisely visited Cornelius with six witnesses. What if Peter had done this alone? As you consider how you can grow bolder in witnessing, how can you invite godly community to come alongside you to confirm and advocate?

QUESTION SIX:

Read Acts 10:34-44. Peter's sermon here differed from many of the other Apostles' famous invitations to salvation. How did he personalize his testimony for them? How can you tailor your testimony to a specific audience in your life?

FOLLOW UP: God sent the Holy Spirit to Peter's hearers before he could even finish his sermon. If Peter did have a grand finale planned, it sure got upstaged! Do you trust that the Spirit can—and may—do the same with your efforts to witness?

QUESTION SEVEN:

It's common to hear that a primary purpose of prayer is to conform our hearts to God's. That is an invaluable effect of prayer, but it's not the only one! Track the mentions of prayer in chapter 10. With what is it correlated to here? When have you seen tangible events affected by prayer in your own life?





APPLICATION

Trust in God can fuel wise obedience even when He directs us to make changes that bring lots of uncertainty and discomfort! Cornelius and Peter, two diametrically different men, moved toward each other in obedience when they didn't even understand what was going on. While witnessing to Cornelius' household, one literal Bible translation shows Peter saying, "I am in the process of comprehending the fact that God does not show partiality..." He then moved right along into testifying about who Jesus had been and what He'd done.

Even in the life of a spiritual legend like Peter, a step forward in faith is often required before the next step is revealed. Jesus doesn't usually promise external peace as affirmation of our obedience; instead, His Spirit offers confidence in who He is. Do you wait for full understanding before you're willing to obey and testify about all God is and does for you? Is there an area of delayed obedience in your life that you can address this week?



KEY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

During this time, Jewish people and non-Jewish people (Gentiles) did not really mingle or become friends. The early followers of Jesus were Jewish. They followed Jewish law where some foods could not be eaten—they were forbidden. These foods were considered “unclean” and made the person “unclean.” These “unclean” foods were foods the non-Jewish people (Gentiles) could and did eat. Because of this, the Jewish people saw the Gentiles as unclean.

BIG IDEAS

1. PETER

Read Acts 10:1-8 aloud.

Cornelius was a centurion, which was a commanding officer in the Roman army. He was Roman not a Jew, but he was very interested in God. He was generous and he prayed, but he was separated from God because of sin. When Cornelius saw a vision of an angel, he knew it was from God. Cornelius promptly obeyed when the angel told him to send for Peter.

2. CORNELIUS

Read Acts 10:9-16 aloud.

As Cornelius' men were on their way, Peter went to pray. He was hungry and while he was waiting for the food, he fell into a trance.

Question: What did he see?

Answer: The heavens opened, something like a bedsheet came down. On the sheet were all kinds of animals, reptiles, and birds.

Question: At first, the voice said, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” What was Peter's reply?

Answer: “No way, for I have never eaten anything that unclean.”

Question: The second time, what did the voice say?

Answer: “What God has made clean, do not call common.”

Question: After three times, what happened?

Answer: The sheet was taken up to heaven.

In his vision, Peter saw unclean animals, animals that he wasn't supposed to eat because he was a Jew. When God told him to eat these, Peter politely refused. Peter is then told, "What God has made clean, do not call unclean." Peter was a Jew and, like most Jews, saw non-Jewish people (Gentiles) as "unclean" and thought he was right to do so.

Read Acts 10:17-23 aloud.

Question: When the Holy Spirit told Peter about the three men, what did He say to do?

Answer: Go with them without hesitation.

While Peter was trying to figure out what the vision meant, Cornelius' men arrived. The Holy Spirit reassured Peter that these men were from God, The Holy Spirit needed to tell Peter he should go with them without hesitation because Peter hadn't yet fully understood God's vision. Peter would have still seen a division between Jews and Gentiles. Peter would have never guessed that a non-Jewish, Roman army officer could become a Jesus follower.

