

Acts

Objectives and guidelines

- The objective of this study is to give you a foundation of understanding and a thirst to return to this book. Remember that this is an overview and not an exhaustive study.
- To help you grasp the message of the book as a whole.
- To teach you by example how to study a book of the Bible. This is primarily done by learning to ask good questions.
- The questions are to be used as a guideline for studying the selected passage. The purpose of the questions is to stimulate your thinking. Remember that simply answering the questions does not mean that you have finished the study. Rather, your study is complete when you feel that you have a good understanding of what the passage says and what it means for your life. This may involve asking and answering your own questions as well.
- You will notice 3 types of questions. What does it say (observation), what does it mean (interpretation), and how does this truth affect my life (application).
- As you work through the passage remember to pray and ask God to answer your questions. Ask God to show you, "Lord, what do you want me to see here, why is this true, how does this apply to my life?" Try to keep it from becoming just another assignment to complete.
- Each lesson will take between 60 and 90 minutes to complete each week. Try not to do it all at one time. By spreading your study out over a couple of different times during the week, you will allow yourself more time to meditate on the passage and the questions that arise.
- Budget your time. Some studies are longer than others. Get the overview first by considering all the questions, and then if you have time left go back to the section or questions that most interest you.
- Be sure to write down your answers. Writing will help you to clarify your thinking and help you to remember and then share what you have learned.
- The purpose of the group meeting is to share what you have discovered about the passage and how it applies to your life and circumstances. Please come prepared to do this.
- Memorizing a key verse from the passage will help you to remember what you have learned in that lesson.

Lesson 1 Acts Overview and Chapter 1:1-7

Overview - What is Acts?

While God has given 4 accounts of the life of Jesus, we only have one book of the early years of the church. It is called the Acts of the Apostles but in fact it tells us only selected things about a few of the apostles. If Acts is not a complete history of the Church's first 3 decades, then what is it?

Most scholars date the book as written between 62-70 AD.

1. Read Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2. What can you learn about this book and who wrote it? If the gospel of Luke is about "all that Jesus began to do and to teach", what is Acts probably about?

2. What do these verses have in common, and what progression do you see?
Acts 1:8,14, 2:41, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20 and 28:31. What does this pattern tell you about Acts?

Note: Acts does not record all that Jesus did through the apostles. Luke focuses on one line of geographical expansion: from Jerusalem to Rome. Luke is not concerned with the apostles biographies. He begins with the apostles in Jerusalem, then ignores them to focus on Peter and two 'newcomers'. Luke does not focus on the organization, structure, lifestyle or worship practices of the early church. While these are mentioned, they are not the main theme. So what is the main theme? Maybe you will be able to answer this by the end of this study!

3. One main character dominates the whole of Acts. Who is it and what are some of his effects? See 1:8, 2:4, 4:8,31, 8:39, 9:31, 13:4, 15:28, 16:6-10, 20:22-24, 21:10,11.

4. From your observations so far, what seem to be the central themes, messages or purposes of Acts?

5. From what you know about Acts at this point, what title would you give the book and why? Would you pick any of these? Why or why not?

- Acts of the Apostles
- Acts of the Holy Spirit
- Expansion of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome
- The reluctance of the Apostles to obey the great commission.
- The first 30 years of the church
- The work of Jesus after His resurrection

6. Familiarize yourself with the time line and map before you continue.

Time line of Acts

(All dates are approximate, based on F.F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, page 475.)

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection; Pentecost	30 AD
Martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 6:8-8:1)	33
Conversion of Paul (Acts 9:1-19)	33
Paul visits Jerusalem to see Peter (Galatians 1:18)	35
Paul in Cilicia and Syria (Galatians 1:21, Acts 9:30)	35-46
Herod Agrippa I dies (Acts 12:19-23)	44
Paul visits Jerusalem to clarify the mission to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:1-10)	46
Paul and Barnabas in Cyprus and Galatia (Acts 13-14)	47-48
Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15)	49
Paul and Silas travel from Antioch to Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia (Acts 16-17)	49-50
Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18)	50-52
Paul travels to Macedonia, Dalmatia, and Achaia (Acts 20)	55-57
Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-23:22)	May 57
Paul imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 23:23-26:32)	57-59
Paul sent to house arrest in Rome (Acts 27:1-28:31)	59-62

Map of the Roman Empire

Acts Chapter 1:1-7

Read the chapter in at least 2 translations before beginning the questions.

1. What title would you give to each of these two sections?

Acts 1:1-11 _____

1:12-26

2. What do you think was the purpose of the 40 days Jesus spent with His disciples after the resurrection? 1:2-5

- Why is the fact of Jesus' physical resurrection so important at this time? Is it just as important today?

