Study Guide

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
A Study Through the Book of Acts

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Gateway Christian Church
Inductive Bible Study—The Basics

The Inductive Bible Study method is a method that helps people dig deep into Scripture. It is a great way to really get a grasp on the Bible.

There are three basic elements to the inductive study method: Observation (noticing what is there), Interpretation (understanding what it means), and Application (understanding what we are supposed to do with that information).

One mistake that many people make is that they go to the Bible and jump first to “what does this mean for me?” This is a dangerous way to approach the Bible because if we do not understand what is really there, and what the purpose of the text was for the original audience, then we cannot know how to apply it to our lives.

Therefore, when approaching the Bible, we must put in the time and effort needed to understand the text first.

This sounds scary, I know, but that is why this method is so helpful; breaking it down into three parts makes it much more manageable. Remember—the Bible was meant to be read and understood by common people, not meant only for the theologically trained and experts of the law. Let us take a closer look at each step.

Step One: Observation (Seeing what is there)

This step helps us to slow down and really notice what is in the text. A good start in the observation step is to ask the 5 W questions (Who? What? When? Where? Why?) and the H (How?). Also essential to the observation step is to make note of any repeated words or themes, look for key words or phrases, and anything that appears to be a list. Note anything that is being compared or contrasted. Finally, take note of any transition words like “because”, “so”, “thus”, and “therefore” – these point you to the true context of the verse and will help you to interpret Scripture properly.

Step Two: Interpretation (Figuring out what it means)

Here are some important things to remember with the interpretation step of the inductive method:

- Context is king. Always base a phrase or passage on what is happening in the surrounding text.
- Use the whole Bible to help you understand a passage. Use tools like a concordance, study notes, and cross-references to help you.
- Typically, take the words in their natural, normal sense. Do not assume analogy, allegory, or wild interpretations.
- Remember—your goal is to figure out what the author intended the message to be. To do so, you have to try to span the cultural gap to understand how the original audience would have heard it. Reading the introduction to the book in a good study Bible will help you to do so.

Step 3: Application (What I should do with the information)

Once you have taken the time to figure out what is in the text and what it actually means, you can figure out how you should respond to what is there.
There might be implications for you in your personal life, family, church, job, school, community, or in the world.

Questions you may ask of the Scripture once you have a grasp of what it means:

- Is there a promise to hold? Command to obey? Sin to avoid? Example to follow? Warning to heed? Prayer to lift up? Problem to solve?
- What changes do I need to make in my beliefs, attitude, and behavior?

This study will provide questions following the inductive format. As you seek to answer these questions, you should seek to also come up with your own observations, and perhaps even spend time reading cross-references, study notes, etc., as you seek to interpret. Also included with each chapter is a key verse or passage. Take the time to memorize and/or meditate on that verse.

More important than any of this, ask God to provide insight and conviction in your life, remembering, “all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17) Also, do not forget the importance of prayer. Ask God to illuminate His Word for you, and ask for an open heart for yourself (and the rest of your group if you are using this as a group study). Afterwards, pray for God’s guidance in applying what you have read.

My prayer for you as you work your way through this study guide is that you not just gain knowledge about the Holy Spirit, God’s mission, and the growth of the early church, but that you seek the guidance, strength, and wisdom of the Holy Spirit as you take part in God’s mission.

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Introduction to Acts

Author


Date

Acts was most likely written by Luke in A.D. 62, before the execution of Paul.

Purpose

Luke declares his purpose for both books at the beginning of Luke (Luke 1:1-4), to write “an orderly account” of “the things that have been accomplished among us” (early believers), “that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught”. Acts gives readers the only details that exist about what happened in the years immediately following the death and resurrection of Christ, linking the gospels and the epistles.

The Setting of Acts

Acts describes accounts which occur in a number of places, from Jerusalem to Rome, fulfilling Acts 1:8, in which Jesus told His apostles that they would be His witnesses “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”

The Historical Accuracy of Acts

Historically, Acts is a treasure for scholars of Ancient Rome. It contains accurate information about ancient cities, Roman officials, culture, and lifestyle. This almost certainly indicates that it was written by someone who lived during the first century A.D. and had traveled all throughout the region, as Luke would have done.

Focus

As you read and study through Acts, pay close attention to the work of the Holy Spirit in the events that occur. Also, look for summary statements throughout Acts which describe the growth of the church and the activity of the Holy Spirit, as well as the work of the apostles, such as occur in Acts 2:46-47, 4:31, 5:41, 6:7, and throughout.
Key Places in Acts
### 1:1 - 6:7
**THE GOSPEL STARTS IN JERUSALEM**

| 1:1-26 | The risen Lord Jesus promises his gathered disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them and they will be his ‘witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ [1:8]. |
| 2:1-47 | Many Jewish people, gathered from ‘every nation under heaven’ to celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem, hear the gospel of Jesus. More than 3000 people receive the good news and are baptised as believers [2:41, 47]. |
| 3:1 - 4:31 | Many of the Jews who heard Peter and John preach the gospel in the temple believe, in total about 5000 men [4:4]. |
| 4:32 – 6:7 | Despite much persecution, the word of the Lord continues to increase, with multitudes of both men and women in Jerusalem being added to the Lord, including a great number of the priests [5:14-15; 6:7]. |

### 6:8 - 9:31
**THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO JUDEA & SAMARIA**

| 6:8 - 7:60 | The gospel continues to be powerfully preached by Stephen, until he is executed by the Jewish leaders. |
| 8:1-40 | In God’s sovereignty, the terrible persecution of the church leads to the spread of the gospel throughout Judea and Samaria [8:1], fulfilling the first stage of Jesus’ mission [1:8]. Philip preaches in Samaria, with many locals joyfully embracing the gospel, including Simon the Magician [8:6, 12-13, 25]. Lastly, Philip sees an Ethiopian eunuch come to faith in Jesus [8:35-38]. |
| 9:1-31 | Saul, the great persecutor of the Christian church, comes to faith after being confronted by the risen Lord Jesus [9:17-22] and is commissioned to evangelise ‘the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel’ [9:15]. To the shock of the Jews, Saul [now Paul] immediately proclaims Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus [9:20] and the church multiplies, with newfound peace throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria [9:31]. |

“Gospel Progress in Acts;” graphics courtesy of visualunit.me
9:32 - 12:24  THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO THE GENTILES

9:32 - 11:18  After Aeneas is healed, residents of Lydda and Sharon turn to the Lord [9:35]. Likewise, after Tabitha is raised, many in Joppa trusted in Jesus [9:42]. Finally, to the shock of the Jewish believers, the Holy Spirit converts the Gentile Cornelius and all his household to the gospel [10:44]. The doors are now open for the Gentile mission to begin!