3. PETER AND CORNELIUS

Read Acts 10:23-33 aloud.

Question: Peter traveled to Joppa to meet Cornelius. When Peter got there, Cornelius was expecting him. What had Cornelius done (verse 24)?

Answer: He had called together his relatives and close friends.

Question: What did Cornelius want?

Answer: To hear how he and his family could be rescued from sin.

TIPS FOR PARENTS: Acts 11:13 gives a more specific answer.

Peter finally realized what God was showing him in the vision—that he should not view the Gentiles as "unclean" or inferior. Peter asked Cornelius why he sent for him. Cornelius wanted to know how to be rescued from his sin and he wanted his friends and family to know too. He was ready to be a disciple who made disciples!

Read Acts 10:34-48 aloud.

Peter began by telling them that God shows no partiality, that He is Lord of all. The good news is really for everyone—Jews and Gentiles! Then, Peter told them all the good news about Jesus. Cornelius and his family and friends had heard about Jesus, His ministry, and His death. They did not know about His rising again. Peter finished by saying, "Anyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through his name." When Peter was telling them the Good News, they believed, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then they were baptized.



CONNECTED TO OUTREACH

In Acts 10, we see Peter spread the good news about Jesus to Cornelius. Peter was willing to listen when God told him to go and meet Cornelius. Because of this, Cornelius and his whole household were saved and received the Holy Spirit. Peter was outreach minded—he listened and answered the call when God told him to go. Are you willing to be like Peter and go where God sends you? Even if God doesn't ask us to go somewhere far away, we should always be listening to Him and pray for opportunities to tell others the Good News about Jesus.



YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

The Gospel is for everyone.



Read Acts 10. Underline anything that stands out to you.

Have you ever felt like an outsider? Maybe at school, a friend's birthday party, or an extracurricular event? It doesn't feel so good to be the one on the outside. Paul made it clear in Acts 10 that the Gospel—the Good News about Jesus coming to save us—is available to each and every one of us. The Gospel isn't just for the good kids, or for the cool kids, or for the quiet kids, or for even just for the mean kids. The gift of Jesus has every one of our names on the tag.

QUESTION ONE:

Who is someone you can share the Gospel with this week?

QUESTION TWO:

Who is someone you can pray for this week? Perhaps someone you see in the halls, but don't even know?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 10, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 10**
The Gospel is for everyone.
- ☐ **Psalms 22:22-31 | Luke 24:44-49**
God's plan has always been for His people to preach the Gospel to the whole world.
- ☐ **Isaiah 52:6-10 | Romans 10:8-15**
We need to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to all of those around us.

PRAYER

Because God is not bound by time or space, He can see the full picture of what is going on in the world all at once. No matter how far apart or different two people may be, if they both have their eyes on Jesus, they are more alike than they could possibly imagine. There would have been no reason for Cornelius and Peter to meet, but God intertwined their stories to bring about a new thing: salvation for the Gentiles! Pray that you would be able to follow where the Spirit leads. Pray that others would also follow the Spirit and be obedient to Him. Pray that God would intertwine your life with the lives of other believers so that you can join together for the purpose of spreading the Gospel.

ACTION STEP

The Gospel reached the Gentiles in this section of Acts and a lot of unexpected people came to know the Lord. The Gentiles were people that worshipped other gods, but the Gospel is powerful. Currently, there are people all over the world that are hearing about Jesus for the first time and choosing to be His disciples because the Holy Spirit is actively pursuing everyone. Let's take part in what the Lord is doing!

This week, choose a specific country to pray for each day—or pick a new one every day. Pray for them to have an experience just like the Gentiles did in Acts 10 and that they would accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.





MAIN IDEA

We are called Christians because we follow Jesus and model our life after Him.