3. What did the apostles expect would happen with the arrival of the Holy Spirit? 1:4-6

What is your current understanding of the kingdom of God? What is it, where is it, who, when ...?

4. What does Jesus say we need to know and not know about His return? 1:7 (also see Luke 21:8-9, 34-36 and Acts 1:11)

- Don't need to know ...

- Need to know ...

Lesson 2 The Coming of the Spirit Acts 1:8 - 2:13

1. What does Jesus say will be the result of the Holy Spirit's coming? 1:8

1b What evidences are commonly used today as proof of the Holy Spirit's presence? Is there a problem or discrepancy with this in your opinion?

2. Does 1:8 apply to you? If not, why not? If so, how would this shape the look and direction of your life?

3. 120 disciples are given the task of being witnesses to 4 million Jews in Palestine (1 in 30,000 were Christians) and told to evangelize the whole world. How do you think you would feel?

3b What promise does Jesus give them? How is it similar to the one in Mt 28:20? How would this encourage them? How does it affect or encourage you?

3c What role has Jesus' Great commission played in the lives of the apostles to this point? Had they forgotten about it or were they just powerless to fulfill it?

Note: Application in Acts. Because Acts is a narrative (a true story) it teaches us mainly by example, not directly as the Gospels and Epistles do. Because this is a unique period in history, not everything in Acts sets an example that we should imitate. Acts records what did happen, not necessarily what should have happened or what always should happen. To apply Acts to our lives sensibly, we need to distinguish when Luke is describing an example we should follow; when he is describing an example we may follow; and when he is giving details to portray the overall message rather than exact models for us. One clue to this distinction is that primary patterns recur whereas specific details vary. As you study watch for examples of this. One example in Chapter 1 is the casting of lots to make a decision. Keep this question in mind: When is a practice in Acts a norm we should follow, when is it an option we should consider, and when is it unique to the time?

4. How did Peter describe the chief function of an apostle? 1:22 What are the qualifications of such a person? 1:21-22

Note: **apostle** Literally “one who is sent” - a messenger, ambassador. “A person acting with full authority for another” in a business or legal transaction. The early church eventually recognized other believers as apostles in some senses: Paul 14:14, Barnabas, James the brother of Jesus Gal 1:19, and perhaps Andronicus and Junias Rom 16:7.

5. Memorize a key verse from this passage. Try 1:8 if you don't already know it! Write it here.

Note: **Pentecost** - the fiftieth day after the Sabbath of Passover week. Same as Feast of Weeks or Harvest or Firstfruits. In Jesus' time, Pentecost “was associated with the renewal of the covenant made with Noah and then with Moses...” Forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus left His disciples with a mission and a promise. For 10 more days the believers prayed together and prepared. Then came the Jewish feast of Pentecost.

6. Why do you think it was appropriate that the events of Acts 2:1-13 occurred on Pentecost? (see Jeremiah 31:31-34, Rom 7:6 or 2 Cor 3:6)

Note: **wind, fire** - are common biblical symbols for the presence of God 's Spirit. (2 Sam 22:16, Ez 37:9,14, Jn 3:8....Ex 3:2, 19:18, Lk 3:16) The Greek word pneuma and the Hebrew ruach mean both “wind” and “spirit.”

7. How did God sovereignly arrange the details surrounding the arrival of and proof that the Spirit had arrived? What significance does this have in light of Acts 1:8?

8. How do you know if you have been filled with the Spirit? Rom 8:9,10, Eph 1:13,14

8b. What are some evidences of being Spirit filled? Acts 1:8, Rom 8:5-8, 1 Cor 12:3-7, Gal 5:23,24

9. Review the questions and answers in this lesson. Is there one specific truth that you can take to heart, or some action or prayer you would like to make during the coming week?

Lesson 3 Peter Shares the Good News Acts 2:14 - 3:26

1. Outline Peter's speech by giving titles to each section.

:14-21

:33-35

:22-24

:36

:25-32

:37-40

2. Peter says that the babble of languages is a sign of something greater than drunkenness. What does the sign demonstrate?

3. What was the crucial event of Jesus' career and what did it prove? 2:24,36 (pay special attention to the "therefore" in :36)

Note: **Christ** means Messiah promised by the Scriptures. **Lord...Lord** 2:34 Hebrew uses 2 different words. The first Lord is YHWH, the name of God too holy to be pronounced by the Jews, the second Lord is Adon which means "lord" or "master".

