

The
Acts
of Jesus
Study Guide

SPEAK TRUTH. BELIEVE TRUTH. LIVE TRUTH.

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Introduction

Walking with Jesus

Wouldn't you have loved to be one of the two people on the road to Emmaus with Jesus? My grandfather had a painting of this scene hanging in his living room. The artist depicted a path winding through a peaceful forest, sunlight sprinkling through the trees, and three robed figures walking together in close conversation. As a child I would stare at that picture and want to get inside it. One commentator suggested that the two people on the road to Emmaus with Christ could have been a husband and wife. That thought made me want to insert myself into this story even more. If ever there was a conversation I wanted to get in on, this would be it. The words that the risen Jesus spoke that day gave light and understanding to these two troubled travelers. His Words literally transformed the hearts of His hearers—from utter despair, confusion, and hopelessness to joy, clarity, and a living hope that had to be shared.

From the amazing change that took place in the lives of the other disciples shortly after this scene, it is obvious that Christ had many of these same types of conversations with them as well. His resurrection changed everything. The effects of eyes opened and hope given are seen all throughout the narrative in Acts. On Roman roads leading out of Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and beyond, the followers of the risen Christ took the gospel to the world. If we were able to capture these journeys on a canvas, we wouldn't paint the figure of Christ walking alongside His disciples. But He is there nonetheless, powerfully at work though unseen with physical eyes. Although *The Acts of the Apostles* is the title you will find over the book of Acts in most Bibles, a more accurate title seems to be *The Acts of Jesus through the Apostles*, as Jesus is very much the central figure

in the entire book. Look for Him and you will find Him active everywhere in and through His followers.

In a similar way, centuries later, we are on a journey too. Each believer has an Emmaus Road story...a time when Christ came alongside and gave understanding of the gospel and granted the gifts of repentance and faith. Lives transformed—darkness to light, despair to hope, bondage in sin to bond slave for Christ. And like the disciples of the first century, we too have a mission. As disciples of Christ, we are called to carry the gospel message to our world. We do not walk this road alone; the risen Christ is present with us, working in and through our lives. He is still the central figure of history, powerfully at work though unseen with physical eyes. Look for Him and you will see the *acts of Jesus through His Church*.

But as we walk this road, it is easy to lose sight of our mission. We struggle on the journey. We forget that Christ is with us. The temporal things of life distract and the truth of Christ's death and resurrection on our behalf doesn't compel us to serve as it once did. We need to return to the basics once again. The book of Acts can help us remember what this journey is supposed to look like. It can inspire us to go with the gospel to the hard places and hard people in our lives. It answers foundational questions like: What is the church? What is her mission and how can I be a part of it? How do I share this gospel message? What does discipleship look like in everyday life? It is a "companion" alongside us on the road, making the journey all the better.

As we study Acts both individually and corporately, God will increase our unity and commitment to follow the risen Christ. Good things happen when believers study Scripture together! Hearts are knit together around the truth of God's Word, resulting in sweet unity. God uses His truth to reveal areas of needed change and expose sin in our lives. As we share

transparently, “confessing our faults one to another,” we are able to receive and give the help in our spiritual battles that God wants to provide through the body of Christ. This is true biblical fellowship.

Why a whole year in one book of the Bible?

Have you ever been challenged to devote an entire year to studying one book of the Bible? The idea is to pick a book you want to know really well and, by reading it over and over again, begin to master the truth it contains. Gradually it becomes a part of you. That is what we are proposing to do with the book of Acts. After spending a year with Dr. Luke, this unique book will become a treasured friend.

What kind of Bible study is this?

Borrowing from the Puritans, there are two main approaches to Bible study: plow work and trowel work. Like the gardener with spade in hand digs deep and turns up the soil in a specific area of her garden, trowel work means using the tools of Bible study to dig deeply into a specific passage or verse of Scripture for an extended period of time. *The Inductive Study Method* is an example of this kind of Bible study.