MEMORY VERSES

So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. Acts 10:34-35 (ESV)

Spend a few moments thinking about the people of God depicted thus far in the book of Acts. They’ve been called “disciples” for their commitment to follow Jesus. They’ve been “saints” for their commitment to God. They’ve been called “believers” for their belief in and commitment to the Gospel. They’ve been called “brothers and sisters” in the new family of the early Church. And they’ve been called “witnesses” for their willingness to proclaim the Gospel to the world. In this week’s passage (Acts 11) a new title was added; for the first time, this new community of Christ followers were called “Christians”. Chances are, this wasn’t a title they gave themselves, but one given to them from their non-believing neighbors—those who recognized their willingness to be like Jesus in all that they did. While the church in Antioch was remarkably new, it mirrored what it saw from the early community in Jerusalem and became a pillar of the early Church, birthing many of the missionary endeavors for years to come—all out of their desire to be like Jesus.

BIBLE READING

- ☐ **Acts 11**
We are called Christians because of who we follow and model our life after.
- ☐ **Luke 4:1-14**
The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to boldly endure temptation while remaining faithful to God through it.
- ☐ **Luke 4:16-30**
The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to boldly proclaim the Gospel despite its offensiveness to those around Him.
- ☐ **Luke 20:1-20**
The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to boldly proclaim the Gospel despite its offensiveness to those around Him.
- ☐ **Luke 3:15-16 | Luke 12:4-12 | Luke 24:44-49**
Jesus promised to empower His followers with the Holy Spirit to speak boldly despite opposition.
- ☐ **1 Timothy 1:6-14**
The Spirit empowers us to proclaim the Gospel boldly despite persecution and suffering.
- ☐ **Matthew 4:18-5:1 | Matthew 28:18-20 | Luke 24: 46-49 | Acts 1:8**
Jesus made disciples and commanded His people to also make disciples.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

Recite this month's memory verse (Acts 10:34-35), then read John 1:11-13. Thank God that He has accepted you as His child, just like Jesus!

Read Luke 23:32-34, Luke 23:44-46, and Acts 7:54-8:1. Consider how followers of Jesus have been transformed by the power of the Spirit to look just like Jesus. Ask that the Holy Spirit in you would make you look just like Jesus to those around you.



CONNECTED TO CHRIST, COMMUNITY, & CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

A few weeks ago, we encouraged you to write out your testimony. This week, we invite you to put it into action! Sharing your story isn't meant to convince people of the truth, but rather get the conversation started, and open the door to the full telling of the Gospel. People often shy away from conversations about religion but are much more open to hearing a personal story. Those initially unreceptive to a conversation about God are often much more open after hearing a personal testimony.

This week, practice sharing your story out loud by yourself, with a loved one, and/or with a trusted friend. Then, take it a step farther, and try sharing it with someone outside your Christian relationship; ideally a non-Christian you have been in relationship with and praying for. Remember, you are not responsible for what the hearer does with the information. Pray for those you shared with and ask that God would use your story to spark an interest or soften their heart toward Jesus.

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

Nicknames often reflect the similarities between the person and another individual, physical trait, or personality type. Have you ever been given a nickname because you reminded others of someone or something?

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 11:2. Why did they criticize Peter? The Jewish perspective stemmed, in part, from misunderstanding God's commandments. In truth, God always intended purist living to exclude false gods, not people.

QUESTION TWO:

Prejudice is a universal human symptom of lovelessness and arrogance. The first recorded example of prejudice in Scripture was between Abraham and Lot's workers! What presumptions might you have absorbed, perhaps even subconsciously, that sours your interest in connecting with certain people groups?

FOLLOW UP: When encountering social or cultural division, what is your first reaction? What emotions emerge? What life experiences or thought patterns influence your perception of the situation?

FOLLOW UP: How might you begin to pray for the people groups you struggle with? These could be ethnic, race-based, economic—even political affinity groups.

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 11:19-21. Some of the Jewish Christians had been “going about preaching the gospel only to the Jews” but began reaching out to the Gentiles once it became clear to them it was God’s will. When you recognize an unkind or reactive response to God’s call to reach certain people, are you quick to submit yourself to Him and pursue obedience despite your internal resistance? Or do you delay, avoid, or even push back against God’s call? What are some practical things you might do to increase your submission response time?

