The Book of Acts

**Student Copy**

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Table of Contents

Week 1: Overview

Week 2: You Will Be My Witnesses (Acts 1:1-26)

Week 3: Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47)

Week 4: Growing Witness and Opposition (Acts 3:1-5:42) Part I

Week 5: Growing Witness and Opposition (Acts 3:1-5:42) Part II

Week 6: Stephen (Acts 6:1-7:60)

Week 7: Saul (Acts 8:1-9:31) – Part I

Week 8 Saul (Acts 8:1-9:31) – Part II

Week 9: The Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:32-12:25) Part I

Week 10: The Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:32-12:25) Part II

Week 11: Paul and Barnabas Are Sent (Acts 13:1-14:28)

Week 12: The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35)

Week 13: Paul’s Second and Third Missionary Journeys (Acts 15:36-21:16) Part I

Week 14: Paul’s Second and Third Missionary Journeys (Acts 15:36-21:16) Part 2

Week 15: Paul’s Second and Third Missionary Journeys (Acts 15:36-21:16) Part 3

Week 16: The Gospel Goes to Rome (Acts 21:17-28:31)

Week 17: The Prisoner (Acts 23-28)

Week 18: Summary and Conclusion

Week 1: Overview

Course 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). *To be memorized*

1. What is your understanding of how Acts relates to the storyline of the New Testament and the whole Bible?
2. How do you think the book of Acts will help you to better understand the cultures and people of other New Testament books?
3. What is your overall understanding of how Acts relates to Luke, knowing that the book of Acts is part two of a two-part narrative?
4. Do you have any sense of similarities and continuities between Luke and Acts?
5. From your current knowledge of Acts, what do you think this book teaches us about God, the church, the gospel, and other doctrines?
6. What aspects of Acts have confused you? Are there any specific questions that you hope to resolve through this study of Acts?

**Week 2**

**You Will Be My Witnesses (Acts 2:1-47)**

Research and define the following words:

* Gospel
* Preach the Gospel
* Mission of God
* Resurrection

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 1:1-26. Then review the following questions concerning this first chapter of Acts.

1. Acts 1:1 addresses “Theophilus” and references a previous book, the Gospel of Luke. Here in the first verse of Acts the work and teachings of Jesus are center stage. Why do you think that is? Why do you think that might be important to what Luke is going to say?
2. In Acts 1:1, Luke also makes the point that in the Gospel of Luke he wrote about “all that Jesus began to do and teach.” What does that phrase imply about the content of Acts?
3. Read Acts 1:4. How do you respond to times of waiting in your life? Why do you think God so often calls His followers to wait before He directs them to the next steps to take?
4. In Acts 1:6, the disciples ask Jesus, “Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” How does Jesus’ response challenge and expand the disciples’ thinking and understanding of the gospel?
5. John the Baptist had said, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming…He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16). What promise concerning this baptism of the Holy Spirit was Jesus now giving (See Acts 1:7-8)
6. What did Jesus’ followers do after He ascended to heaven”? What evidence does Luke provide that they obeyed His final command to them (see verses 12-14)?
7. Based on our reading thus far, how would you summarize the **message** of Acts.

**Week 3**

**Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47)**

**Research and define the following words:**

* Pentecost
* Lord
* Christ

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 2:1-47. Then review the following questions concerning this chapter of Acts.