Just as you would imagine a farmer plowing a large portion of his field, plow work moves through larger portions of Scripture, looking for specific themes. You could think of it as building a Biblical theology about a certain topic. For example, you could choose to read through the Psalms looking for God’s attributes and creating your own biography of God’s character. Or, in the New Testament, choose a gospel and capture all the things you learn about Jesus: how He was an example of a servant, or what He taught, or how He lived in perfect obedience to His Father. As with any type of Bible study, the focus of our study is on a Person, and the goal is always understanding that leads to worship and obedience. Whenever God opens our eyes to

understand His Word, the result is long-term change in the lives of His people—we become more like Christ, and ultimately, God is glorified.

Both types of Bible study are needed for a “balanced diet” in our Christian life. Even when we settle down to prayerfully read, study, meditate on, interpret, and apply smaller portions of God’s Word, it is helpful for us to have the “big picture” view provided by plow work. In other words, the plow and the trowel work well together.

The Acts of Jesus provides an opportunity to “plow” through the book of Acts, studying various key themes. With 28 chapters, Acts can easily be covered in a month’s time. There is much to learn from this important New Testament book that chronicles the birth of the church. Having different specific themes to look for each month will help keep our hearts engaged and our minds alert, especially as we read through increasingly familiar passages of Scripture.

How do I do this study?

Begin by purchasing a journal. Read through Acts and record what you learn about the specific topic of focus. It’s that simple.

To break it down a little more: each day of the month, prayerfully read one chapter and write down what you learn in a journal. Remember to take time after reading God’s Word to consider how to apply what you are learning to your life. Or, if you have other Bible studies that you would like to continue working through, you could take time on the weekend to read seven chapters in one sitting. In four Saturdays you will cover the book of Acts.

Each month will follow the same pattern laid out in this booklet: *Prepare, Search, Apply, Respond, Share*. For the group discussion questions you can use the space provided in the booklet; or

record your answers in your journal. One other idea—if you are a visual person and like to mark in your Bible, consider printing off a copy of Acts (or purchasing a Scripture journal of Acts). Marking Scripture can be especially helpful in identifying themes and key words.

In the 1970's a group of believers conducted Bible Reading Marathons around the country. They would gather at a convenient public place like the steps of a courthouse, a shopping mall, or parking lot. Then they took turns reading the Bible aloud. It took them 20-23 hours to read the entire New Testament, and they could read the entire Bible aloud in about 72 hours. We aren't suggesting that we all convene in the grocery store parking lot on Saturdays to read through Acts, but if you desire to do your own Bible Reading Marathon, you can read through the book of Acts in about two hours. Reading one chapter a day or even seven in one sitting will take considerably less time.

Bible study takes a lot of time; what if I can't get it all done?

Though less intense than trowel work, *plow work* still takes time. No doubt there will be certain months when reading *all* 28 chapters in the book of Acts just doesn't happen. Unexpected trials, family emergencies, or the craziness of holiday seasons can threaten to crowd out your daily time with the Lord. During those "crunch times," please don't bail out of this study just because you don't read every chapter. Each month *key passages* will be included under the study heading. If you don't have time to read all of Acts, simply read these key sections. You will still glean important truth and gain God's perspective on the topic we are considering through this foundational book.

What are some other ways I could use this study?

Remember, good things happen when believers study Scripture together. Although the following study is intended for you to do

individually, you could consider using it in a number of different ways:

- Use this study as a tool for one-to-one Bible reading with a friend.
- If you are married, work through the study with your spouse or your entire family. If you have younger children, read aloud a chapter a day—or just the key passages listed in each lesson—and see if they can catch key words or pick out the theme as you go along. Keep a record of what you learn.
- Teach your kids or teenagers to do this study on their own. What wonderful practice in learning the “how to” of Bible study. As you work through the study at the same pace, they can easily come to you when questions or difficulties arise. Gather everyone together once a week to compare “notes” on what you have learned. Work through specific application to your lives individually and as a family. Watch your unity increase!
- Talk about what you are learning with other members of our body, even those who aren’t in your small group. God will use this interaction to sharpen each one of us.

As we walk through this study together over the next nine months, let’s commit to pray that our time in the book of Acts will change us to be more like the early disciples: speaking truth, believing truth, and living truth!