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FOLLOW UP: Describe a time you were convicted of an unkind heart towards a people group and were empowered through the Holy Spirit to change.

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QUESTION FOUR:

According to Acts 11:4-18, how did Peter demonstrate faithfulness in response to criticism?

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QUESTION FIVE:

Instead of succumbing to boredom at the repetition in Acts 11, trust that it was on purpose! Look for all instances of repetition around this passage. Keeping the original audience in mind, why does Scripture repeat itself so frequently? For reference read the following passages throughout Acts:

Acts 1:4-5, 2:1-4, 8:14-17, 8:36, 10:3-6, 10:9-16, 10:22, 10:30-32, 10:44-46, 10:47, 11:4-10, 11:13-14, 11:15-16, 11:17, 15:7-9, and 19:6

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QUESTION SIX:

Read Acts 11:17-18. Amid a deep dive into social brokenness, Peter brings the conversation back to the primary point: God's character. What aspect of God's character is Peter alluding to in his "mic drop" moments in Acts 10:44-48 and 11:17-18?

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FOLLOW UP: Peter reminded his listeners that their foundation was built on God's character not their current circumstance. What was their response?

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QUESTION SEVEN:

In Acts 11:15-18, Gentiles received the Spirit and were baptized without converting to Judaism first. They didn't have time to fulfill all the Jewish laws even if they wanted to! God reiterated here that no works are needed to get to Jesus. This applies to you too! Spend some time this week meditating on the personal implications of a works-free Gospel.

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APPLICATION

What was the circumcision party's initial reaction to the news that the Gentiles were embracing the Gospel? Criticism—and about a secondary issue! They were distracted by Peter's association with the Gentiles that felt too close for their traditions; this perspective failed to consider the value of humanity and even the value of God's grace.

Why do you think they so easily fell into this struggle? Take time today to look up testimonies of Christian brothers and sisters from people groups other than your own. Sit in the wonder of God's kindness to them—and to you!



KEY VERSE

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

What does it mean to be a “Christian?” Do you think the world views Christians in a positive or negative light?

Read Acts 11:4-14 and review last week’s story.

BIG IDEAS

1. PETER EXPLAINS

Read Acts 11:15-18 aloud.

The apostles throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles were also becoming followers of Jesus. In Jerusalem, Peter was criticized for being with them and eating with them.

Question: When Peter recounted what happened with Cornelius, what did he mean when he said, “And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction”?

Answer: The Holy Spirit needed to tell Peter he should go with them without hesitation because Peter hadn’t fully understood God’s vision yet.

Question: What did God’s vision to Peter mean?

Answer: Peter should not view the Gentiles as “unclean” or inferior. God shows no partiality. The good news was for everyone—Jews and Gentiles!

TIPS FOR PARENTS: Read Acts 10:34-35 for a summary of the point of this story.

Question: When Peter began to tell them the Good News, what happened?

Answer: The Holy Spirit came upon them.

Question: What was Peter’s conclusion to all that happened?

Answer: “If God gave the same gift to Gentiles as he gave to Jews when we believed in Jesus, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” Acts 11:17

When those who were criticizing Peter heard these things, they fell silent. Then they glorified God, saying, “God has given to the Gentiles, too, the privilege of turning to him and receiving eternal life!”

2. THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

Read Acts 11:19-26 aloud.

Question: What happened because of the persecution of Stephen?

Answer: The believers scattered to other countries.

Question: Where were the believers first called Christians?

Answer: In Antioch (see Acts 11:26)

The believers scattered, but they continued to tell people the Good News about Jesus, and more people believed—both Jew and Gentile! Antioch was a major city and the capital of Syria. Barnabas was sent there to check on the Gentile believers and he rejoiced at what he saw. He encouraged them to continue loving, following, and obeying God. Barnabas brought Saul there and both spent a year with the Gentile believers, who were the first to be called Christians.