1. Acts 2:2-3 describes the filling and presence of the Spirit as a mighty wind and fire. Considering passages like Exodus 13 and Ezekiel 1, what is the significance of the Spirit appearing and being described in this way?
2. Why is it important for us to know that the power of the church comes from the Spirit and not from man? Why is the Spirit’s ministry essential to the church?
3. Why do you think denominations are so split over the role of the Holy Spirit? In what ways does this diminish the impact of Christ’s church? What can the churches today learn from the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost that can help them be more effective in ministry?
4. In Acts 2:5-13, the disciples speak in other tongues, and the resident foreigners “hear them telling in their own tongues the might works of God” (Acts 2:11). This miraculous communication did not depend on their education (which was minimal, among “these…Galileans”; Acts 2:7) not eloquence, but on the movement of God’s Spirit. Where else in Scripture do you see the power of God working despite or through human weakness?
5. In Acts 2:34-35, Peter cites Psalm 110 and refers to Jesus being at God’s “right hand.” Jesus also refers to himself as being at the “right hand”. Read Psalm 16:11; 98:1; 139:10; and Romans 8:34 regarding the right hand of God. Considering these passages, what does it mean for Jesus to be at the “right hand” of God?
6. Peter finishes his speech in Acts 2:36 with a short summary of his message: Jesus is “Lord and Christ.” Throughout his speech Peter provides a number of different points of evidence for the lordship of Jesus. What evidence does Peter point to?
7. How did God reward the efforts of His servants to spread the gospel (Acts 2:47)?

**Week 4:**

**Growing Witness and Opposition (Acts 3:1-5:42) Part I**

**Research and define the following words:**

* Sanhedrin
* Messiah

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 3:1-5:42. Then review the following questions concerning this section of Acts.

1. After the lame beggar is miraculously healed, how does the crowd respond to this miracle (Acts 3:9-11)? How does the beggar respond (Acts 3:8, 11)? How do Peter and John respond to the crowd’s amazement in Acts 3:12-16?
2. Consider the number of different names and titles Peter attributes to Jesus in his speech in Acts 3:12-26. What are they, and how does that help you understand Peter’s message?
3. Why did the religious leaders reject Peter’s message? How was this the beginning of persecution? In what ways might the first result of Peter’s message (the conversion of two thousand people) be related to the religious leaders’ attempts to silence Peter? Does this sort of thing happen today? Explain.
4. Acts 4:8-12 records Peter’s third speech in three chapters, this time before the Jewish rulers and elders. As before, Peter emphasizes the resurrection of Jesus, but this marks the first time the apostles experience overt opposition to the gospel from authorities. How do Peter and John respond (Acts 4:19-20)? What do they say is their motivation for witness?
5. Read Acts 4:21. Why would the religious leaders want to avoid referring to the miracle that took place with the healing of the cripple man? What implications did this miracle have for their status quo? In what ways were their verbal attacks successful? In what ways did they fail?
6. Review 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 and Deuteronomy 13:1-5. If false prophets and Satan can also do miracles, how did the early Christians know if a miracle was from God? How might sowing doubt about a miracle’s origin have affected the early Christians. How do churches today handle apparent miracles?

**Week 5**

**Growing Witness and Opposition (Acts 3:1-5:42) Part II**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 3:1-5:42. Then review the following questions concerning this section of Acts.

1. After the elders try to silence the apostles, the disciples pray for boldness to speak God’s word (Acts 4:24-30). Why did they pray for renewed courage to proclaim the word of God rather than to be delivered from persecution? From where are they drawing such confidence? Look at Acts 4:24 and Acts 4:26-28.
2. In Acts 4:32-37, a number of important characteristics of the first community of believers are mentioned. What are the characteristics? Looking at Acts 4:33, what two “great’ things empowered this reality?
3. The account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) is one of the most disturbing narratives in the New Testament. It reveals how essential unity within the church is to God, and how seriously God takes deceit that threatens that unity. Examine Acts 5:3-4. What specifically did Ananias and Sapphira did wrong?
4. Thankfully, we do not receive immediate judgment for our sins as Ananias and Sapphira did. Such judgment is rare in Scripture. Our sin was great, but Jesus chose to die for us because his love for us was greater. The God who punished Ananias and Sapphira is the same radically merciful God who offers grace to even those who arranged the crucifixion of His Son. Where else in Scripture do you see examples of God’s radically merciful grace?
5. Why does the media seem to love stories about Christians who are revealed as hypocrites? What is an appropriate response to someone who points to these stories as examples of why they don’t want to have anything to do with Christianity?
6. In Acts 5, the Sanhedrin wants to kill the disciples, and the apostles are beaten for the first time (Acts 5:40). What motivations does the text reveal for the Sanhedrin’s actions? See Acts 5:17, 28.
7. Read Acts 5:41-42. Confident in God’s sovereignty, how do the apostles respond to all that has been done to them.
8. The early church spent a lot of time in prayer. How much emphasis do you put in prayer? How much emphasis do you put on prayer in your personal life? In your life with other believers? What can we do to expand and improve our prayer life, both personally and corporately? How might a better prayer life affect your daily living?