Study Schedule

Date*	Lesson	Reading Focus
	Lesson 1	<i>The Power of the Resurrection</i>
	Lesson 2	<i>What is the Gospel?</i>
	Lesson 3	<i>The Triumph of the Gospel</i>
	Lesson 4	<i>The Comforter Has Come</i>
	Lesson 5	<i>Prayer's Power</i>
	Lesson 6	<i>Discipleship in Everyday Life (pt.1)</i>
	Lesson 7	<i>Discipleship in Everyday Life (pt.2)</i>
	Lesson 8	<i>The Danger of Prosperity</i>
	Lesson 9	<i>Personal Review</i>
	Lesson 10	<i>We are the Church</i>

** While this study was originally designed for local church ladies' Bible study groups that meet during four months in the fall and four months in the spring, it can easily be adapted to fit a different schedule: monthly, bi-monthly, or weekly.*

The Power of the Resurrection | Lesson 1

This first lesson is designed to be done together with your small group, so no study is needed beforehand. Prior to the first meeting, please simply read the *Introduction* on pp. 3-8. When your group meets together, bring this booklet, something to write with, and a blank journal.

As you work through the following lesson with your group and gain practice using the “plow,” be sure to ask your group leader to clarify any difficulties or points of confusion.

PREPARE

Prayer helps prepare our hearts to receive and respond to God’s truth. Before beginning your study, humbly ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth and give you spiritual understanding.

Psalm 119:12,16 Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

SEARCH

Divide the selected passages listed below among your group. Read your assigned passage and then share your thoughts with the rest of your group. In your journal, record everything that you and your group discover about this question: ***How did the Resurrection change the disciples?***

Part 1 – Before the Resurrection

- **Key Passages to read aloud among your group so you can practice plowing together:**

Luke 22:14-34, 39-46

Matthew 26:20-22, 30-35, 47-56

John 13:1-11; 13:31-14:1; 14:27-31

John 16:16-33

Luke 23:44-24:1

Mark 15:40-16:3; John 20:19a

- As you read, look for characteristics of the disciples during the trial, death, and burial of Jesus. Look for descriptions of what they said and did. How did they react and respond to their circumstances? What do you learn about their thoughts, emotions, and attitudes? Write down anything that stands out to you.
- After reading the selected Scripture, how would you describe the disciples? What descriptive words come to mind?
- **Key Words from this study:** _____
(Use this space to record any repeated words or phrases that stand out to you as you read.)

Part 2 – After the Resurrection

- **Key Passages to divide and read silently before discussing as a group:**
Matthew 28:1-10
Mark 16:4-8
Luke 24:2-53
John 20:1-29
Acts 1:1-14
Acts 9:1-22
- As you read, look for characteristics of the disciples after meeting the resurrected Jesus or hearing reports of His resurrection. Write down what you learn about them from their words and actions. What emotions, attitudes, and thoughts stand out to you?
- After reading the selected Scripture, how would you

describe the disciples? What similarities or differences did you notice from the first passages you considered?

- **Key Words:** _____

APPLY

Consider the following questions as you prayerfully review what you learned from Acts. These general questions are the same for every lesson. Don't feel like you have to answer every question every time – just use them as a spark for personal application. Journal your thoughts.

- How does this truth apply to my life?
- Does my life—the way I think and the way I live—show that I really believe this truth? Remember that “a belief not practiced is not a belief at all.”
- In what ways does my life need to change to better reflect this truth?
- Are there any action steps I need to take?
- Is there any sin I need to confess and forsake?
- How can I be more intentional about obeying God in this area?

RESPOND

Each month you will be prompted to personally respond to what God has shown you in His Word. Life-changing Bible study will always produce humility and gratitude. These heart attitudes are expressed in worship—through prayer and singing. Take time to respond to God, praising Him and asking for His help to grow and change in the areas where the Spirit has convicted you. You may find it beneficial to actually write out your response to God in your journal.

SHARE

Thoughtfully consider the following group discussion questions and openly share what you are learning with other believers. Remember that discipleship is simply speaking God's truth into each other's lives.

1. Discuss the contrast between what the disciples "were" and what they "became" after the resurrection of Christ. How did the resurrection change the disciples? (Note: Some change was gradual and will be revealed as we move further into Acts.) What was it about this important event that worked such a powerful change in them?
2. Do you see any characteristics in your life that are similar to the disciples prior to the resurrection? In what ways do you sometimes live as if Christ is not risen?
3. The next logical question to ask ourselves is, "How should the resurrection change me?" Discuss how the resurrection should impact your daily life in specific, practical ways. Consider the positive responses of the disciples to the news of the resurrection. Practically, how should these same responses be coming out in your life? This section of our study could be titled: The Resurrection for Everyday Life.