3. FAMINE

Read Acts 11:27-30 aloud.

Question: What was happening and how did the church respond?

Answer: There was a famine and the people in Antioch sent relief to the people in Jerusalem.

The Jewish believers that left Jerusalem settled in other countries and told people the Good News, including the Gentiles in Antioch. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to encourage the new “Christians” in Antioch. So, when the Gentile believers heard about the famine, they reciprocated and sent help to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. They gave “everyone according to his ability.”



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

4. THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED

Read Ephesians 3:1-11 aloud.

Ephesians is a book about God's love for all and those who believe are melded into one unified body, the Church.

- Part of God's plan had been revealed from the beginning: God would send the Messiah. The Jewish people, as God's chosen people, had been waiting thousands of years for this Messiah's rescue.
- What was not known was that the Messiah in God's plan would come for ALL people. Believers—no matter if they were Gentile or Jew would be equal before God, and all believers are co-heirs with Jesus. (Romans 8:17, Galatians 3:29, 4:7)
- God planned to have Jews and Gentiles comprise one body—the Church.
- This union of Jews and Gentiles—which was astonishing to all who saw it—is a living example of the Gospel: that God accepts ALL who believe.



CONNECTED TO CHRIST, COMMUNITY, AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

The early Christians saw how important it was to help their community in practical ways. They also knew that they needed to keep sharing the Good News about Jesus. They were disciples who made more disciples! Because of this, they were able to change how people lived and acted. People acted out of love for others and were able to help other communities.

YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

We are called Christians because we follow Jesus and model our life after Him.



Read Acts 11. Underline anything that stands out to you.

In our culture, there will be times where someone may proclaim the name of Jesus in a way that is NOT actually honoring of the name of Jesus. Unfortunately, our world will continue to be a broken place until the day Jesus comes back to make all things new again. However, we can help do something about it; we can choose to be different!

QUESTION ONE:

Being a “Christian” means being Christ-like. How might you become more Christ-like, truly following Jesus, in place of wearing the title of “Christian” casually?

QUESTION TWO:

What is one aspect of Jesus that you’d like to focus on becoming more like this week? Example: more patient, kind, gracious, forgiving, gentle, slow to anger, disciplined, etc.

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 11, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 11**
We are called Christians because of who we follow and model our life after.
- ☐ **Luke 4:1-14**
The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to boldly endure temptation while remaining faithful to God through it.
- ☐ **Luke 4:16-30**
The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to boldly proclaim the Gospel despite its offensiveness to those around Him.

PRAYER

When Peter was retelling the story of his meeting with Cornelius and bringing the Gentiles to salvation in Jesus, he said, “who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” (Acts 11:17b). A lot of us wouldn’t openly admit it, but we often act like we know better than God. We think we already know what’s right and wrong and we don’t leave room or ask God what it is that He wants. Have you ever done this? Pray now that God would show you His will for your life. Pray that His will would be done, not your own. Pray for Him to reveal any ways you might be “standing in God’s way” and for the bravery to join Him in His mission rather than clinging to your own.

ACTION STEP

Names were important then and important now as a way of identifying who a person is and what they stand for. The followers of Jesus were given the name “Christian”. So what does it mean for us today to take up the title of Christian? If we want to be witnesses and share about Jesus, we need to make sure that our actions and words reflect our Savior.