**Week 6**

**Stephen (Acts 5:1-7:60)**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 5:1-7:60. Then review the following questions concerning this section of Acts.

**Research and define the following words:**

* Hellenists
* Pharisees

**The Big Picture: Before his death, Stephen eloquently tells the story of Israel to show how Jesus is the culmination of God’s redemptive plan and how, even though rejection and persecution, the power of God is advancing.**

1. Acts 6:1-7 records an account of internal division in the early church. What is the division and how do the apostles handle this potentially divisive situation?
2. In Stephen’s speech, he takes the time to walk eloquently through salvation history. He begins with Abraham and God’s promises to him. Read Genesis 12:1-3. What are these promises? Considering Acts 3:25-26, how were they fulfilled through Jesus?
3. Read Acts 7:27, 35, and 39. What point is Stephen making about Moses and his relationship to Israel? How is this relevant to the Jewish leaders’ current opposition to Jesus? Considering Acts 7:42, how did God respond to those who rejected Moses?
4. Stephen gives an overview of the presence of God throughout Israel’s salvation history (Acts 7:42-50). He moves from God’s presence in the tabernacle, to the temple, to a quote from Isaiah 66:1-2. What is his point about God’s presence?
5. Read Act 7:51-53. Stephen concludes with a direct, sharp attack on the religious leaders (Acts 7:51-53). What does he accuse them of? How does Stephen’s speech up to this point condemn the leaders?
6. Acts 7 ends with the stoning of Stephen and the introduction of Saul. Read Acts 6:10. Stephen’s accusers “could not withstand the wisdom of the Spirit”, so they falsely accused him. What does the term “could not withstand the wisdom of the Spirit” refer to?
7. Stephen prayed for two thing as he died. What are they? Does this remind you of a similar prayer Jesus prayed

**Week 7**

**Saul (Acts 8:1-9:31) Part I**

**Research and define the following words:**

* Conversion
* Repentance

**The Big Picture:** In Acts 8:1-9:31, the church faces its fiercest opposition yet in the persecution led by Saul, but this violence actually serves to advance God’s work and spread the gospel out from Jerusalem.

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 8:1-9:31. Then review the following questions concerning this section of Acts.

1. In Acts 8:4-25, the gospel reaches Samaria, and thus the first cross-cultural barrier is breached. To what degree is this a fulfillment of Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8?
2. Compare Peter’s response to Simon in Acts 8:20 on receiving the Holy Spirit in light of what we read in Acts 2:39, 10:45, and Acts 11:17. How is the Holy Spirit described?
3. How did Philip help the Ethiopian official realize that Jesus was the Messiah whom had been promised in the OT (See Acts 8:30-35)?
4. Read Acts 9:1-2. What prompted Saul’s continued zeal? Why was he so angry with the Christ-followers?
5. How is the conversion of Saul a picture of God’s radical grace? How does it give you confidence and hope in the power and work of the gospel?
6. Read Acts 9:22, 29-30. What are the responses to Paul’s preaching?
7. How might the Jews in Damascus have initially responded to Saul’s sudden conversion and bold claim about Jesus? In what ways are people today similarly suspect when a critic of Christianity suddenly starts to proclaim the truth? What does Paul’s proclamation teach us about the power of God? About the manner in which believers ought to respond to the life changing power of God?
8. What is the most dramatic story you have heard of how a person came to believe in Christ?