Note: **Old Testament Quotations** in Acts - why are they different from what is in my Bible? There are a couple of reasons; NT writers and speakers often give a "general sense" of a passage rather than quoting it word for word, they often quote from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT which was used by many Jews in Jesus' day, and the NT writers sometimes enlarged, abbreviated, adapted, or combined OT passages to make their point. The Holy Spirit has inspired these adaptations just as He has inspired the rest of the NT.

3. Why didn't Peter have to prove that Jesus had done miracles? 2:22 How can this fact help us to convince people today that Jesus did miracles?

4. Why does Peter mention God's plan and foreknowledge in 2:23? Why is it important for us to remember?

Note: **Repent** - "The word indicates a change of direction in a person's life rather than simply a mental change of attitude or a feeling of remorse." Since man is incapable of this alone, it is called a gift from God in Acts 5:31, 11:18. Repentance "is an essential part of conversion."

5. What does Peter say one must do in order to be saved? 2:38 What does God promise to do as a result?

5b Is Peter preaching that baptism is necessary in order to be saved? If not, what is the role of baptism?

6. Peter used the Scriptures which the Jews already accepted to support his claims. Would this approach work with your friends? Why? If not, what beliefs that you already hold in common could you use to draw them toward examining the Scriptures?

7. Summarize what Peter asks the Jews to believe, do and reasons why.

truths to believe (2:21-24, 31-33, 36,39)

actions to do (2:21, 38)

reasons why (2:20-21, 38, 40)

8. Is Peter's speech in 2:14-40 a model for our evangelism in any way? How?

9. Read Acts 3. In what ways is this chapter similar to what happens in Acts 2?

10. What purposes did the physical healing serve? Why didn't they just give him money or share the gospel with him? Was there any historical doubt that a miracle had occurred? 4:16

11. Even if you haven't performed any miracles like this, what other evidence can you show for the validity of your message and faith?

12. Why is it important for us that the apostles did not need their own power or exceptional godliness to heal the beggar? 3:12

13. How did Peter describe Jesus? 3:13-15, 22 (Optional: look up some cross references on these titles of Jesus) Which of these descriptions is most meaningful to you right now and why?

14. What truths seem most significant to you from these chapters? What implications does it have for your life? How does it make you want to change or respond?

Lesson 4 Confrontation and Community

Confrontation - Acts 4:1-31, 5:12-42

1. What happens in these two passages? Briefly summarize. How are these events connected to 3:1-26?

2. How does Peter defend their actions? (see 4:14,16, 19, 20)

2b What principles for Christian behavior before authorities do they exemplify?

2c When is it OK for Christians to disobey human authorities? Have you ever faced any modern day equivalents to this?

3. How do the believers respond to the threats against them? 4:23-31 What do they confess about God (write down as many observations as you can)?

3b What do they ask God to do? What don't they ask God to do (why don't they pray for protection)?

4. In 5:32 it is stated that the apostles and the Holy Spirit were witnesses to Jesus. The apostles were testifying to these facts through preaching and miracles. How was the Holy Spirit witnessing to Jesus' identity?

4b What does this tell you about your role and God's in witnessing about Jesus?

5. How did the apostles respond to their sufferings? What do you think was the key to their being able to respond in this way?

Community Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-5:11, and 6:1-7

Between the landmark events in the growth of the Jerusalem church, Luke inserts bits of information concerning the inner life of the church. As you study these passages, think about how your church experience compares to what you see here.

2:42-47

1. How can we devote ourselves to “the apostles’ teaching” today?

1b Why is it important that we do this together?

2. How can you devote yourself to “the fellowship”? What are some specific ways that you could do this?

3. What other details of the early life of the church do you observe in 2:42-47? What other things were they “devoted” to?

4:32-37

4. These early believers expressed their devotion by taking responsibility for each other’s needs. To what extent do you believe this is a model we should follow?

5. How was this generosity related to 4:33?

5:1-11

6. Exactly what was Ananias’s sin?

6b What do you think might have motivated him to do this?

6c What do you think God was trying to teach the early church through this tragedy? What do you think might have happened if God had not judged this sin?

6:1-7

7. Are there any lessons we can learn from this passage that are relevant to us today?

8. Review your study. What stands out to you? What do you think God may be trying to teach you?

Lesson 5 First martyr (6:8-8:3) and Philip's Journey (8:4-40)

First Martyr 6:8-8:3

1. What were the accusations brought against Stephen? Were they true? 6:11,13,14

2. Stephen answered the charges and gave his testimony in 7:2-53. What patterns in Jewish history did Stephen trace through Joseph 7:9-16, Moses :17-39, and Jesus :51-52? What was similar about these men and their experiences with the Jews.
(see 7:9-10, 25-29, 35-39, 51-52)

3. What did Stephen imply was wrong with the Jews' attitude toward the Temple 7:48-50?
 - 3b. The Jews thought their Temple in Jerusalem was the holiest place on earth. How did Stephen's account of Israel's history subtly explode that myth? 7:2,9,30-34,36,38

 - 3c. Can you think of anything that we might idolize today the way the Jews idolized their interpretation of the Law and the Temple?