*This week review the action steps from **Week 2 (pg. 40)** and **Week 3 (pg. 53)** and choose one to repeat this week as a way of refreshing your mind and remembering how important our words and actions are.*



MAIN IDEA

*Kingdom advancement
sometimes comes with a cost.*

MEMORY VERSES

So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. Acts 10:34-35 (ESV)

Elements of our culture contribute to an often-unconscious view the opposing forces of good and evil, God vs. His enemies, as equally matched. This can result in the false attribution of power to the enemies of God, as though they were equal to Him, engaged in some cosmic arm-wrestling match. Yet even in the most difficult and dire of times, God's will prevails. We see this in Acts 12 as opposition, persecution, and even execution attempt to stop the advancement of the Gospel. Yet in every situation, a messenger of God displayed God's power triumphant over all levels of human power. As we engage with this week's text, we are reminded that prayer is the primary method for us to experience and engage God's power. When we gather, and cast ourselves fully upon God, refusing to rely on our own efforts, we find the power to defeat opposition. That doesn't mean we will always be successful in escaping or avoiding the painful experiences of this world—we will always encounter opposition—but we can find our peace in an eternal perspective: our King is always triumphant and no one—not current rulers, influencers, or the powerful—can overcome our King.

BIBLE READING

- ☐ **Acts 12:1-25**
Kingdom advancement sometimes comes with a cost.
- ☐ **Acts 4:25-26 | Psalm 2:1-12**
No plot or rebellion will stand against Jesus whom God has established as His victorious King to rule over all things.
- ☐ **1 Timothy 2:1-13**
We endure suffering, knowing that the Gospel cannot be contained or thwarted and that Jesus rules and reigns over all.
- ☐ **Philippians 1:12-26**
God uses the enemy's attempts to stop the Gospel to further His Gospel throughout the world.
- ☐ **Philippians 1:27-2:11**
We are invited to share in the sufferings of Christ, demonstrating Him to the world as a sign of the work God has done in us and the victory He has won on our behalf.
- ☐ **1 Peter 2:21-25 | 1 Peter 4:12-19 | 1 Peter 5:6-11**
When we suffer for the Gospel, we can do so joyfully, remembering Jesus' suffering on our behalf and trusting that, just as God was faithful to Jesus, He will be faithful to us.
- ☐ **Luke 24:36-49**
Jesus was opposed even up to death for the Gospel he preached, but God used that opposition to accomplish His mission.

PRAYER & MEDITATION PROMPTS

Read and recite this month's memory verse (Acts 10:34-35). As you recite this verse each day, consider those who are preaching the Gospel around the world. Ask for God's protection and blessing over them as they bear witness to a God who loves without partiality or prejudice.



CONNECTED TO COMMUNITY (PRAYER)

The power of prayer is on full display in this week's text! God continues to invite His people to be a people of prayer. When we prayerfully step out in faith and do things we could never do in our own strength, we reveal our dependence on Him.

This week, take time to pray for the three congregations of Summit View Church and our future church plants. Here are a few prayer-prompts to get your started:

PRAY THAT SUMMIT VIEW WOULD...	PRAY FOR THE PEOPLE AT SUMMIT VIEW:
...be a body growing in maturity	Church leaders (staff, elders, deacons)
...be devoted to one another	People in your Life Group
...love and serve one another	Children's Ministry
...hold to the truth	Youth Ministry & Young Adults
...make known God's glory	The elderly
...give generously	The not-yet Christians

LIFE GROUP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED:

When in a stressful situation, what is your typical response? What do you do to alleviate tension?

QUESTION ONE:

Read Acts 12:1-4. There have been some major ups and downs for the early Church; trials, misunderstandings, opposition—even death. And in this week's passage, it appears things are only getting worse. In the first four verses, what was being done to the people of God?

FOLLOW UP: What seemed to be Herod's motivation? What did he gain by persecuting the Church?

FOLLOW UP: James, the brother of John (not Jesus' half-brother) is killed in verse one. Look back to Mark 10:35-40, where James makes a big request of Jesus. How might Jesus' response in Mark speak to what James eventually faced in Acts 12:2?

QUESTION TWO:

How might the events of Acts 12:1-4 bring confusion or frustration to the hearts of the disciples or even the new converts to the faith?

FOLLOW UP: Read Acts 12:5. How did the church respond to the opposition they were experiencing? Does this response make sense or seem counterintuitive to you?