**Week 8**

**Saul (Acts 8:1-9:31) Part 2**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 8:1-9:31.

1. Research and review the life of each of the men featured in Acts 8. What were their stories? Make a list of what stands out to you about each man and the role he played in the early church story? What lessons do these stories teach us about the challenges and opportunities of being a Christ-follower?

* Saul (8:1-3)
* Philip (8:4-8)
* Simon the Sorcerer (8:9-25)
* Ethiopian (8:26-40)

1. Why do you think God chose Saul, the persecutor, to become one of His greatest proclaimers? What does this say about how God sees us? About how God chooses to go about bringing His plan to fruition?
2. When have you been tempted to write off someone as “too far gone”? When have you been tempted to believe that you are “too far gone” to be used by God?
3. Why do you think God struck Paul with blindness and led Ananias to him for healing (see verses 15-17)?
4. After relating the events of Saul’s conversion, Luke shows the other apostles were also working to spread the gospel throughout the known world. The town of Lydda was located twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem. What effect did the healing of Aeneas have on the people in the region? How did this spread the gospel? (see verses 34-35)?
5. How is the healing in Acts 9:32-35 similar to the healing of the lame man and the preaching of the gospel in Acts 3?

**Week 9 – Part 1**

**The Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:32-12:25)**

**The Big Picture:** In Acts 9:32-12:25, we see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, dramatically demonstrating that the barrier between Jews and Gentiles is being demolished and salvation is now streaming out to all nations.

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 9:32-12:25. Then review the following questions.

1. Read Acts 10:9-16. Explain Peter’s vision. What is Peter’s initial response? What reason does he give for his response?
2. Read Acts 10:1-48. What connection is God making for Peter between the unclean animals in the vision and Cornelius and his household?
3. Read Acts 10:1-48. How is the story of Peter and Cornelius part of the continued fulfillment of Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8?
4. How does the conclusion embraced by Peter (Acts 10:47-48; 11:15-17) and the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:18) reveal that these Gentiles were fellow believers?
5. Read Acts 11:1-18. What was the criticism from the circumcision party? Note, the change of attitude from Acts 11:2-3 to Acts 11:18. Like Peter before, the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were thinking that God still wanted separation between Jews and Gentiles. Looking at Acts 11:4-17, what things changed their understanding?
6. Reviewing Acts 11 again, why did the Jewish Christians look down on the Gentiles? In what ways are there similar divisions among Christians today? How did Peter answer the concerns of the Jewish Christians? How ought we respond today to Christians who look down on other believers because they don’t follow similar practices or do certain things?
7. How did Barnabas encourage the new Gentile believers (Acts 11:19-30)? What approach did he take when worshipping with them? What can we learn from his example for how we should treat new believers and new church members?

**Week 10**

**The Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:32-12:25) Part 2**

1. If the name “Christian” was coined in derision, why did it become the common reference for those who are followers of Christ? How many times is the term found in the NT and where?
2. What are some reasons why divisions still exist within the church today?
3. Read Acts 12:1-19. What gave Peter such confidence and peace in the midst of this trial? What are the sorts of trials Christians face today that might be similar to what Peter endured? How can we learn to respond with confidence and peace to those trials?
4. Recalling Acts 8, which of the four men represented in that chapter do you most relate to? Why? What can we learn from each of their stories to help us live out our faith in confidence and peace?
5. Think back on the time before you knew Christ. What are some of the character traits you had then that God now uses to further His kingdom through you? What are some of the characteristics you have changed since your conversion? In what ways are you most like Paul? Least like Paul?
6. Read Acts 12:1-17. After many people had gathered and were praying during Peter’s imprisonment, why were they shocked when Peter knocked on the door? In addition why did they say the servant girl was out of her mind when she insisted Peter was at the door?
7. Read Acts 12:1-19. Explain the context of these passages. How does Herod’s response compare with Peter’s swift denial when Cornelius seeks to worship him (Acts 10:26) and Paul’s vehement protests when the people of Lystra mistake him for the god Hermes (Acts 14:11-15)?