4. Stephen not only answered the charges against him, he responded with charges of his own. What were they? 7:51-53

5. Stephen's words in 7:55-56 moved his audience to riot and stone him for blasphemy. Why?

6. Why do you think God allowed Stephen to die when the charges brought against him in the first place were false? How did the ensuing persecution of the Hellenistic Jewish Christians in Jerusalem serve God's purposes for the Church? 1:8, 8:1,4
(Also see 7:58,60; 8:1,3; 9:1-6)

7. What lessons does 6:8-8:3 offer?

Sins of the Jews to avoid? (Any ways in which we take pride in God's Word but disobey it 7:53? Do we ever try to box God into our traditions?)

Philip's Journeys 8:4-40

1. In 8:4-25 who is evangelized, convinced and baptized?
2. What do the Jews think about these people (John 4:9)?
3. Look at 8:4. Where do you think "those who were scattered" got the idea to do this?
4. How is this group's conversion significant to the progress of the gospel?
5. What convinces this group to become believers? 8:6-8,12

5b How can we convince people to believe today? What do we have to validate our message?

6. What is the apostles role in bringing this group into the church? 8:14-17 Do you think this is a normative pattern that we should still follow today? Why or why not?

6b. Why do you think it was important for God to use the apostles to demonstrate officially that Samaritans were true participants in the Church? Why wasn't Philip's confirmation enough in this case?

7. Why do you think Luke recorded the episode with Simon? What does it add to the story of Acts?

7b Do you think that some people believe in Jesus today with wrong motives? What are some of these? How should we respond to someone like this?

8. Read 8:26-40 What lessons concerning evangelism can be learned from this passage?

9. How is this person's conversion significant to the progress of the gospel?

10. What role do the apostles take in this situation? Why is this important?

11. What can you learn about God's will and how He guides us from this chapter? Why did God give special guidance for the eunuch?

12. How is this section relevant to your life? What sins to avoid, examples to follow, or truth about God does it offer?

Lesson 6 Saul Appointed (9:1-31, 11:19-30)

Peter Moves Out (9:32-11:18)

Philip disappears from the stage of Acts except for a short appearance 25 years later in 21:8. Luke now shifts the focus to the young Pharisee Saul, whom we left in 8:3 arresting Christians on a house to house search. Read 9:1-30 and 11:19-30 and try to imagine that you are present at these events.

In the following questions you will find references to Acts 22 and 26 where Paul retells the story of his conversion and includes other details.

1. What did Paul learn about ... who Jesus is (9:4-5,20,22; 22:14)?

1b ... what his own mission was going to be (9:15-16,20-30; 22:14-16; 26:16-18)?

2. What roles did Stephen, Ananias, and Barnabas have in Saul's reconciliation with God and His people? What did they do, how did God use them?

Stephen 7:60-8:1

Ananias 9:10-17

Barnabas 9:26-27

2b What does this teach you about how God uses people? How can we apply this to our own life?

3. Do you think that the Jerusalem disciples' feelings in 9:26 were reasonable? What can learn from Barnabas? 9:27, 4:36, 11:25,26

3b Why do you think Barnabas sent for Paul and actually went himself to find him?

4. What do you think are the evidences of the grace of God that might have been observed in Antioch? 11:23 Are any of these evident in your own life?

5. Name at least 3 results of Stephen's death? 8:4,5; 8:3 and 9:1-30; 11:19,20

Peter Moves Out (read 9:32-11:18)

1. In 9:32-43, who does Peter attribute the healing to? What was the result?

2. What was the immediate lesson of Peter's trance vision in 10:9-16?

2b After the messengers from Cornelius came, what further application of the vision was apparent to Peter? 10:17-29 What was still confusing to Peter? 10:29

2c When Peter observed Cornelius' manner and heard the account of the angel's message, what did Peter then realize? 10:34,35

2d What various means did God use to teach Peter something that he could have already known from the Old Testament Scriptures concerning God's acceptance of people from all nations? What does this tell you about how God may want to teach you?

3. Why do you think God went through all this trouble for Cornelius to hear the gospel (a vision, an angel, 4 days)? Why didn't the angel just tell Cornelius the gospel? What can we learn from this?