11:19 - 12:24  On account of the persecution, the gospel spreads to the Jews as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. Uniquely, the gospel is preached to the Gentiles as well in Antioch, with many coming to faith in Jesus [11:21-24]. The church is fully established through the preaching ministry of Barnabas and Saul [11:26], and Antioch becomes the new base for Paul’s three missionary journeys into Asia-minor, Macedonia and Greece. Back in Jerusalem, the word of God increases and multiplies, despite the imprisonment of Peter and execution of James [12:24].

12:25 - 16:5  THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO ASIA-MINOR

12:25 - 14:28  After being commissioned for gospel mission [13:2-3], Paul and Barnabas sail from Antioch (in Syria) to Cyprus and then onto Pisidia and Galatia, visiting the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Along the way they face much opposition to their preaching from both Jews and Gentiles, culminating in Paul almost stoned to death [14:19]. Nevertheless, by God’s grace, a Roman leader [13:9], and many Gentiles believe and the gospel spreads through the whole region [13:48-49; 14:1, 21, 27].

15:1 - 16:5  Despite the call for Gentile believers to be circumcised, the Jerusalem Council sends delegates to the largely Gentile church in Antioch to encourage them in their faith (though urging them to not be a stumbling block to the Jewish believers). Furthermore, though Paul and Barnabas part company, the apostles revisit and strengthen the churches planted on their previous mission together [15:39-40; 16:1], and the number of believers continue to grow [16:5].
16:6 - 21:16  THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO EUROPE

16:6 – 17:15 Guided and empowered by the Spirit, Paul and Silas bring the gospel to Macedonia, namely in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Despite them being imprisoned, beaten and lynched, many come to faith in Jesus: Lydia and her household (16:14-15), the Philippian jailer and his family (16:39-34), a few Jews, many devout Greeks and several leading women (17:4-5, 12).

17:16 - 18:22 Despite Paul being mocked for his belief in the resurrection in Athens, some men and women join him and trust in Jesus (17:34). Likewise in Corinth, despite strong opposition from the Jews, Crispus the ruler of the Synagogue, his whole household and many Corinthians believe the gospel and are baptised (18:8).

18:23 – 19:41 Paul speaks for two years in Ephesus ‘so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks’ (19:10). After Paul performs extraordinary healings and exorcisms in the name of Jesus, fear falls on the residents, who praise the name of Jesus and many repent of their evil practices. ‘So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily’ (19:20).

20:1 – 21:16 Paul travels throughout Macedonia and Greece, encouraging, instructing and farewellng the churches of these regions, as well as the Ephesian elders, on his way to Jerusalem.

21:17 - 28:31  THE GOSPEL ON THE WAY TO ROME

21:17 – 23:35 In the face of hostility, arrest, imprisonment and an assassination plot, Paul still manages to speak the gospel to all the gathered Jews in Jerusalem, to the Jewish council and to his Roman captors.


27:1 – 28:31 Despite being bound on a ship, shipwrecked on Malta and imprisoned in Rome, Paul witnesses to the sailors and soldiers, the Maltese people, and the Jews and Gentiles in Rome. The book of Acts concludes with Paul ‘proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance’ (28:31). From Rome, over many centuries, the gospel continues to spread to ‘the ends of the earth’.
Acts 1

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 1. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- To whom is Acts written? If you have a study Bible, what do the study notes say about him?
- In verse 4, what does Jesus instruct His disciples to do?
- According to verse 5, the disciples were to be looking forward to what?
- In verse 6, what were the disciples hoping would happen? What was Jesus’ response?
- What was the last truth that Jesus revealed to His disciples before ascending to heaven?
- The word “apostle” literally means “one sent out,” like an ambassador. How is this related to verse 8?
- What does it mean to be a witness for Jesus?
- What does Jesus say will accompany and enable their witnessing?

Scriptural Insight: Verse 8 is the thematic statement for all of Acts. It begins with the Spirit’s power that stands behind and drives the witness to Jesus. Then it provides a rough outline of the book: Jerusalem, (chs. 1-7), Judea and Samaria (chs. 8-12) and the end of the earth (chs. 13-28). (ESV Study Bible)

- After Jesus left them, what did the disciples devote themselves to doing?
- According to verses 21-22, what were the qualifications of one to be considered to be an apostle (taking Judas’ place)?
- Who was chosen to take Judas’ place among the apostles? How did they choose him, once they had narrowed it down to two men who met the qualifications?

Applying

- What have you witnessed God do in your life and the lives of those you love?
- What are some ways you can communicate that to people?
- How might you be a witness in ways you have not tried before?

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
Acts 2

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 2. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Read verse 3, then Exodus 3:2; 13:21; 19:18; 19:18; 40:38; Isa. 4:5; and Ezek. 1:4.
- Read Luke 3:16. What was John the Baptist replying to when he said this?
- What do you think is significant about God being represented by fire?
- What did the Holy Spirit enable the apostles to do?
- What important information is included in verse 5?
- How did the fact that this occurred during Pentecost, a Jewish festival when many Jews from all over the world were in Jerusalem, help to begin to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20)?
- What were people hearing about from the apostles in their own languages? (verse 11)
- The mere presence of “tongues” by themselves was not enough evidence of the Holy Spirit’s activity. The apostles Paul and John wrote about the subject matter of those who come from God. Read 1 Cor. 12:3 and 1 John 4:2. About what types of “mighty deeds” (verse 11) do you think the apostles were talking?
- What is important about Peter quoting from the prophet Joel (verses 17-21)?
- Read Luke 23:44-45. Had you been in Jerusalem that day and heard Peter quote the prophet Joel (Acts 2:20), how do you think you would have responded?
- Luke puts Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit as the beginning of the “last days.” Read Matthew 24:29-51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:11; Hebrews 9:28; and Revelation 21:1-4 (among many others). What happens at the end of the last days? What do we know about when this will happen?
- Summarize Peter’s sermon.
- Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 (a Psalm of David) in verses 25-28. How is Psalm 16 related to what Peter is saying?
- Read verse 37. What was many people’s reaction to Peter’s sermon?
- How did Peter tell them to respond? What does he say will happen if they do this? For whom does he say this promise is? How many people responded?
- Reread verses 42-47. Describe the early church. What kinds of things did they do? Where did they meet? What was God’s role?

Applying

- How have you witnessed the mighty deeds of God? How can you best communicate that to others?
- If you believe that Jesus died for our sins and rose again three days later, what should your response be? Have you repented of your sins and been baptized?
- The last several verses of Acts 2 talk about the fellowship of believers. How is this understanding of fellowship different from how we might talk about fellowship?
- If believers gathering in the temple together is like us today attending and worshipping in a church setting, what are we missing out on if we are only attending church, according to verses 42-47?