**Week 11**

**Paul and Barnabas Are Sent (Acts 13:1-14:28)**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 13:1-14:28. Then review the following questions.

**Research and define the following words:**

* Forgiveness
* Law

**The Big Picture:** Commissioned by the Antioch church, Paul and Barnabas set off on their first missionary journey to bring the gospel to the Gentiles in Acts 13-14.

1. Where do Paul and Barnabas start preaching first when they arrive in Cyprus (Acts 13:5)? Considering Acts 3:25-26 and Acts 13:46, why is this pattern noteworthy? In what way is it a partial fulfillment of Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8?
2. Read Acts 13:10-11. What does the text say was the result of Paul’s rebuke to the magician Elymas?
3. In Acts 13:14, Paul and Barnabas preach the gospel. What are the core elements of the gospel found in Acts 13:28, 30, 31, 34, and 38?
4. In Acts 13:45-52, Jewish opposition to the gospel once again begins to rise. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 that “Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.” The “stumbling block to Jews” of Christ crucified has been a common theme through Acts so far. What is the reason given for Jewish opposition in Acts 13:44-45? What happens when the Gentiles are offered the good news (Acts 13:48-49)?
5. God’s grace begins to multiply and spread through the Gentiles in the region. What does the text give as the determining factor in who believed the gospel (Acts 13:48 and Acts 14:27)? Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Where does Paul say that faith comes from?
6. Acts 13:1-3 shows that the believers in Antioch viewed evangelism as such a priority that they sent out some of their top leaders to that work. Why is it often hard for individuals and churches to invest heavily in outreach as opposed to taking care of their own? How can you treat outreach as a priority?
7. Read Acts 14. How did the people of Lystra react when they saw that Paul had healed the crippled man? How did Paul and Barnabas respond to the worship they received from the people of Lystra?
8. How do you deal with people who try to interfere with your sharing of the gospel? Is your response similar to Paul and Barnabas?

**Week 12**

**The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35)**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 15:1-35. Then review the following questions.

**Research and define the following words:**

* Circumcision
* Grace

**The Big Picture:** In Acts 15:1-35, the Jerusalem Council is convened to decide whether non-Jewish believers must submit to all the requirements of the Law of Moses, and especially circumcision, in order to be accepted as brothers and sisters in Christ.

1. Read Genesis 17:9-14. For a faithful Jew, what did circumcision mean? What was its significance for being a member of the covenant people of God?
2. Read Acts 15:1-5. What prompted these Jewish teachers to tell the Gentiles they needed to be circumcised in order to be saved? What did they have to gain by teaching this? Are there similar scenarios in today’s church? Describe them. What would Paul say to the people in today’s church who teach about additional requirements for salvation?
3. Read Paul’s narrative in Galatians 2:1-21. How does this help you understand more fully the issues in Acts 15?
4. Up to this point in Acts, we have seen how the inclusion of the Gentiles and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon them was an unexpected paradigm shift for many Jewish believers. In Acts 15:7-9, Peter refers to the outpouring of the gospel at the house of Cornelius in Acts 10:34-43. Peter then refers to the manner in which the Gentiles received the Spirit. In Acts 15:7-9, what is Peter referring to?
5. Consider Matthew 11:28-30. Who is Peter echoing when he calls the law an unbearable yoke? Explain
6. Peter concludes his speech in Acts 15:11. What does he say? How does this support the unity of the church that would include both Gentile and Jewish believers?
7. In Acts 15:13-21, James responds emphatically that the Gentiles do not need to be circumcised. In the letter sent to the Gentile churches (Acts 15:22-29), James writes, “It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements.” What are these “requirements”?
8. How do the Gentile Christians respond to the letter from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:31)?
9. What benefit did Paul gain by partnering up with Silas for his subsequent missionary journeys?