4. Read Mark 16:1-3 once again. These verses show us that the disciples were not expecting Jesus to rise again. And yet, while He was still alive, Jesus told them over and over again that He would rise from the dead. Is there something Jesus has clearly told you that you have a hard time believing? How can the truth of the resurrection help you with unbelief in your life?

5. Time permitting, share one action step that you are personally asking God to help you take as a result of what you have learned today.

What is the Gospel? | Lesson 2

PREPARE

Prayer prepares our hearts to receive and respond to God's truth. Before beginning your study, humbly ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth and to give you spiritual understanding.

Psalm 119:18 *Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.*

SEARCH

Prayerfully read through Acts. In your journal, record the answers that you discover to this question: ***What is the gospel?***

- There are over 40 sermons and summaries of the gospel recorded by Luke in the book of Acts. See what you can learn about sharing the good news of salvation from these inspired records. What words did they use? What was their focus? What differences do you notice? Record your observations in your notebook.
- Luke uses a variety of descriptive terms for salvation throughout his writing. (For example: Acts 3:26 – *“turning every one of you from your wickedness;”* Acts 8:14 – *“received the word of God.”*) Look for the variety of words and phrases Luke uses to describe the spiritual effect that the gospel has on people; this will give you a richer understanding of God's amazing work of redemption.
- Try to keep your observations focused on the specific topic of the gospel's *content*. Next month we will consider various *responses* of those who heard the gospel message.

- **Key Words:** _____
- **Key Passages:** 2:14-40, 3:12-26, 7:2-53, 10:34-43, 13:16-41, 17:22-31, 26:1-23

APPLY

Think through application of these truths to your everyday life in specific, practical ways. Consider the following questions as you prayerfully review what you learned this past month. Journal your thoughts.

- How does this truth apply to my life?
- Does my life—the way I *think* and the way I *live*—show that I really believe this truth? Remember that “a belief not practiced is not a belief at all.”
- In what ways does my life need to change to better reflect this truth?
- Are there any action steps I need to take?
- Is there any sin I need to confess and forsake?
- How can I be more intentional in obeying God in this area?

RESPOND

Life-changing Bible study will always produce humility and gratitude. These heart attitudes are expressed in worship—through prayer and singing. Take time to respond to God, praising Him and asking for His help to grow and change in the areas where the Spirit has convicted you. You may find it beneficial to actually write out your response to God in your journal.

SHARE

Thoughtfully consider the following group discussion questions and be ready to openly share what you are learning with other believers. Remember that discipleship is simply speaking God's truth into each other's lives.

1. Be prepared to share at least one impacting truth from your reading focus this past month. What did God show you that changed your thinking?
2. What is the Gospel? After reading over the 40+ gospel messages in Acts, try to summarize the gospel in three sentences or less.
3. What differences did you notice in the apostles' approach to sharing the gospel when presenting it to Jews and when sharing it with Gentiles? How about when talking to individuals compared to a larger group?
4. Which was your favorite gospel message in the book of Acts? What did you learn from it that you can put into practice in your own life?

5. What did you learn about being a witness for Christ?
Is there any part of the gospel message you tend to neglect when sharing it with others?

6. To help each other change in a concrete way, share one action step that you are personally asking God to help you take as a result of what you have learned this month.

The Triumph of the Gospel | Lesson 3

PREPARE

Prayer prepares our hearts to receive and respond to God's truth. Before beginning your study, humbly ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth and to give you spiritual understanding.