4. Peter says that, "God accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." (10:35) Does this sound like salvation by works? Why or why not in the context of the whole story? (especially 10:22,33,43-48)

5. Peter's speech to this Gentile household differed in several ways from what he said to Jewish audiences. What key points did he make and how might we use these same points with our nonChristian friends?

6. What unprecedented thing happened in the middle of Peter's speech? What did this signify? Why were Peter's fellow Jewish believers so astonished? 10:45

7. What was Peter criticized for when he returned to Jerusalem? 11:1-3 How does Peter defend his actions? What is the importance of the conclusion that they come to? 11:18

8. The early disciples culture and traditions blinded them to the truth of God's Word, that He shows no partiality. 10:34 In a similar way, do we ever show partiality in our own hearts toward people with certain ethnic, economic, social, political, or educational backgrounds?

9. How has God spoken to you?

Lesson 7 To Asia Minor Acts 12:1-13:52

1. What do you think is the main theme of Chapter 12?
2. God saved Peter from being executed by Herod but He allowed James to die. What conclusions can we draw from these facts about:

God's sovereignty

Persecution

Prayer

Deliverance

3. Do you think that Herod's death and its aftermath teaches a lesson? If so, what is it?
4. What role did worship, fasting, and prayer play in the calling and sending of the first missionaries? 13:1-3 What role do these play in your life? Should this be different?
5. What was Paul's strategy in proclaiming the gospel in these new places? Why did they go to the synagogues first? Were they showing favoritism?

6. Summarize the Holy Spirit's role in 13:1-52.

7. What are some characteristics and tactics of Satan seen in this passage? 13:4-12

8. Try outlining the major points of Paul's message.

13:16-41

13:16-19

13:20-22

13:23-25

13:26-31

13:32-37

13:38-39

8b What does Paul seem to focus on the most during his message? Why do you think he does this?

8c Should we also make this our focus when sharing our faith?

9. In Acts 13:47, Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6, which was originally addressed to the Servant of the Lord or Messiah. Why can Paul apply the Servant's commission to himself and Barnabas? Is this a misuse of Scripture, quoting something out of context and applying it to oneself? Why or why not? What implications does this have for us? Can we also claim this same promise?

10. Write down one or more insights from this study that apply to your life. How can you begin to put one of these insights into practice with prayer and/or action this week?

Lesson 8 Acts 14:1-15:35 Gentile Christians

1. The Lystrians reacted to the healing of the lame man like typical rural pagans of that time (14:8-13). What do you learn from this incident about the religious beliefs of those people - the assumptions that Paul and Barnabas had to overcome? (List as many observations as you can.)

2. Acts 14:15-17 gives us our first example of what Paul and Barnabas preached to purely Gentile audiences, as opposed to Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers. In addition to proclaiming Jesus, what did the apostles have to explain to pagans that they didn't have to say to Jews and God-fearers?

2b What do your nonChristians friends need to understand about God before they can begin to understand the gospel? Would you start like Paul did here or with something else?

3. What does 14:19-20 tell you about Paul's character?

4. From the following verses, summarize the key features of Paul's missionary strategy on this trip: 13:14,46; 14:1-6, 21-23.

5. Despite all the hardships on their trip, what was Paul and Barnabas' verdict when they reported back to the church in Antioch? 14:26,27

Note: Council at Jerusalem (15:1-35) “Two key issues were at stake here: 1) Does God still require His covenant people to keep the Law of Moses (and the oral tradition)? and 2) Even if the Law is just a cultural preference for Jewish Christians, should Gentile Christians keep it anyway in order to keep peaceful fellowship? Jewish believers were partly concerned not to put barriers in the way of converting fellow Jews. Gentile believers, of course, were concerned not to hinder Gentiles.”

6. How did the Church handle this major dispute between some Jewish believers and the Antiochene Christians? 15:2,6,12,22-30

7. Why did Peter support the Antiochene position? List his key reasons in 16:6-11.

8. What evidence did Paul and Barnabas offer to defend their view that Gentiles could be saved without becoming Jews? 15:4,12

9. James was by now a leader of the Jerusalem congregation and known for his conservative Jewish practice (Gal 2:11-12) What convinced James that Paul was right about the Gentiles and the Law? Acts 15:13-19

10. What did the council decide was necessary for salvation? 15:9-11 What restrictions were made? Are we still bound by these restrictions? Which ones? (Need help: see Rom 14:1-4, 13-23)

11. What lessons or principles can be made from this passage for how to resolve conflict among Christians?

Lesson 9 Acts 15:36-17:15 Paul and Silas

1. Whose idea was the first missionary journey? 13:2 ...the second journey? 15:36
2. Why did Paul return to churches he had already founded? What did he do there, and why were those things important? 15:41, 16:4-5
3. Does disagreeing and parting company have to lead to anger and broken fellowship? Consider how Paul felt about Barnabas and Mark after parting from them. (See 1 Cor 9:1-7, Col 4:10, Philemon 24, 2 Tim 4:11) What do you learn about fellowship?