**Week 13**

**Paul’s Second and Third Missionary Journeys**

**(Acts 15:36-21:16) Part 1**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 15:36-21:16. Then review the following questions.

**Research and define the following word:**

* Paganism

**The Big Picture:** In Acts 15:36-21:16, Paul and Silas follow the Lord’s leading on their missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor and the Roman world.

1. What was behind the split between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41? Why do you think Paul left without Barnabas? What does this situation tell us about each of these men?
2. Acts 16:11-15 records the baptism of Lydia. The Lord is the one who graciously opens hearts to repent and believe the gospel. Consider Acts 16:14. How does Luke emphasize that God is the active agent in bringing believers to faith in Christ? How is this fact also reflected in Acts 18:27?
3. Acts 16:16-34 records Paul and Silas in prison. What is the jailer’s questions in Acts 16:30? How do they answer him (Acts 16:31)? How does he respond (Acts 16:33-34)?
4. In Acts 17:1-15, the episodes in Thessalonica and nearby Berea offer vivid illustrations of nearly opposite reactions to the gospel. How does each city respond, respectively?
5. Paul’s speech at the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34) offers an example of witnessing with relevance. He studies the culture to find the most relevant and engaging inroads for the gospel. Despite his passionate disdain for the idolatry of the city (Acts 17:16), how does Paul begin is discourse (Acts 17:22)? Knowing that his listeners are not familiar with the OT Scriptures, who does Paul quote (Acts 17:28)?
6. Read 17:30-31. What does Paul say God is commanding everyone to do (Acts 17:30)? Why does he say they must do this (Acts 17:31)? What assurance has God given (Acts 17:31)?
7. Before Paul returned to Antioch to bring his second missionary journey to a close (Acts 18:18-22), he spends some time in Corinth (Acts 18:1-17). In Acts 18:6, Paul seems frustrated. In Acts 18:9-10, God spoke to Paul, what did God encourage Paul to do? How does God promise his presence and protection?
8. Why do you think Paul’s missionary trips were so effective? What can you glean from Acts 17 about Paul’s approach to missions? What lessons can we learn from Paul’s approach that can be applied to our churches today?

**Week 14**

**Paul’s Second and Third Missionary Journeys**

**(Acts 15:36-21:16) Part 2**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 15:36-21:16. Then review the following questions.

1. Read Acts 17:7. The Greek word translated another means “another of a different kind,” that is, a king unlike Caesar. Why would the news about a “different” king cause such a ruckus among the Jews?
2. Why did Luke refer to the Bereans as being of “noble character”? What would this “noble character” look like in today’s believers? Why did the troublemakers in Thessalonica follow Paul to Berea? What was the result of the troublemakers’ efforts? How is this like the way some people cause trouble in churches today?
3. Read 17:16-34. What was Paul’s initial impression of Athens? What approach did he take in ministering to the people there? What can we learn from Paul’s approach that can help us reach out to nonbelievers today?
4. Why is Christianity so often the target of ridicule? What is a right response to these sorts of portrayals of the faith? How does the media’s typical portrayal of Christianity affect the way in which you relate to non-Christians?
5. Read Acts 17:16-34 and compare the experience in Athens to that in Thessalonica (17:1-9) and Berea (17:10-15). Why was the experience in Athens so dramatically different for Paul? What was unique about the audiences Paul spoke to in the different towns?
6. How might Paul’s experience in Athens have affected his approach to the people in Corinth? Why is it notable that Acts tells about Paul’s trade as a tentmaker? How might this trade have helped Paul in his missionary journey?
7. Read Acts 18-9-11. What does this passage tell us about Paul’s experience in Corinth? After the dream, Paul stayed for a year and a half. What does this tell us about Paul’s faith? About God’s promise and protection of Paul?
8. To have blood on your hands means that you bear the responsibility for another’s death. The image comes from the watchman on the city walls whose task it was to stay alert and warn of coming danger (Ezek. 3:17-21; 33:1-9). Review Acts 18:6. What does it mean to have “blood on your hands” (See also Josh. 2:19)?