Key Verse

And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

~Acts 2:38
Acts 3

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 3. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Note the “who”, the “what”, the “where”, and the “when” in verse 1.
- For what did the lame man ask Peter and John?
- What was Peter’s response?
- What was the response of the people who witnessed all of this?
- Summarize Peter’s sermon after he heals the lame man. What does he say about what they already knew about God? What does he say about Jesus? What does he say about the role of the Jews in all this? What does he tell them they should do?
- What does Peter say that all of God’s prophets foretold (verses 18, 24)?
- What does Peter call Jesus in verse 15? What does this mean?
- According to verse 21, Jesus will be in heaven until what happens?
- Read Genesis 12:1-3 and then Genesis 22:18. What does Peter say in Acts 3:25-26 that shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of this blessing?

Applying

- Pay attention to what Peter said about Jesus in Acts 3.
  - Who is Jesus? (verse 15)
  - What happened to Jesus? (verse 15, 18)
  - What happened to Jesus after he died? (v15)
  - What will Jesus do in the future? (verses 20-21)
  - What should people’s response to that information be? (verse 19)
  - How did Peter pay special attention to what the people he was preaching to already knew and believed?

- Now take time to write out what you might say to someone if you had the opportunity to tell him or her about Jesus. In what ways might what you say be different than Peter, based on the beliefs of the person with whom you would be sharing? In what ways would it be similar?
- What encouragement can you take from Acts 3?

Key Verses

“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.”

~ Acts 3:19-21
Acts 4

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 4. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- In verses 1 and 2, who is annoyed with Peter and John? Why? What did they do? (verse 3)
- According to verse 4, how many men were now believers? If Luke would have included women and children in that count, estimate the total number of believers at this point.
- What do the high priests and other leaders want to know from Peter and John?
- What does Luke point out about Peter in verse 8?
- When Peter responds to them, what does he say that is similar to what he said in his sermons in Acts 2 and 3?
- What did the Jewish leaders observe in verses 13-14?
- Why couldn’t they really oppose what Peter had just said?
- Read verse 16. Then look at Mark 8:11-13 after Jesus fed the 4,000. What seems to be very apparent regarding many of the Jewish leaders’ hearts?
- What did the Jewish leaders order Peter and John not to do?
- How did Peter and John respond?
- Why do you think Luke included the fact that the man who was healed was more than 40 years old? (verse 22)
- “Anointed” or “anointed one” in verse 26 is another translation of Christ or Messiah. The believers here are quoting from David in Psalm 2:1-2. Why is this relevant here?
- List the activities of the Holy Spirit that are described in Acts 4.
- How is the end of Acts 4 similar to the end of Acts 2?
- To whom are we introduced at the end of Acts 4? What do we learn about him?

Applying

- Read Romans 13:1-7. How would you summarize what Paul teaches here? How can you reconcile that with what Peter and John say in Acts 4:19-20? When is it allowable to disobey the instructions of those with authority over you?
- What can you learn about how we should pray, and the kinds of things for which we can pray, from Acts 4:23-30?
- Pay attention to the work of the Spirit and the believers’ reliance on the Spirit.
- After reading Acts 4 and understanding how it applied to the lives of those in the early church, what do you think are some things that directly apply to your life today as a part of the same church in a different time and culture?

Key Verses

“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” ~Acts 4:11-12
Acts 5

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 5. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- After reading verses 1-4, compare Ananias to what you learned about Barnabas at the end of chapter 4.
- Was Ananias guilty of keeping some of his land or of lying about what he was keeping? To whom does Peter say Ananias was actually lying?
- Many people in the church have been guilty of lying about their faith. Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira suffered the fate they did?
- Summarize what is happening in the church in verses 12-16.
- According to verse 17, what emotion caused the high priest to have the apostles arrested?
- How were the apostles released from prison? What did they immediately do after being released?
- Why did the captain of the temple not take them by force when he found them in the temple? (verse 26)
- What was Peter’s response when the high priest questioned him about disobeying their orders?
- Read verse 30. Here, Peter is alluding to Deuteronomy 21:22-23. What does that say about someone who is hung on a tree? What did Jesus accomplish by this, according to Paul in Galatians 3:13?

**Scriptural Insight:** “What weighed most of all with the apostles was their personal commitment to the risen Lord to be His witnesses, ‘We cannot stop telling what we have seen and heard.’” (F. F. Bruce, The Book of the Acts, pp. 96-97)

- Who is Gamaliel? Summarize his advice to the council.
- What does the council do with the apostles? How do the apostles respond?
- According to verse 42, what continued to happen every day?

Applying

- Do you find the community the early church had desirable? Why or why not?
- What has happened in Acts every time the gospel has met with opposition? How does this encourage you?
- According to verse 41, how should you respond when you experience suffering for the sake of the gospel?

**Key Verse**

But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.” ~Acts 5:9
Acts 6

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 6. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- As the number of disciples increased, what practical needs were evident?
- What was the response of the apostles to these needs?
- What were the names of the seven men chosen to meet these needs? How did they choose them?
- What does verse 7 tell us about what was happening in the church?
- Why is the end of verse 7 important?
- What are some things that you learn about Stephen in this passage?
- What specifically do you think it looks like to be full of grace and power?
- What do the accusations against Stephen tell us about why the Jewish leaders were so upset?
- What actions by the people who opposed Stephen show the status of their hearts?

Applying

- What is your responsibility in helping the word of God to increase? What is God’s responsibility?
- How do you think you can best be a person who could be described as “full of grace and power?” Hint: read verse 5.
- What two adjectives would you say best describe your spiritual life? What would look different if you were “full of grace and power?”

Key Verse

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. ~Acts 6:9
Acts 7

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 7. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- If you were to give a title to the speech that Stephen gives to the council, what would it be?
- What do Joseph and Moses have in common in Stephen’s speech (vv9-10; 35-36)?
- In 6:13-14, what did Stephen’s accusers accuse him of doing? How does what he says in verses 47-50 (quoting Isaiah 66:1-2) serve as a response to that?
- What do you think it means to have “uncircumcised hearts and ears?”
- Why do you think Stephen retold the story of God’s people to make his argument?
- What do you think made the Jewish leader’s son enraged? (verse 54)
- Stephen’s execution was illegal (see John 18:31). What does this reveal about the desperation of the Jewish leaders?
- To whom is the reader introduced in verse 58? What do you think his role in the events that occurred was?
- What two prayers did Stephen say as he was dying?
- In verse 60, it says Stephen fell asleep. How does referring to death as falling asleep show Luke’s hope in a future resurrection?

Applying:

- How well do you know the story of God and His people? What can you do to boost your knowledge?
- Do you tend to try to limit God to a building? If so, why do you think that is?
- Do you tend to idolize anything the way the Jews idolized the temple? What types of things are you tempted to make an important part of the gospel that are not really part of the gospel?