Psalms 119:33-34 *Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.*

SEARCH

Prayerfully read through Acts. In your journal, record the answers that you discover to this question: ***How did the early church see the gospel triumphing in spite of opposition?***

- The gospel demands a response. As you read through Acts, look for the varying ways people responded to the gospel message. What kind of response does the Gospel demand from people? Record what you learn about these responses.
- When a person responds in a positive way to the gospel, what kinds of evidence follow?
- What do Christians say about Christ and His impact on their lives? What do opponents of Christianity say about Christ and His impact on others?
- The gospel message often prompts opposition. As Jesus said in John 15:18-19, the world hates Christ and it hates those who identify with Christ. Persecution threatened to silence the witness of the early church. When faced with persecution, hardship, or opposition for the sake of the gospel, how did the church/individual believers

respond? How does the gospel triumph in spite of opposition?

- **Key Words:** _____
- **Key Passages:** 2:38-47, 4:1-22, 7:54-8:3, 10:44-48, 13:42-52, 17:32-34, 18:1-28, 26:24-32

APPLY

Think through application of these truths to your everyday life in specific, practical ways. Consider the following questions as you prayerfully review what you learned this past month. Journal your thoughts.

- How does this truth apply to my life?
- Does my life—the way I *think* and the way I *live*—show that I really believe this truth? Remember that “a belief not practiced is not a belief at all.”
- In what ways does my life need to change to better reflect this truth?
- Are there any action steps I need to take?
- Is there any sin I need to confess and forsake?
- How can I be more intentional in obeying God in this area?

RESPOND

Life-changing Bible study will always produce humility and gratitude. These heart attitudes are expressed in worship—through prayer and singing. Take time to respond to God, praising Him and asking for His help to grow and change in the areas where the Spirit has convicted you. You may find it beneficial to actually write out your response to God in your journal.

SHARE

Thoughtfully consider the following group discussion questions and be ready to openly share what you are learning with other believers. Remember that discipleship is simply speaking God's truth into each other's lives.

1. Be prepared to share at least one impacting truth from your reading focus this past month. What did God show you that changed your thinking?
2. What big truth(s) did you learn by considering the wide range of responses to the gospel message recorded in Acts?
3. An obvious question that is worth asking: How did the gospel spread in the first century? Does it still spread in the same way in the 21st century?
4. Acts is a wonderful record of God faithfully building His church even in the face of opposition and persecution. He uses human instruments to share that message, but He is the One ultimately changing hearts and bringing the increase. Discuss how these two truths work together – 1) our responsibility to witness, and 2) God's sovereignty to bring the increase. What are some possible wrong ways of thinking and acting that result from misunderstanding or misapplying these truths?

5. American Christians tend to look at persecution as something that only happened to first-century Christians or to believers in nations with tyrannical governments. But in reality, the possibility of Bible-believing Christians facing persecution in our own country is a steadily growing threat. What is your initial reaction when you think of facing persecution for sharing your faith? How does the response of the early church challenge and encourage you?

6. To help each other change in a concrete way, share one action step that you are personally asking God to help you take as a result of what you have learned this month.

The Comforter Has Come | Lesson 4

PREPARE

Prayer prepares our hearts to receive and respond to God's truth. Before beginning your study, humbly ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth and to give you spiritual understanding.

Psalm 25:4-5 *Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.*

SEARCH

Prayerfully read through Acts. In your journal, record the answers that you discover to this question: ***What does Acts teach about the Holy Spirit?***

- Many times during His earthly ministry, Christ promised that He would send a valuable gift to His people: the Holy Spirit. We see this promise fulfilled at the very beginning of Acts. But the rest of the book also clearly demonstrates that the Comforter has indeed come! As you read, look for the various functions of the Holy Spirit in the early church. Be alert to words that describe His activity (What does He do?) and/or His character (What is He like?).
- The Holy Spirit is mentioned often in Acts, but when He is mentioned the focus doesn't remain on Him. One of His main functions is to point people's attention to Christ. Look for this pattern as you read. Whenever you see the Spirit, look for Christ nearby.
- Christ made a specific promise to His disciples before His death, "Truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than

these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). Think about the miraculous works that Christ did. Jesus promised that His disciples would do these same kinds of works, and even greater works, because He was sending them “the Helper, the Holy Spirit” (John 14:26). While reading through Acts this coming month, look for the fulfillment to Christ’s promise.

- **Key Words:** _____
- **Key Passages:** 1:1-26, 2:1-41, 10:1-11:18, 19:1-7

APPLY

Think through application of these truths to your everyday life in specific, practical ways. Consider the following questions as you prayerfully review what you learned this past month. Journal your thoughts.