Note: Paul circumcised Timothy to accommodate Jewish culture in order to make him more effective in ministering to fellow Jews. (Timothy was raised a Jew but had a Greek father so he had not been circumcised as a child) Paul refused to circumcise Titus because he was a Gentile and Paul wanted to affirm the principle that Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to be Christian. Gal 2:1-5

4. Why do you think the missionaries traveled in teams? Why did they always seem to take along less experienced youths like Mark and Timothy? Consider 2 Tim 2:2. Is there a principle we can apply?

Note: Familiarize yourself with the geography and cities mentioned in this passage. Look up the cities in a Bible dictionary. **Macedonia** - a Roman province north of Greece. **Philippi** - this city was a prominent Roman colony along the Egnatian Way (the Roman road that connected Rome with Asia) It was filled with retired military men and few Jews had settled there. Although a synagogue could be formed with just 10 circumcised adult males, there was only a place of prayer in the city. **Amphipolis** 17:1 A city one day's travel on horseback west of Philippi on the Egnatian Way. Apollonia was 27 miles further, and Thessalonica was another 35 miles further west. Paul and Silas passed over the former two cities (by the Spirit's guidance or human planning?) to concentrate their evangelistic efforts on Thessalonica. **Thessalonica** was a port city and the seat of Roman government in Macedonia and therefore the largest city in the province.

5. In what ways does the Holy Spirit guide and direct people in this passage? What patterns do you see?

5b Has God ever guided you by closing doors 16:6 or by direct leading 16:9? If so, name an example or two. If not, how does He guide you, if at all?

5c How did the missionaries make decisions when the Spirit did not give direct guidance? For example, they concluded that God had called them to Macedonia, but how did they decide which city to go to first in Macedonia? 16:11,12; 17:1, 10

5d Some Christians feel they would be more obedient to God if they had direct guidance from him, such as visions. In Acts, does God normally guide through visions? In what situations does He choose to use visions and in when does He prefer other methods?

5e What lessons can you learn about how to be more responsive to the Spirit as He guides and directs your life and decisions.

6. Why was it necessary for God to open Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message? 16:14

6b What significance does this fact have for you personally, in your evangelism and in your prayers?

7. Bloody and battered in the stocks of a lightless prison, Paul and Silas spent the night "praying and singing hymns to God" 16:23-25. Why do you think they did this? (For instance, what attitudes toward self, God, circumstances, the other prisoners, or the jailer do these actions show?)

8. Why do you think they didn't just leave submissively? What principles for dealing with authority do their actions suggest? 16:35-39

9. In response to the gospel, Jason and Lydia both invited missionaries to stay in their homes. 16:15, 17:7 What kinds of trouble and expense were they risking by doing this? 16:20-22, 17:5-9

9b What can Lydia and Jason teach us about Christian fellowship?

10. How did the Berean Jews respond differently to Paul's message than the Thessalonian Jews did? 17:5,11 How can we imitate the Bereans today?

11. If you were Paul and Silas, would you consider this journey a success in light of all that they had to endure? Would you question at all whether or not your "Macedonian vision" was really from God or just a mistake? Why or why not?

Lesson 10 Acts 17:16-18:23 Athens and Corinth

1. How did Paul end up in Athens? (Review from last week) Was this his plan?

2. If you have a Bible dictionary, find out what you can about Epicurean and Stoic philosophies. Here is a short summary:

Epicurean - followers of Epicurus (341-270 BC) who taught:

- Everything that exists is made of particles of matter called “atoms.”
- Therefore, there is no immortal soul; when you die, your atoms disintegrate and form other objects.
- Therefore you do not need to fear death or punishment after death.
- the gods, too, are made of matter and live undisturbed by concern for mankind or worldly affairs, therefore you don't need to fear or pray to the gods.
- the highest good for a person is “peace of mind, freedom from disturbing cares.”

Stoic - this group was founded by Zeno (335-263 BC). Stoics believed that:

- man is completely a part of and a microcosm of nature, therefore the best way to live is in harmony with nature.
- self sufficiency is the highest human virtue.
- god is not a person, but rather the soul of the universe and a spark in each thing.
- the soul survives when the body dies but it becomes part of the world soul.

2b Contrast what Paul said with what the Epicurean and Stoics believed?