Key Verses

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ~Acts 7:59-60
Acts 8

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 8. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- What new information do we get about Saul in verse 1?
- What was the direct effect of the stoning of Stephen?
- What was Saul’s role in the persecution of the church?
- What important information do we see in verse 4 that relates to the spread of the gospel?
- How do verses 4-5 relate to Acts 1:8?
- In verses 14-17, we read about a rare case in which people (Samaritans) became baptized believers but did not receive the Holy Spirit until the apostles came and laid hands on them. The Samaritans and Jews had a long history of hostility toward one another. Why do you think it would be helpful among the Samaritans to witness the Holy Spirit coming when the apostles laid hands on them?
- What was Simon the magician’s motive for wanting the Holy Spirit?
- Do you think Simon the magician was a true believer? Why or why not?
- Why was Philip in the place where he met the Ethiopian eunuch?
- What did Philip first witness the Ethiopian doing? What did the eunuch ask him?
- The eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53:7-8. Why was this a perfect verse for Philip to find him reading? How did Philip respond to this?
- What did the eunuch realize he needed to do, once Philip had shared with him?
- How does this interaction act as the beginning of the fulfillment of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) ?

Applying

- We can look back and see how the persecution of God’s people led directly to the advancement of the gospel. Would God’s people have been able to see that while they were being persecuted? How does that bring you encouragement when you go through difficult times?
- What advice do you think Philip would give you about evangelism?

Key Verse

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ~ Acts 8:4
Acts 9

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 9. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- What details do we learn about Saul in verses 1-2? What does it say about his zeal, knowing that the trip to Damascus was a 6-day journey?
- Describe what happened to Saul on the journey. What did he see? What did he hear? What did he say? What do you think he was feeling?
- Why do you think Jesus said, “Why do you persecute me?” instead of “Why do you persecute my believers?”
- Verses 10 – 16 describe Ananias’ vision. What did God say to him? How did he respond? What would he have been feeling?
- What did Ananias do for Saul? What was Saul’s immediate response? What did he then go out and do?
- Why would the people who first heard Saul preach about Jesus have been wary?

Scriptural Insight: Verse 23 – “The Jews” doesn’t refer to all Jews (remember, Saul/Paul himself was a Jew.) From here on out in Acts, when Luke uses the phrase “The Jews”, he is referring to Jewish people who were opposed to the gospel.

- When the disciples were afraid of Saul, who vouched for him?
- Saul’s name was later changed to Paul. When Paul preached, he emphasized grace. He emphasized that nothing we can ever do saves us, but we are only saved by our faith in Jesus Christ—that salvation is a free gift from God, not by anything we do. How did Paul’s own experience, described in chapter 9, cause him to believe this?
- What do we learn about the church in verse 31? What is the role of the Holy Spirit?
- What miracles are performed through Peter in chapter 9? What do we know about the two people he restored? Where was Peter when he healed Tabitha? With whom did he stay?

Applying

- How is the grace of God, shown to Saul, encouraging to you?
- There is no evidence that Ananias was ever a well-known figure in the early church. Think about what God did through him. How might this encourage you when you think about the part you play in God’s story?
- Reflect on the change that occurred in Saul. Now think about some people you know who seem to be extremely far from accepting Christ. Have you given up on them? Should you? How can you continue to pray for them? How can you help them to understand the love of Christ?

Key Verses

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” 5 And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” ~ Acts 9:3-5
Acts 10

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 10. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.

**Scriptural Insight:** “Cornelius was a centurion, a commander of 100 men, and a member of the Italian Cohort. Centurions were paid very well (as much as five times the pay of an ordinary soldier), so Cornelius would have been socially prominent and wealthy.” (ESV Study Bible)

- What do we learn about Cornelius’ relationship with God?
- What does God tell Cornelius to do?
- Describe Peter’s vision. What does God say to him? What is Peter’s response?
- Read Leviticus 11:2-47 to see why Peter would have responded in this way.
- What was God’s response when Peter said he could not eat anything unclean?
- Why would this be important if Peter were to accept Cornelius’ invitation? (Hint: was Cornelius a Jew?)
- What does verse 28 tell us about the practices of Jewish people? What does Peter tell Cornelius’ household?

**Clarification:** Verse 35 “in every nation. Not just among Jews acceptable to him. The word used here (Gk. Dektos, “acceptable, welcome”) does not refer to legal justification before God (for which the NT uses Gk. Dikaioo and related terms), nor is Peter talking about the basis for justification. Rather the question here is whether God’s favor is made available to Jews only (“partiality,” verse 34) or is now available to Gentiles also (those “in every nation”)...” (ESV Study Bible)

- How would you summarize the gospel message that Peter shares in verses 34-43?
- Why would those who came with Peter have been so amazed that the Holy Spirit had come upon Cornelius and his household?
- What did Peter do when he saw what happened?

Applying

- Peter certainly was not expecting the events that happened in chapter 10. What has God done in your life that was unexpected?
- Why is it important to be open to the Spirit’s leading?
- What was Peter doing when God revealed this new direction for the gospel? What is the best way for you to be open to God’s leading?
- In what ways could you grow in relating to people of different cultures, races, beliefs, and customs than you?

**Key Verse**

*And the voice came to him a second time, “What God has called clean, do not call common.” ~ Acts 10:15*
Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 11. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- How was Peter received when he returned to Jerusalem?

**Scriptural Insight:** The circumcision party was “a group of strict Jewish Christians, perhaps of Pharasaic background (see 15:1, 5). They probably held the position that Gentiles who wished to become Christians must first become converts to Judaism, which included circumcision and living by the ritual laws.” (ESV Study Bible)

- Why was it important to Peter and the other Jewish Christians that Cornelius and the other Gentiles were given the Holy Spirit without being circumcised or obeying any of the Jewish rituals?
- Read verse 18. Why would this have been such an astounding truth for the Jews, given their history? (See Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:4-6; Deuteronomy 7:6-15.)

**Scriptural Insight:** When using the term “Greeks” or “Hellenists” in 11:20, “it designates the Greek-speaking populace of Antioch, therefore Gentiles in general.” (Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible)

- What was the response of the church in Jerusalem when they learned that many in Antioch (including Gentiles) were turning to the Lord?
- What might have been the outcome if they ignored the work of the Spirit and were more concerned with Jewish tradition?
- We were first introduced to Barnabas in Acts 4. What information does chapter 11 give about him?
- Who did Barnabas enlist for his mission in Antioch?
- How long were Saul and Barnabas teaching in Antioch?
- What was the response of Christians in Antioch when they heard about the famine?

Applying

- Reflect upon your attitude toward those outside the church. What church traditions do you keep that may prevent you from ministering to them? Is there a possibility you may be subconsciously judging others based on non-Biblical biases?
- What steps can you take to be more open to what the Spirit is doing and join the work of God already taking place, like the Christians in Jerusalem responded to what was taking place in Antioch?
- With whom might you partner to better reach others for Christ, like Barnabas partnered with Saul?

**Key Verses**

“If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?” 18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.” ~ Acts 11:17-18
Acts 12

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 12. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Who had James the apostle (brother of John) killed?
- According to verse 2, why did Herod arrest Peter?