- How does this truth apply to my life?
- Does my life—the way I *think* and the way I *live*—show that I really believe this truth? Remember that “a belief not practiced is not a belief at all.”
- In what ways does my life need to change to better reflect this truth?
- Are there any action steps I need to take?
- Is there any sin I need to confess and forsake?
- How can I be more intentional in obeying God in this area?

RESPOND

Life-changing Bible study will always produce humility and gratitude. These heart attitudes are expressed in worship—through prayer and singing. Take time to respond to God,

praising Him and asking for His help to grow and change in the areas where the Spirit has convicted you. You may find it beneficial to actually write out your response to God in your journal.

SHARE

Thoughtfully consider the following group discussion questions and be ready to openly share what you are learning with other believers. Remember that discipleship is simply speaking God's truth into each other's lives.

1. Be prepared to share at least one impacting truth from your reading focus this past month. What did God show you that changed your thinking?
2. What did Spirit-directed and Spirit-empowered lives look like in Acts? What does a Spirit-directed and Spirit-empowered life look like today?
3. Based on what you learned in Acts, how should a believer relate to the Holy Spirit? How much focus should we give to the Spirit as we cultivate our walk with God? Should we pray to the Spirit?
4. What are some ways in which the Holy Spirit communicated in the book of Acts? Are there any differences in how He communicates today?
5. What errors are commonly taught today about the Holy Spirit? What can you do to guard against this?

6. To help each other change in a concrete way, share one action step that you are personally asking God to help you take as a result of what you have learned this month.

Prayer's Power | Lesson 5

PREPARE

Prayer prepares our hearts to receive and respond to God's truth. Before beginning your study, humbly ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth and to give you spiritual understanding.

Psalm 119:73, 169 *Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments. Let my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word!*

SEARCH

Prayerfully read through Acts. In your journal, record the answers that you discover to this question: ***How did first-century believers pray?***

- Prayer is a significant theme in the book of Acts. Locate all the times that Luke records the believers praying together. As you read, be on the lookout for answers to these questions: Who do you find praying in Acts? Where did they pray? How did they pray? When did they pray? What did they pray about?
- You have probably heard the old maxim, "prayer changes things." How does prayer impact events in the book of Acts? What happens after the disciples pray? What specific answers to prayer do you find in the book?
- Stewart Custer points out in his commentary, *Witness to Christ*, that there is a cycle repeated often in Acts: prayer, power, proclamation, persecution, more prayer. See if you can identify this cycle as you read.
- **Key Words:** _____

- **Key Passages:** 1:12-26, 4:23-33, 6:1-7, 9:36-43, 10:1-48, 12:1-19, 13:1-3, 16:11-40

APPLY

Think through application of these truths to your everyday life in specific, practical ways. Consider the following questions as you prayerfully review what you learned this past month. Journal your thoughts.

- How does this truth apply to my life?
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SHARE

Thoughtfully consider the following group discussion questions and be ready to openly share what you are learning with other believers. Remember that discipleship is simply speaking God’s

truth into each other's lives.

1. Be prepared to share at least one impacting truth from your reading focus this past month. What did God show you that changed your thinking?
2. One of the main practices of the early church was prayer. It was natural for them to talk to Jesus—anytime, anywhere. Do you think American believers follow this same practice? How can you better practice *“less talk, more prayer”* in your own life?
3. The main response of the disciples when facing persecution was prayer. Is this your regular response when trouble comes your way? Remember, action flows from the heart. We do what we believe. If prayer isn't your *“reaction”* in trouble, then what unbelief do you need to address in your life?
4. What was the theme/content of most of the prayers in Acts? Did you notice any particular request that the disciples were begging God to fulfill? How does this match up with the content of your prayers? Does anything need to change concerning the petitions you bring before the Lord?
5. As you saw in Acts, prayer led to power. The Spirit enabled the disciples to proclaim Christ boldly – even in the face of great opposition – but only when they prayed. What work for Christ are you engaged in now

that lacks power because you are attempting it in your own strength?

6. To help each other change in a concrete way, share one action step that you are personally asking God to help you take as a result of what you have learned this month.