**Week 15**

**Paul’s Second and Third Missionary Journeys**

**(Acts 15:36-21:16) Part 3**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 15:36-21:16. Then review the following questions.

1. Read the following passages. How does each of these verses offer assurance for you as they might have helped to assure Paul in his journey?
   1. Gen 15:1
   2. Gen 26:24
   3. Gen 46:3
   4. 2 Chronicles 20:15-17
   5. Isaiah 41:10
   6. Isaiah 3:1-7
2. Why did Paul shave his head at Cenchrea? When he saved his head, it could have appeared to some that he was doing this in order to comply with the law. What does Paul’s action teach us about the importance of following through on commitments? How might this have confused people about the “requirements” of salvation?
3. Paul’s experience in Athens was less effective than his previous stops. When have you felt like Paul did in Athens? How do you deal with the frustrations that come when people just don’t understand what you are saying? What are some creative ways to share the message of Christ that people in any culture or circumstance can understand?
4. Have you ever been the object of ridicule because of your faith? How did you respond to that ridicule? What are some practical ways to deal with people who make fun of your beliefs?

1. Why was Apollos’ gospel incomplete? What was he missing in his message (Acts 19:1-7)? What is the danger of preaching an incomplete gospel?
2. The Ephesian temple was probably four centuries old during this time of Paul. In the sacred enclosure of the temple stood the “sacred image” of Artemis (a wilderness and fertility goddess) that was supposed to have fallen from heaven (Acts 19:35). How might the pagan setting in this city have affected Paul’s preaching? What unique challenges might he have faced in a city with such a significant pagan presence?
3. Read Acts 19:11-20. Why couldn’t the Jews successfully exorcise the evil spirits? Why did this frighten the Jews? What does this section of Scripture teach us about the way in which God’s power is manifest?
4. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. What do these passages say about the qualifications for someone to be an elder? Why would Paul choose to speak specifically to the elders when preparing to leave Ephesus? Who are the elders in your church? How is their role like and unlike that which is described here?
5. Read Acts 20:28-38. Paul brought his farewell message to a close by warning the leaders of the dangers they had to recognize and deal with if they were to protect and lead the church. What dangers was he referring to? What are the dangers today’s church needs to warn against?

**Week 16**

**The Gospel Goes to Rome (Acts 21:17-28:31)**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 21:17-28:31. Then review the following questions.

The Big Picture: In Acts 21:17-28:31, Paul preaches the gospel without hindrance as the Lord uses him and his arrest to bring the gospel to Rome.

1. See the following verses (Gal. 2:15-16, 21; 3:2-3, 10-14, 19-25 and Romans (3:21-25; 8:1-4; 9:30-33). Considering these passages, how is Paul unyielding about his obligation to spread the gospel to the Gentiles, and about their not having to keep the law?
2. Considering 1 Cor. 9:19-23, how is Paul’s undergoing the rites of purification a picture of allowing for adaptation of nonessentials for the sake of mission, without compromising the gospel or his identity in Christ?