**Historical Insight:** Herod Agrippa I, nephew of the king who tried Jesus, was partly Jewish and known for doing everything possible to curry the favor of the Jews, so he found it politically expedient to arrest Christians, including Peter, and to execute James. (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 384)

- What was the church’s response to Peter’s imprisonment?
- Pause and reflect on verses 1-5. What type of emotions would the church be feeling through all this? What types of questions and doubts might you have if you had been there?
- What does verse 6 say about how well Peter was guarded?
- Connect verses 5 and 12 and verses 7-11.
- What do we learn about Herod’s character in verses 20-23? What word would you use to describe him?
- What was Herod’s fate? Why?
- How is verse 24 important to the events that occurred in this chapter?

Applying

- As you pray, do you prepare your heart for the unexpected, as well as for what you expect? What steps can you take to do this?
- What events are going on in your life right now that make it important to remember God is in control?
- What should your response be when people are opposing the gospel?

**Key Verse**

*But the word of God increased and multiplied.* ~ Acts 12:24
Acts 13

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 13. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- What happened while the prophets and teachers were fasting and worshiping in that church at Antioch?
- What was the response of the church?
- In verse 4, who sent out Saul and Barnabas?
- In Salamis, where did Barnabas and Saul begin proclaiming the word of God?
- Who summoned Barnabas and Saul? Who opposed them?

**Scriptural Insight:** 13:9 – This verse marks the transition in Acts from Saul to Paul. Now that he is working in Gentile territory, the Hebrew Saul becomes known by his Roman name, Paul. He will be so named throughout the rest of Acts, except in 22:7, 13, and 26:14, which recall earlier events. (ESV Study Bible)

- How does Paul respond to Bar-Jesus’ opposition?
- What other information (verse 9) do we know about Paul as he was responding to Bar-Jesus?
- What happened to Bar-Jesus? What effect did that have on the proconsul?
- Verses 16 – 47 record a sermon Paul gave in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia. How does Paul introduce Jesus to the Jews in the synagogue? What is the focus of his sermon (besides Jesus)?
- In verse 32, what does Paul say is fulfilled in Jesus?
- In verse 39, what does Paul say about the law of Moses? Why would this be attractive to one who tried so hard to keep the law?
- In verses 42 and 43, how did the people who heard Paul respond?
- What do we learn about Paul and Barnabas’ audience in verse 44?
- How do Paul and Barnabas respond to Jews who opposed them?
- In verse 47, Paul cites Isaiah 49:6. How do the Gentiles respond?
- What eventually happens to Paul and Barnabas? Where do they go next?
- What does verse 52 tell us about the status of the church at this point?

Applying

- When should you confront people who oppose Christ?
- How does knowing the storyline of the Old Testament help you understand and share the gospel better?
- Do you “honor the word of the Lord” (verse 48)? If not, what obstacles have kept you from doing so?
- Are you in a community of believers that can be described as filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit?

**Key Verses**

“For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’” 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. ~Acts 13:47-49
Acts 14

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 14. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Where are Paul and Barnabas at the beginning of chapter 14?
- What is the good news and bad news of what happened in Iconium?
- How does Luke describe the work of the unbelieving Jews in verse 14?
- Where did Paul and Barnabas go after fleeing from Iconium?
- What do you notice about Paul’s actions in verse 9?
- Who did the crowds in Lystra think Paul and Barnabas were?
- What were Paul and Barnabas’ reactions when they learned what the people were doing?
- In verse 15, what did the apostles tell the crowd about God to correct their false understanding?
- Why would it be important to tell the people of Lystra, who believed in many gods, that God is “a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them?”
- Read verse 19. Who were the instigators? From where were they? What happened to Paul?
- Where did Paul and Barnabas go next?

Scriptural Insight: 14:21 “Derbe, about 58 miles southeast of Lystra, marked the farthest point in Paul’s first journey…” The decision to return to Pisidian Antioch by going through Lystra (a longer route) “shows the importance Paul attached to maintaining contact with his churches and establishing local elders” (ESV Study Bible)

- According to verses 22-23, what four things did Paul and Barnabas do when they went back through cities in which they had already proclaimed the gospel?
- According to verse 27, what did Paul and Barnabas do when they returned from their mission? What do we know about how long they stayed among the disciples there?

Applying

- What does the difference between Paul’s sermon in Acts 13:17-41 and his speech in 14:15-17 teach you about sharing faith with various types of people?
- How do people you know interpret the Gospel by their own prejudices and beliefs?
- How might you share the Gospel differently with a Jewish person than with a non-Jewish person?
- Would you classify yourself as a newer believer in need of someone to strengthen and encourage you to remain true to the faith; as someone who can strengthen and encourage newer believers; or somewhere in between? What is your responsibility to ensure that happens?

Key Verse

“Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.” ~ Acts 14:15
Acts 15

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 15. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- What had been happening prior to the men from Judea coming down (verse 1) that would have caused Paul and Barnabas (and also Peter) to dispute them?
- When Paul and Barnabas arrived back in Jerusalem, how did the church greet them?
- In verse 5, what do we learn about some of the believers that may be surprising?
- What did these believers from verse 5 want to happen?
- Why was it so important that the leadership of the church completely agree on this issue?
- Summarize what Peter tells those who think that the Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved.

Scriptural Insight: 15:10-11 “By contrast with those ‘heavy burdens, hard to bear’ (Matt. 23:4), he and his associates had learned to rejoice in their Master’s easy yoke (Matt. 11:29-30). They recognized that their own salvation was due to the grace of Christ; were they to acknowledge a different and more burdensome principle of salvation for Gentile believers?” (The Book of Acts - New International Commentary, p. 290)

- James, the brother of Jesus, who was now the leader of the church in Jerusalem, quotes Amos 9:11-12 in making his argument. How does what Amos the prophet said relate to the issue being considered in the church?
- Who did the church send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas?
- Summarize the letter that Paul and Barnabas gave to the church there. What was the response of the church in Antioch when they received the letter?
- Verses 32-35 describe the activities of Judas, Silas, Paul, and Barnabas. What specifically were they doing?
- What was Paul anxious to do, according to verse 36?
- In verse 37, we see Barnabas wanted to bring “John, called Mark” (the author of the gospel of Mark) on their journey. Why did Paul not want to bring him?
- What was the outcome of the disagreement with Barnabas and Paul over Mark?
- Who did Paul take with him on his next journey? Where did they go first? To do what?

Applying

- The leaders of the early church decided that having Gentiles be circumcised was an unnecessary “hoop to jump through” in order to be saved because it is God’s grace that saves people through their faith in Christ. Can you think of any unnecessary hoops you want people to jump through before considering them worthy of hearing or accepting the gospel?
- What is so hard about accepting God’s grace with “no strings attached?” Why do we tend towards adding conditions to salvation and complete acceptance before God? Do you do this yourself? Why or why not?