Discipleship in Everyday Life (pt. 1) | Lesson 6

PREPARE

Prayer prepares our hearts to receive and respond to God's truth. Before beginning your study, humbly ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth and to give you spiritual understanding.

Psalm 119:124-125 *Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes. I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies!*

SEARCH

Prayerfully read through Acts. In your journal, record the answers that you discover to this question: ***What did discipleship look like in the early church?***

- Discipleship is a word we use a lot in Christian circles. We know it is important, but we have a hard time defining what it is exactly. And it is even harder to translate our knowledge of discipleship into everyday life. Acts gives us clear examples of discipleship – and shows that it is what the Christian life is all about.
- As you read, look for these three categories: ***who, where,*** and ***when.*** Who did the disciples engage? Where did they engage people? When did they engage people? (Look for specific references to time and place.) You may want to use three columns in your journal to record what you learn (see example below). (Please note that we aren't looking for how they engaged people, as that will be the focus of our study next month.)

Who	Where	When
3:2 – the lame man	3:1 – the temple	3:1 – on their way to pray

- **Key Words:** _____
- **Key Passages:** 3:1-16, 5:12-32, 9:10-19, 10:1-33, 13:1-14:28, 16:11-40, 17:16-34, 24:1-27, 25:23-26:1, 28:1-31

APPLY

Think through application of these truths to your everyday life in specific, practical ways. Consider the following questions as you prayerfully review what you learned this past month. Journal your thoughts.

- How does this truth apply to my life?
- Does my life—the way I *think* and the way I *live*—show that I really believe this truth? Remember that “a belief not practiced is not a belief at all.”
- In what ways does my life need to change to better reflect this truth?
- Are there any action steps I need to take?
- Is there any sin I need to confess and forsake?
- How can I be more intentional in obeying God in this area?

RESPOND

Life-changing Bible study will always produce humility and gratitude. These heart attitudes are expressed in worship—through prayer and singing. Take time to respond to God, praising Him and asking for His help to grow and change in the areas where the Spirit has convicted you. You may find it beneficial to actually write out your response to God in your journal.

SHARE

Thoughtfully consider the following group discussion questions and be ready to openly share what you are learning with other believers. Remember that discipleship is simply speaking God's truth into each other's lives.

Be prepared to share at least one impacting truth from your reading focus this past month. How has your thinking about what discipleship should look like changed through this study?

1. Based on what you learned this past month, how do you define discipleship?
2. Acts shows us that discipleship isn't something reserved only for super-spiritual Christians. It is for all believers. In fact, the Bible assumes that believers are involved in discipleship as a normal "way of life." We don't see the believers in the early church out looking for a "mentor" or the first pastors creating programs to make sure that discipleship happened. So why was discipleship so successful in the early church?
3. Do you think the American church still makes discipleship "a way of life" like it was in the early church? What do you think we are missing?
4. What examples do you see of the gospel crossing all barriers of culture, religion, and people groups in the book of Acts? Would you say that the early church demonstrated prejudice of any kind? Is there any people

group you have a hard time loving or desiring to share the good news of the gospel with?

5. In your current stage of life, what venues do you have for sharing the gospel? Where and when can you take advantage of everyday opportunities for advancing God's kingdom?

6. What person or people has God placed in your life that He wants you to invest in for the sake of the gospel? What will you plan to do in the coming week to intentionally invest in at least one of these individuals' lives?

Discipleship in Everyday Life (pt. 2) | Lesson 7

PREPARE

Prayer prepares our hearts to receive and respond to God's truth. Before beginning your study, humbly ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth and to give you spiritual understanding.

Psalms 119:137-138, 140, 144 *Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules. You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness. Your promise is well tried and your servant loves it. Your testimonies are righteous forever; give me understanding that I may live.*

SEARCH

Prayerfully read through Acts. In your journal, record the answers that you discover to this question: ***How did early believers go about practicing discipleship?***

Last month we considered when, where, and with whom the gospel was shared by the disciples. This month in our reading through Acts we will be considering the ***how*** and ***why*** of discipleship.