3. How does Luke describe Athens? 17:16,21

3b What did the cultured men think of Paul and why? 17:18,32

3c Why was Paul able to face those men confidently? (Optional: see 1 Cor 1:18-31)

4. When invited to speak to the prestigious Areopagus, what did Paul say about...

- the nature, character, and attributes of God?

- the nature of man?

- idols?

- Jesus?

5. What do you think was the purpose of Paul's opening words? 17:22-23

5b Why did he quote Greek poets that philosophers liked? 17:28

5c Why did he discuss the nature of God rather than the identity of Jesus?

6. Why do you think Paul addressed the Athenians differently than Jews? (What principle of evangelism was he practicing, and why is it important?)

6b. What other principles of evangelism does Paul demonstrate in Athens?

Corinth 18:1-17

7. What do you think Paul meant when he said, "I am clear of my responsibility?" 18:6 At what point do we stop trying to share the gospel with a person?

8. What did God promise Paul while in Corinth? 18:9-10 How did he respond? 18:11 How did God keep His promise? 18:12-17

9. Does God still use secular officials to further the gospel as He did in 18:2, 14-16? If so, how?

10. What do the events of 18:1-17 tell you about God?

11. Describe at least one way in which this study is relevant to your life. Is there a promise, an example, or an insight about God that you might take to heart?

Lesson 11 Acts 18:24-20:38 Ephesus

Note: **Ephesus** was the most important city in western Asia minor. Because it had a harbor and was the intersection of major trade routes it became a commercial center. It boasted a pagan temple dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana. When Paul passed through Ephesus on his way to Antioch and Jerusalem, he left Priscilla and Aquila there to begin building the church.

1. Both Apollos and the disciples Paul met had similar gap in their information about the gospel. What did they not know? 18:25, 19:2,3
2. Why was it essential to be baptized in the name of Jesus, not just for repentance as John had done? (see Romans 6:3-11)
3. From what you know about the people of Ephesus (19:17-20), can you think of a reason why God worked healings and exorcisms through Paul? 19:11-12 Explain?
4. Why couldn't Jesus' name be invoked to magically cast out demons (19:13-16)? What else is necessary for the name to be effective?
5. Exactly what is wrong with magic? Why do you think God abhors it so much?
6. Why was it important for the Ephesians to burn their magical scrolls? 19:17-20 Is there anything you should destroy or get rid of?
7. What good resulted from the miraculous healings in Ephesus?
 - 7b. What are some possible drawbacks of a ministry that overemphasized miracles? How did Paul keep his ministry in balance?

Note: the temple dedicated to Artemis of the Ephesians was known as one of the seven wonders of the world.

8. Why were the Ephesian silversmiths against Paul? 19:23-27

8b How was this reason similar to the opposition they faced in Philippi? 16:16-21

9. Do economic interests set any groups against the gospel today? If so, give an example.

10. What protected Paul from the violence of the mob? 19:31, 35-41

11. In light of this episode (19:37-40) and the one in Corinth (18:12-17), explain why Paul and Peter considered it so important that Christians carefully obey the civil laws.
(Rom 13:1-7, 1 Pet 2:13-17)

12. In the events of 20:1-38, how did the various believers show fellowship/partnership/communion with each other? What feeling did they express, and how?

20:1-6

20:7-12

20:13-38

13. What actions and attitudes had Paul practiced as a model for Christian leaders?
(20:17-27, 33-35)

14. What warning and command did Paul repeat? (20:28-31)

14b What would protect the elders in the face of this danger? 20:32

15. What does God want you to learn and/or do as a result of this study?

Lesson 12 Acts 21:1- 23:11 To Jerusalem

To Jerusalem 21:1-16

1. Why was Paul going to Jerusalem? 20:22, 24:17

2. The Holy Spirit repeatedly warned Paul both internally and through prophets that danger waited in Jerusalem (20:22-25, 21:4, 10-13). Why do you think the Holy Spirit warned Paul about this? With what attitude did Paul respond to these warnings? 20:24, 21:13

2b While all agreed that the Holy Spirit promised suffering in Jerusalem, there was disagreement as to what Paul should do in light of these warnings. Why didn't Paul heed the prophetic warnings given to him? Should he have gone? What can we learn about how to deal with conflict regarding the Spirit's leading?

Arrest in Jerusalem 21:17-23:11

3. Why did the leaders of the Jerusalem church want Paul to participate in the vow?
21:20-25 How did they believe this would serve the gospel?

4. What might have been some of Paul's reasons for doing as these believers asked? (Do 1 Cor 9:19-23 and Romans 14:13-15:3)

5. What can 21:17-26 teach us about dealing with differences within the church today?

5b Can you think of any present day conflicts within the church or your fellowship to which you can apply these principles? What are they?