Key Verses

“Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” ~Acts 15:10-11
Acts 16

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 16. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Who are we introduced to in verse 1? From where was he? What else do we know about him?
- Did Paul believe that Timothy had to be circumcised to become a believer? Why did he circumcise him?
- According to verse 5, what was continuing to happen?
- What kept Paul from going to Asia and Bithynia?
- How did Paul know to go to Macedonia?
- What does verse 12 say about the city of Philippi?
- In verses 13-15: How did Paul meet Lydia? What was her occupation? How did she come to listen to Paul? What was her response?
- What happened with Paul and the slave girl?
- Why did the owners of the slave girl take Paul and Silas to the rulers of the city? What did they tell the rulers about Paul and Silas? How did the rulers respond?
- What were Paul and Silas doing when they were in chains?
- How did they get free?
- What was the jailer’s immediate instinct when he saw that the prison doors had been opened?
- What do you think led to the jailer’s desire to be saved? What did Paul tell him he must do to be saved? What happened next (verses 33-34)?
- Summarize what happened between the magistrates and Paul and Silas in verses 35-39. Where did they go when they first left prison?

Applying

- How did the Lord open your heart to respond to the Gospel? Who did He use as part of the process?
- What is something you can apply to your life about the way Paul and Silas handled their time in prison?
- Paul and Silas speak the truth of the gospel as well as living it out. How do you give both a living witness and a verbal witness to Christ?

Key Verses

Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” ~Acts 16:30-31
Acts 17

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 17. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- In verses 1-4, how many times did Paul speak in the synagogue in Thessalonica? Describe what he did there. What was the result?
- How did the Jews who still did not believe respond?
- A man named Jason had apparently been allowing Paul and Silas to stay with him. What did the Jews do to him?
- What city did Paul and Silas go to next? Where was their first stop when they arrived?
- Describe how the Jews there responded to the gospel.
- What stirred up the crowds?
- When Paul arrived in Athens, what immediately bothered him?
- What information do we read in verses 20-21 that helps us understand why the philosophers were so eager to listen to Paul?
- What is the first thing that Paul says in his sermon to the Greeks in the Areopagus?
- What connection point does Paul use to bridge the beliefs of the people of Athens and Christianity?
- What truths does Paul reveal about God in this sermon?
- Review the sermon that Paul gave to the Jews in Acts 13. What are some major differences between the two sermons? Why do you think they are so different?
- Why do you think Paul does not mention the name of Jesus or say much about Him?
- In verse 28, Paul quotes Greek poetry, with which they would have been familiar. Do you think that means he approves of everything those poets wrote?
- What were the different responses of people when they heard Paul talk about the resurrection?

Applying

- Think about how Paul felt about the idol worship that was happening in Athens versus how he reacted to it. What lesson can you learn from this?
- What words would you use to describe Paul’s attitude toward the Athenians?
- In many ways our culture today is more like that of the Athenians in Acts 17 than the Jews in Acts 2. We can no longer assume that our neighbor, co-worker, or friend has any working or even accurate knowledge of the God of the Bible, Bible stories, or Jesus. How does this affect our approach to people? What can we learn from Paul’s approach and apply it to sharing the gospel with those who live in our “Acts 17” world? What might be some of the ways that you communicate differently to those type of people, as opposed to those who have a good knowledge of the Biblical story?
- We may not have physical statues as idols in our culture as the Athenians did, but what kinds of things do people in our culture tend to worship instead of God? In what ways can you communicate graciously that their idols are false?

Key Verses

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.” ~Acts 17:22-23
Acts 18

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 18. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Where did Paul go when he left Athens?
- Who did Paul meet in Corinth? What is said about them in verses 2-3? What do we learn about Paul?
- According to verse 4, what did Paul do on the Sabbath?

Scriptural Insight: 18:6 “Paul will spend much time with audiences where there is interest and response, even if they don’t immediately believe (see verse 4), but he will not spend time where he simply faces hostile opposition. Shaking garments was a gesture of rejection, much like shaking the dust from one’s feet.” (ESV Study Bible)

- How long did Paul stay in Corinth?
- Why did Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, not make a judgment on Paul when the Jews brought him before a tribunal?
- What did the Jews do when Gallio refused to make a judgment?
- Who stayed in Ephesus when Paul went on to Caesarea?
- According to verse 23, what was Paul doing when he went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia?
- What does chapter 18 reveal about Apollos? From where was he? What was he doing? What do we know about his skills and gifts?
- What do Priscilla and Aquila do to disciple him well?

Applying

- What can we learn from Priscilla and Aquila regarding their correction of Apollos?
- Did Apollos allow the fact that he was not an expert on everything concerning the gospel keep him from teaching about Jesus?
- Have you ever used your lack of knowledge about Scripture as an excuse for not telling people what you do know about Jesus?
- When has someone helped encourage you in ministry, through teaching you, encouraging you, or investing in you in some way?

Key Verses

And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, 3 and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.  ~ Acts 18:2-4
PAUL’S THIRD MISSION  ACTS 18:23 - 21:17  AD 53-57

(1) Syrian Antioch 18:23
(2) Tarsus?
(3) Derbe?
(4) Lystra?
(5) Iconium?
(6) Pisdian Antioch 18:23
(7) Ephesus 19:1
(8) Tarsus?
(9) Neapolis 20:1
(10) Philippi 20:1
(11) Amphipolis 20:1
(12) Apollonia 20:1
(13) Thessalonica 20:1
(14) Berea 20:1
(15) Athens 20:2
(16) Corinith 20:2
(17) Athens 20:2
(18) Berea 20:3
(19) Thessalonica 20:3
(20) Apollonia 20:3
(21) Amphipolis 20:3
(22) Philippi 20:6
(23) Neapolis 20:8
(24) Tarsus 20:8
(25) Assos 20:13
(26) Mitylene 20:14
(27) Chios 20:15
(28) Samos 20:16
(29) Miletus 20:15
(30) Cos 21:1
(31) Rhodes 21:1
(32) Patara 21:1
(33) Tyre 21:3
(34) Ptolemais 21:7
(35) Caesarea 21:8
(36) Jerusalem 21:17
Acts 19

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 19. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Where is Paul in Acts 19?
- What questions does Paul ask the disciples he meets there? What is their response?