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QUESTION THREE:

Read Acts 12:6-10. Luke repeatedly pointed out the fact that Peter was heavily guarded; why do you think those details were so specific and so significant?

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FOLLOW UP: Read verse 11. To who did Peter attribute his deliverance? Can you think of a time where God provided protection and deliverance for you?

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QUESTION FOUR:

Read Acts 12:12-17. Here we find the church in prayer but struggling to believe. Rhoda was the first person to believe that God, in fact, answered their prayers. If the Christians were praying for God to deliver Peter, why do you think were they surprised when Peter showed up?

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FOLLOW UP: How do the doubts of the early Church in their own prayers encourage you when you pray?

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FOLLOW UP: How might the deliverance of Peter and his subsequent declaration have been comforting and encouraging to the early Church?

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QUESTION FIVE:

When you consider both scenarios in this passage—Peter’s deliverance and James’ death—what comes to mind? How does it make you feel? What do these two events teach us about the sovereignty of God?

QUESTION SIX:

Read Acts 12:18-23 and consider what happened to Herod. Read Isaiah 42:8. What does this verse tell us about how God dealt with Herod?



APPLICATION

Despite all the hard parts of Acts 12, it ends on an extremely high note stating:

"But the word of God increased and multiplied."

The Word of God did not die, nor did it get slowed down. The Word of God prospered and continued to grow and multiply. This was done by faithful believers committing themselves to gathering, praying, and proclaiming the Gospel together. However, our confidence is not in people or circumstances, but in God's unchanging and powerful Word. Consider ways this week you can hold fast to this truth, and for opportunities to faithfully proclaim it to those you encounter. The Word of God remains forever. May the Word of God increase and multiply in your life.



KEY VERSE

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 (ESV)

GETTING STARTED:

We've learned that the apostles told everyone the good news about Jesus. Several times, they were arrested and put in jail.

To understand today's lesson, let's review Acts 5. The Apostles were put in prison. In the middle of the night, God sent an angel to the prison. The angel opened the prison doors and let them out. The angel told them to go to the temple and tell people about Jesus. The next morning, they were back in the temple teaching!

In light of this, you can see why, in today's passage, the king not only had many soldiers guarding Peter, but also went to some extreme measures to keep him captive. As you study today's lesson, enjoy the humor of the story and recognize the power of prayer.

BIG IDEAS

1. PETER IS RESCUED

Read Acts 12:3-8

Peter was again arrested, put into prison, and had four squads of soldiers guarding him. The believers were earnest in prayer for him.

Read Acts 12:9-11 aloud.

Question: Peter was in chains between two soldiers and had guards outside the door. What was Peter doing?

Answer: Sleeping.

Question: Who appeared suddenly?

Answer: An angel.

Question: How do we know that Peter was sleeping soundly?

Answer: The angel had to strike Peter on the side!

Peter was chained between two soldiers and was likely facing execution the next morning. He trusted God's plan for his life and did not worry about what might happen—he slept soundly! The angel told Peter to get up and the chains fell off from Peter's hands. The angel told Peter to get dressed and follow him, so Peter did. Peter did not know if everything that was happening was real, or if he was seeing a vision. They passed two guards and then came to the city gate. It opened for them on its own, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. Then Peter said,

"Now I am sure that the Lord has sent His angel and rescued me."

Read Acts 12:12-17 aloud.

Question: Peter went to the house of a believer. What was happening inside?

Answer: Many were gathered together and were praying.

Question: Peter knocked at the door, and a servant heard Peter's voice. Did she let him in?

Answer: No!

Question: When the servant told the believers Peter was knocking at the gate, did they believe her?

Answer: No!