1. Paul is convinced that God has called him to proclaim the gospel to all, despite the rejection he suffers. Read Luke 12:51-53. Considering Acts 22:22-29, how is Paul living out the persecution that Jesus promised would come to some of his followers when he foresaw that families would be bitterly divided on account of his kingdom?
2. In Acts 21:27-36, the Jews attack Paul and distort both what he said and what he did. How did they distort what Paul had to say? While the text doesn’t always tell us the reasoning for accusations and attacks of others, what does the text say is the reason for the Jews’ accusations here?
3. In Acts 22:1-23, Paul has another opportunity to preach the gospel before a Jewish crowd. Although he is interrupted before he can finish (Acts 22:22), what is the result of Paul’s declarations of his call to go to the Gentiles, and that God is concerned about them?
4. In Acts 23:11, Jesus appears to Paul and encourages him to “Take courage.” What does Jesus promise him? How do these words reflect his commission in Acts 1:8?
5. In Acts 18:14, Luke writes a brief geographical note: “And so we came to Rome.” He ends Acts on a note of triumph, showing Paul in the capital of the world as he preaches the gospel with “boldness and without hindrance” to all who are willing to hear it Acts 28:31). Luke and Paul both knew that the mission that Christ had laid out had not been fully accomplished. Paul mentions in this letters that he intended to travel beyond Rome to even more distant Spain (Rom 15:24). Considering Acts 1:8, how has Jesus already begun to fulfill his promise?

**Week 17**

**The Prisoner (Acts 23-28)**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Acts 23-28. Then review the following questions.

1. As you read about Paul’s trial and imprisonment, what sense do you get about Paul’s demeanor? What gave him the ability to be calm in the face of the charges and then after he was imprisoned? After all Paul had gone through, it wouldn’t be surprising if he felt frustrated or felt like giving up. Instead, he pressed on. What lesson can we learn from his endurance that’s applicable to today’s church?
2. Paul’s friends could visit him and help meet his personal needs, but there is no record that the Jerusalem church took any steps to assist him, either in Jerusalem or during his two years in Caesarea. Do you think this is because no one visited him, or merely because it wasn’t recorded? What are the implications in either case?
3. Read Acts 23:1-2. What is your reaction to the way the Sanhedrin acted toward Paul? What was Paul’s reaction (v3)? Paul didn’t realize at first that he was speaking to the high priest. How might his response have been different if he had?
4. Review Acts 23:6-10. Why did Paul shift to the doctrinal approach in his defense? Do you think he expected a fair trial? If not, what would he have to gain by addressing the doctrine of the resurrection? What was his motive for this?
5. What can you learn about the Roman legal system from Acts 24? How does it compare with our country’s current legal system? How did the legal system play into Paul’s circumstance in Jerusalem? In what ways is this like and unlike the way the Roman legal system played out in Jesus’ story?
6. Compare Luke’s account of Paul’s arrest (Acts 21:27-40) with the captain’s account (Acts 23:25-30) and the lawyer’s account (Acts 24:5-8. What does each of these accounts tell you? What does this reveal about the challenges of the legal system? About the challenges of uncovering the truth of Paul’s story?
7. What do we learn about Paul in his response to Felix (Acts 24:10-21)? How does he use this situation to further the cause of Christ? Again, Paul references the resurrection as a key point in his argument. What does this tell us about our own approach to sharing the good news?
8. Review Acts 27-28. Why would Luke devote such a long section of Acts to a description of a voyage and a shipwreck? Why might this be of value to the reader?

**Week 18**

**Summary and Conclusion**

Write a paragraph summarizing the “big picture” of Acts as a whole and be ready to share with the class. Then we will consider a few questions for final reflection.

1. Over the past 17 weeks, you have explored the book of Acts. What expectations did you bring to this study? In what ways were those expectations met?
2. What is the most significant personal discovery you have made from this study?
3. What surprised you most about the early church? What, if anything, troubled you?
4. Acts introduces the early church and Paul’s role in helping to grow the church. As you read about Paul’s life, what stands out to you about his commitment to the church? What lessons can we learn from Paul that can inspire church leaders today?
5. Have you ever been in a situation similar to Paul when he was on trial for his faith and ministry? If so, how did you deal with it? What role did your faith play when you were listening to or responding to accusers?
6. Has Acts brought new clarity to your understanding of the grace of God? If so, how?