Scriptural Insight: “John’s baptism was one of preparation rather than one of fulfillment, as Christian baptism now was... Now that Jesus had come and accomplished his mission on earth, now that he had returned to the Father’s presence and sent to his followers the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, an anticipatory baptism was no longer appropriate or adequate.” (The Book of Acts-New International Commentary, p. 364)

- How long did Paul speak in the synagogue at Ephesus? Why did he stop doing so?
- Where did Paul speak daily after he reasoned that the synagogue was fruitless? How long was he in Ephesus?
- Summarize the events of verses 11-20. How did many of the Ephesians show repentance for dabbling in the “magic arts?” What was the result of this? (verse 20)
- Paul begins to prepare to go to Jerusalem, by way of Macedonia, before heading to Rome in verse 21. Who does he send ahead of him?
- What caused the disturbance with Demetrius the silversmith? Describe the events of verses 23-40 in your own words.
- In verse 37, notice that Paul and his companions could not be accused of being blasphemous or sacrilegious concerning the Ephesians’ beliefs. What sort of thing do you think they would have had to say to be considered blasphemous?

Historical Insight: By weaving the book of Acts together with Paul’s letters, scholars believe that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus; 2 Corinthians from Macedonia; and Romans while in Corinth.

Applying

- Is there anything you need to “burn” in order to give God all of you?
- Success, money, and living only for pleasure are some idols within our culture. Can you think of others? (Think of things that people within our culture allow to guide their lives and keep them from putting God first). How has your faith affected your relationship to idols? What idols do you need to give up?
- What started as Artemis worship became Artemis business. How might Christians fall in the same trap and allow Jesus worship to turn into Jesus business?

Key Verse

This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. ~ Acts 19:10
Acts 20

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 20. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Before departing for Macedonia, what did Paul do?
- How long did Paul spend in Greece?
- What made him return again to Macedonia?
- Recall from Acts 19 what Paul’s ultimate destination really is. Is this trip through the region of Macedonia (which included Berea, Thessalonica, and Philippi) the most direct route?

Scriptural Insight: The story of Eutychus—“The story has a touch of humor and a happy outcome. The etymology of the name Eutychus is ‘lucky, fortunate.’ The ‘many lamps’ (verse 8) and long sermon likely led ‘Lucky’ to seek air in the window, but he fell asleep anyway and fell three stories. Taken up dead (not ‘as dead’) indicates his actual death.” (ESV Study Bible)

- Why did Paul sail past Ephesus?
- Although he sailed just past Ephesus, what did Paul do from Miletus?
- Summarize Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders in 4-5 bullet points.
- According to verses 22-25, what are Paul’s priorities?
- What caused the Ephesian elders the most sorrow when they were saying farewell to Paul (verse 38)?

Applying

- Who receives your spiritual care? How are you preparing them spiritually so they are prepared if you left them?
- Based on his own experience, Paul warns the church to be on guard against threats from both inside and outside the church. What are some specific ways these attacks manifest themselves against the Church today? Divide them into the two categories as Paul did, listed below:

Savage wolves...External attack

Among themselves...Internal corruption

Key Verses

And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, 21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” ~ Acts 20:18-21
Acts 21

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 21. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- List the places and people Paul encountered on his way back to Jerusalem (verses 1-14).
- What was Agabus the prophet’s message to Paul?
- Read Roman 15:22-20; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, and 2 Corinthians 8-9 (which were all written during Paul’s third missionary journey). What was part of the reason for Paul to take this final trip to Jerusalem?
- What pressure do James and the elders face as Paul comes to Jerusalem? Why would Paul’s teaching cause some strict Jews to be upset? (verses 21-26).
- This issue should have been settled around 6 years prior (see chapter 15). Why do you think these tensions still caused problems among believers in Jerusalem?
- How do you see Paul living out what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 and in Acts 21:19-26?
- In verses 27-29, what accusations do the unbelieving Jews bring against Paul?
- Reflect on how far Paul has come and all that has changed since Acts 8:1-3.
- Who stopped the Jews from beating Paul? What did they do next?
- Who did the tribune think Paul was? How did Paul reply? What did the tribune then give him permission to do?

Applying

- In what ways do you see Paul sticking to his mission despite: a) some people asking him to do things that could have caused him to be offended; and b) direct opposition? In what ways can you follow the example of Paul to “stay on mission?”
- How do you decide when you should bend for the sake of others and when you should stand your ground?
- What groups are critical of the church today? How might the church provoke and offend these groups, apart from the gospel message itself? What could be done to lessen the animosity? What can you personally do to help build bridges to the gospel with these groups?

Key Verses

And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” 12 When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, “Let the will of the Lord be done.” ~ Acts 21:11-14
Acts 22

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 22. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- What caused the Jews to be quiet and actually listen to Paul?
- Summarize the story that Paul shares with the Jews.
- This speech retells the events that occur in Acts 9. What points of identification does Paul make with his audience? What is he hoping to achieve?
- What caused the Jews to stop listening to Paul (verse 21)? Why would this offend them more than anything he had previously said?
- What was the real sticking point of the gospel for the Jews? What does that tell you about them?
- What saved Paul from being flogged by the Romans?

Scriptural Insight: “Roman law forbade flogging a Roman citizen without a hearing or a formal sentence (uncondemned). Officers who did this would face serious charges.” (ESV Study Bible)

- Where does the Roman tribune take Paul at the end of chapter 22?

Applying

- Are you prepared to tell your story about how you came to place your faith in Christ and how He has changed you? Summarize your story now.
- How has your faith in Christ redirected your life in surprising ways?
- Paul’s background and experiences, as well as his Roman citizenship, were assets in his efforts to share the gospel with Gentiles. What traits, skills, and experiences do you have that have prepared you to take the gospel to others?

Key Verses

So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.  
30 But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.  ~ Acts 22:29-30
Acts 23

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 23. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Who is Paul specifically addressing at the beginning of Acts 23?
- When Ananias orders others to strike Paul in the mouth, what does Paul call him?
- Read Matthew 23:27. What do Jesus and Paul mean when they call Jewish leaders “whitewashed?”
- Read Leviticus 19:15. Of what was the high priest guilty?
- According to Paul in verse 6, to what is his trial related?
- What caused the Pharisees and Sadducees on the council to become divided?
- How did the “trial” end?
- What is revealed to Paul in verse 11? How is this related to Acts 9:15? Why would Paul have needed encouragement at this time?
- What were more than 40 Jews plotting to do to Paul?
- Who does Paul’s nephew inform about this plot?
- Why would the tribune have been eager to protect Paul?
- Where and to whom did the tribune send Paul?
- What did the governor, Felix, decide to do with Paul?

**Historical Insight:** “Felix was the governor of Judea from A.D. 52-58. A man of weak character, one historian said, ‘He held the power of a tyrant with the disposition of a slave.’ He was recalled to Rome in A.D. 59/60 to answer for disturbances and irregularities in his rule.” (NIV Study Bible)

Applying

- How does this chapter encourage you that God is in control, even when things seem hopeless?
- Think about God’s hand in your life. How have you seen Him protect you and guide you toward His will?
- Ask God to show you His hand in your life.