Many believers were gathered together praying for Peter. Even though the servant girl recognized Peter's voice when he knocked, she did not let him in! She was so excited that he was no longer in prison that she ran in to tell the others and left Peter still knocking outside! Though they were praying fervently for Peter to be released, when the servant told the believers Peter was outside, they did not believe her. Meanwhile, Peter was still knocking at the door. The believers finally opened the door, saw Peter, and were amazed. Peter then told them how God had brought him out of the prison. The passage ends by telling us that the followers of Jesus increased and multiplied.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT | CONNECTED TO COMMUNITY

Remember in Act 1:14, the believers were “with one accord and devoted themselves to prayer”? In almost every chapter of Acts there is a reference to prayer. Let’s take a look:

- The early Church was a community of believers who did many things together, including praying. (Acts 2:42-47)
- After Peter and John were released from prison, they went to their friends and told them all that had happened. Then, the believers prayed together. When the prayer ended, the place they were in was shaken. (Acts 4:23-24, 29-31)
- Stephen prayed for those who were hurting him before he died. (Acts 7:54-60)
- Peter and John laid hands on and prayed for the Samaritans, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:9-13)
- Ananias prayed over Saul, scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he was able to see again. (Acts 9:10-19)
- Peter knelt beside Tabitha/Dorcas (who was dead) and prayed, and then said, “Tabitha, arise.” By the power of the Holy Spirit, she did! (Acts 9:36-43)
- Cornelius prayed before he even knew how to be rescued from sin. (Acts 10:1-8)
- Peter prayed and was given a vision about clean/unclean things. (Acts 10:9-16)

The beginning of our story said, “Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.” In verse 5. The defining moment in our passage is small, “but prayer” but it packs a punch! We should never underestimate prayer and the power of a praying community!



YOUTH

MAIN IDEA

*Kingdom
advancement
sometimes comes
with a cost.*



Read Acts 12:1-25. Underline anything that stands out to you.

In our passage of scripture this week, we see Peter thrown in jail for Jesus' sake. That'd be pretty scary! While sometimes bad things happen even to good people, we know that God is in control, and that our fear doesn't stand a chance against the power of our God's hand of protection and will for our lives.

QUESTION ONE:

In the face of trial and opposition, do you think you could hold fast to your belief in Jesus?

QUESTION TWO:

When you think of God's characteristics, which come to mind first? Do you think of God as an all-powerful, sovereign (meaning, in total control, or reigning,) being? Why or why not?

QUESTION THREE:

Have you ever called on God when you were afraid? How did you feel afterwards?

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BIBLE READING

The Bible is more than just a chain of events strung together one-by-one; it is a collection of intricately interwoven stories that work together to show us new truths about God. To gain a deeper understanding of Acts 12:1-25, spend a little time throughout your week reading these additional passages:

- ☐ **Acts 12:1-25**
Kingdom advancement sometimes comes with a cost.
- ☐ **Acts 4:25-26 | Psalm 2:1-12**
No plot or rebellion will stand against Jesus whom God has established as His victorious King to rule over all things.
- ☐ **1 Timothy 2:1-13**
We endure suffering, knowing that the Gospel cannot be contained or thwarted and that Jesus rules and reigns over all.

PRAYER

Jesus has a habit of rescuing us from some of the most unlikely places. Have you ever felt like there was no way that you would be able to escape the hard things you were going through? Pray that you would remember that God sees you and is for you, not against you. If you are going through a difficult time right now and you feel burdened, pray that God would bring you rescue and comfort. If you are not in a difficult season right now, think about other times in your life that God has pulled you out of the darkness. If you can't think of anything, pray that God would reveal to you the ways that He has been close to you and working in your life. Thank God for the ways He has rescued you.

ACTION STEP

Can God's plans be stopped? Bad things happen to the people of God but as we see in chapter 12 there is nothing that can stop the Lord's plans. When Peter was thrown in prison, it says that "earnest prayer" for Peter was made by the church. Let us be people of prayer this week.

This week, find a prayer partner and exchange prayer requests. Pray for that person every day this week. At the end of the time report back to one another.











SUMMIT VIEW CHURCH