6. Paul called his speech a “defense”. Summarize what he said to the Jews in 22:1-21.

7. How did Paul shape his speech to appeal to the Jews? 21:40-22:21

8. What made the Jews interrupt with rage? 22:21

8b What might make students on this campus react in the same way to an evangelist? What aspects of the gospel seem offensive to people today?

9. For what 3 important things had God chosen Paul? 22:14

9b To what extent have you been chosen for these?

10. Paul might have known that 22:21 would infuriate the Jews. Why do you think he risked his life to say 22:6-21, instead of just refuting the charge of defiling the Temple? (see Rom 9:1-5, 10:1)

11. What do you think was the purpose of the promise in 23:11? What does it tell you about the Lord? How God ever done this for you? If so, describe a time.

12. What one truth from this passage would you like to take to heart this week? How can you apply it?

Lesson 13 Prisoner in Caesarea Acts 23:11- 26:32

1. In 23:11, God promised Paul that he would testify about Him in Rome. How much time passed before this actually happens? Check your time line and 24:27. Would this have discouraged you to have to wait so long for God to fulfill His promise?

1b Do you think this was “wasted” time? What evidence do you see that God was sovereign over this time just as much as when he was establishing new churches?

1c What lessons can you learn about waiting?

2. Consider the lengths to which the Jewish fanatics were willing to go to silence Paul. 23:12-15 What human and divine factors prevented them? 23:16-30

3. How did Paul refute each of Tertullus’s charges against him?

making trouble, inciting dissension 24:11-13, 17-18

leading a new and unlawful sect 24:14-16

desecrating the Temple 24:11-13, 17-21

4. Put yourself in Paul’s place in 24:23-26. Would you have tried to raise money to buy your way out of prison, or would you have continued to wait and preach to Felix. What does this tell you about Paul and yourself?

5. How did Paul's expectation of resurrection and possible judgment affect him? 24:15-16

5b Why was it so important to Paul to keep a clear conscience before God and man? 23:1, 24:16 Is this important to you? Is so, how do you do it?

5c How did this idea affect Felix? 24:25 Why do you think the prospect of judgment affected these men so differently?

6. Lysias, Felix and Festus all knew that Paul had broken no Roman laws. Why didn't they free him?

7. Do you think Paul should have appealed to Caesar or simply trusted God to protect him in Jerusalem? Why?

Agrippa 25:13-26:32

8. What did Paul think was the issue for which he was being held prisoner? 26:6-8

9. Summarize the message Paul gave to Agrippa. 26:2-23

10. Why do you think Paul so often told about his conversion in his defenses? Why was this a good evangelistic technique?

11. How does Paul set an example for you as a Christian in 23:12-26:32? (Consider especially 24:10-26, 25:8-11, 26:1-29)

12. Acts 26:17,18 describes what Jesus will do for people. What must they do in response?
26:20 How can you also do this?

13. What do you think God wants you to learn or do as a result of this study?

Lesson 14 Journey to Rome; Review Acts 27:1-28:31

1. What did Paul say and do during his trip to Rome?

27:9,10

27:21-26

27:30-32

27:33-36

28:1-6

28:7-10

2. What can you learn about Paul from his comments and actions (his gifts, character, beliefs, attitudes toward people, view of God, etc.)?

2b Why do you think Paul, a prisoner, came to have such an influential role (adviser to the ship's captain, the centurion, encouraged of the crew and passengers) during the trip?

2c How is Paul an example to us? What would you like to imitate in your own life?

Paul Preaches in Rome 28:17-31

3. Why did Paul address the Jews when he got to Rome? (see Acts 13:46, Rom 1:16)

4. What did he say to them first? 28:17-20

5. When they agreed to hear him further, what did Paul then discuss with them? 28:23
6. What was the point of the prophecy from Isaiah that Paul quoted? 28:25-29
7. How did Paul spend his time awaiting trial? 28:30-31
8. Why do you think Luke wrote so little about the church in Rome? How did his choice of information in 28:17-31 serve his overall plan for Acts?

8b Why do you think Luke ended Acts where he did? What does this tell you about the theme of Acts?

Review - do your best to answer the following summary questions.

1. From your study of Acts, what would you say the Church is?
2. What is the Church's mission?
3. Summarize in a few sentences the Christian message - who Jesus is, what He has done and how we should respond.
4. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in Acts? In your own life?

5. What has Acts taught you about Christian fellowship or partnership?

6. Have you learned any other important lessons from Acts? If so, explain.