**Key Verse**

*The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”*  ~ Acts 23:11
Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 24. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Who was the spokesman for Ananias, the high priest before Felix?
- In what ways does Tertullus attempt to flatter Felix?
- Of what crimes is Paul accused?
- Summarize Paul’s response to Tertullus’ accusations.
- What does verse 22 say Felix already knew?
- According to Felix, when was he going to decide the case against Paul?
- Describe Paul’s custody.
- What do we know about Felix’s wife? Why did Felix and his wife come to Paul (verse 24)?
- Why do you think Felix was “alarmed” when Paul talked about Jesus Christ?
- What was at least a partial motive for Felix to call Paul to his presence?
- How much time has passed between the beginning and end of Acts 24? Who succeeded Felix?
- According to verse 27, why did Felix leave Paul in prison? What does this tell you about what Felix probably believed?

Applying

- Describe a time when you were falsely accused because of your faith.
- What can you learn from Paul about the proper way to respond to false accusations?
- What is the difference between being “well acquainted with The Way” and being a true believer? Do you know anyone who is “well acquainted” but has not yet become a believer? How can you be a witness for “The Way” to them?
- What can you learn from Paul’s situation about trusting God to open doors for the communication of the gospel?

Key Verses

“But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.” ~ Acts 24:14-15
Acts 25

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 25. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- What did the chief priests and leaders do immediately when Festus arrived in Jerusalem?
- What was Festus’ response?
- Pay close attention to the types of details Luke uses throughout Acts—names, time frames, places. Why would that be important for his purpose in writing the gospel of Luke and Acts (“that you may have certainty…” [Luke 1:4])?
- Verse 9 says that, like Felix, Festus also desired to appease the Jews. What does that tell you about the pressure Roman governors of Judea felt from Rome?
- How does Paul reply when Festus asks him if he wants a trial in Jerusalem?
- Where does Festus decide to send Paul?
- Who comes to Caesarea and is presented Paul’s case before Paul is sent to Rome?

Scriptural Insight: “Agrippa the king was Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa, and great-grandson of Herod the Great (see…Matt 2)...Bernice was his half sister and constant companion.” (ESV Study Bible)

- What does Festus understand to be a point of dispute between Paul and the Jewish council (verse 19)?
- How does Agrippa respond to Festus’ words about Paul’s case?
- In verse 23, how did Agrippa and Bernice enter?
- What does Festus hope that Agrippa can provide for him?

Applying

- Paul had just spent two years in prison under Felix and now Festus, Felix’s successor, wants to send him back to Jerusalem for a trial. Imagine Paul at that point. Describe a time when you have waited and waited for something that you thought was God’s will.
- What is the proper response to such waiting, when it might seem God has forgotten about you?

Key Verses

“If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.” 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.” ~ Acts 25:11-12
Acts 26

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 26. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- In what ways does Paul show respect to King Agrippa? How does this relate to what he writes in Romans 13:1-7?
- In what ways does Paul attempt to connect with Agrippa, a pious Jew, in verses 4-9?

**Scriptural Insight:** “It went without saying that a faithful Pharisee believed in the resurrection of the dead, and saw no fulfillment of Israel’s ancestral hope apart from the resurrection. But the amazing and indeed absurd feature of the present dispute was that he was being prosecuted for his proclamation of this very hope—and prosecuted by Jews, of all people.” (The Book of Acts—New International Commentary on the New Testament, p.463.)

- What new information is given about Paul’s former life?
- Why do you think Festus believes Paul has lost his mind after Paul tells how he came to be a believer? How does Paul reply to him?
- Paraphrase verse 26.
- How does Agrippa respond when Paul asks him if he believes the prophets (concerning the Messiah)?
- How does Paul reply to Agrippa (verse 29)?
- How does Paul’s appeal to Caesar both fulfill the prophecy in Acts 9:15 and cause him more hardship?

Applying

- In what ways can you demonstrate respect, honor, and concern for the salvation of those who are not believers?
- Have you ever thought about how you might communicate your testimony in various ways to people, depending on their beliefs? How might your testimony change?

Key Verses

“And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?” ~ Acts 26:6-8
Acts 27

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 27. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- What kindness did Julius show Paul (verse 3)?
- What did the centurion decide because he listened to the captain and not to Paul?
- According to Luke, why was all hope abandoned after the storm?
- What does Paul say to the crew in verse 21? How do you think this is related to what he goes on to tell them in verses 22-26?
- What are Paul’s instructions to the crew in chapter 27? In what circumstances do they listen to him?
- What caused the shipwreck?
- Why did the crew seek to kill the prisoners when the ship ran aground?
- What kindness does Julius show Paul in verse 43?
- How many on the ship made it safely to land?

Applying

- What fellow coworkers in Christ have been by your side through thick and thin? How can you show your appreciation to them this week?
- Put yourself in the midst of the storm and the subsequent shipwreck. How might you look at things differently if you did NOT hold to the fact that God is in control?
- What circumstances are in your life for which you need to fully rely on God and remind yourself that He is in control?

Key Verses

“For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on some island.” ~ Acts 27:23-26
Acts 28

Observing and Interpreting

- Read Acts 28. Make note of any key words, repetition, or key themes.
- Where did Paul and the rest of the crew end up after the shipwreck? How were they greeted?
- Almost immediately after being welcomed, what happened to Paul? What did the natives of Malta assume? What were the effects of the snakebite on Paul?
- What did Paul do for Publius, the chief official on the island?
- Besides healings, what did Paul almost certainly do on Malta, although it is not mentioned here?
- How long were they in Malta?
- Describe Paul’s “imprisonment” once they arrived in Rome.

> **Scriptural Insight:** “Paul’s party was met by Roman Christians at two points along the way to Rome—the Forum (or ‘marketplace’) of Appius, some 40 miles...from Rome, and 12 miles...farther on at Three Taverns. Paul had written his epistle to the Roman church three years earlier, and, though he had not personally visited Rome, his greetings at the end of Romans (Rom 16:1-16) show that he already had many acquaintances in the church there.” (ESV Study Bible)

- How do the leaders of the Jews in Rome welcome Paul when he calls a meeting with them?
- How would you summarize what Paul preached to them?
- What did Paul say that caused them to depart?
- What did Paul continue to do for two years after this confrontation with the Jews?

> **Historical Insight** “What happened after this two-year captivity? Perhaps no charges were filed in Rome and Paul was released. Probably Paul returned to the provinces of Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia and then turned west to Spain according to his original plans. Then he administered once more in the Aegean area where he was taken prisoner, removed to Rome, and executed.” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 431)

Applying

- In what situations and relationships (with unbelievers) are you tempted to give up proclaiming the gospel? What truths from Acts encourage you to not give up?
- How has Acts shown the activity of the Holy Spirit in regards to the increase in knowledge of God and the increase in numbers in the church? How does this encourage you, knowing that ultimately, the work of the Spirit is behind both the growth of the church and the knowledge of God’s Word? What is your own responsibility? (Hint: See Acts 1:8)

**Key Verses**

*He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,*

**31** *proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.*  ~Acts 28:30-31