- ***How*** did the disciples advance God's kingdom in everyday life? Methods matter to God. What methods did the disciples use to share the gospel? What was Paul's normal mode of operation – how did he go about winning people to Christ and planting churches? Do you find any methods rejected by the disciples? What was their response to people who used wrong methods?
- ***Why*** did the disciples engage people with the gospel? Motives matter to God. What motivated the disciples to engage people with the gospel? Look for words/phrases that communicate their heart behind the mission. Do

you think the early disciples obeyed Acts 1:8 out of duty, or is there something more? Why did they give their lives to this mission? Also look for what motives were rejected by the disciples. How did they respond to people who had ungodly motives for sharing or embracing the gospel?

- Look for any invitations given (usually at the end of a gospel message), calling for a response to what the listener has heard.
- The disciples always seem to be talking about Jesus. To see just how often, mark every mention of the name of Jesus as you read through Acts.
- **Key Words:** _____
- **Key Passages:** 3:11-4:33, 8:4-40, 9:20-22, 11:19-26, 13:1-14:28, 26:1-23

APPLY

Think through application of these truths to your everyday life in specific, practical ways. Consider the following questions as you prayerfully review what you learned this past month. Journal your thoughts.

- How does this truth apply to my life?
- Does my life—the way I *think* and the way I *live*—show that I really believe this truth? Remember that “a belief not practiced is not a belief at all.”
- In what ways does my life need to change to better reflect this truth?
- Are there any action steps I need to take?
- Is there any sin I need to confess and forsake?

- How can I be more intentional in obeying God in this area?

RESPOND

Life-changing Bible study will always produce humility and gratitude. These heart attitudes are expressed in worship—through prayer and singing. Take time to respond to God, praising Him and asking for His help to grow and change in the areas where the Spirit has convicted you. You may find it beneficial to actually write out your response to God in your journal.

SHARE

Thoughtfully consider the following group discussion questions and be ready to openly share what you are learning with other believers. Remember that discipleship is simply speaking God's truth into each other's lives.

1. Be prepared to share at least one impacting truth from your reading focus this past month. What did God show you that changed your thinking?
2. How would you describe the disciples' main method of engaging people for Christ?
3. We find in Acts that methods really do matter to God. Write down a few of the popular methods of evangelism used in evangelical churches today. For example, some modern-day Christians cite Paul's use of Athenian poetry in his witness to Christ on Mars Hill to justify fully embracing culture in order to more effectively reach people for Christ. In other words, we must be like them to win them. Is this biblical? Why or why not? With so

many ideas out there, how can we discern if a modern method of evangelism or discipleship is pleasing to the Lord?

4. Do you ever feel unqualified to effectively share the gospel with others? Of all the apostles, Paul is the only one who had “advanced theological training.” Most of the people God used to “turn the world upside down” were ordinary tradesmen... “common men” as the Jewish religious leaders called them (Acts 4:13). What qualified and enabled these normal people for the work of advancing God’s kingdom? What do you need in order to be successful in carrying out God’s mission?
5. What did you learn about proper motivation for evangelism and discipleship? If you have had wrong motives in the past, how can you cultivate godly motives?
6. Discuss the prominence the disciples gave to speaking about Christ to others. It was natural for them to talk about Christ. They did it all the time. How can you make Jesus a more natural part of your conversation and avoid talking about Him in a way that seems forced?
7. To help each other change in a concrete way, share one action step that you are personally asking God to help you take as a result of what you have learned this month.

The Danger of Prosperity | Lesson 8

PREPARE

Prayer prepares our hearts to receive and respond to God's truth. Before beginning your study, humbly ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth and to give you spiritual understanding.

Psalm 86:8, 10-11 *There is none like you among the gods, O LORD, nor are there any works like yours. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.*

SEARCH

Prayerfully read through Acts. In your journal, record the answers that you discover to this question: ***What are the dangers of prosperity?***

- This is a surprising theme in Acts, something we wouldn't normally look for as we read through Luke's account of the early church. But even in the first century, prosperity and materialism were threatening to harm God's people. Perhaps Luke was so passionate about this topic because he had served alongside Demas and saw firsthand just how dangerous loving the things of this world could be (Col. 4:14, 2 Tim. 4:10, Phm. 1:24). This theme is worth considering in our day of unparalleled prosperity.
- Luke also refers to this subject numerous times in his Gospel. Consider what he says about the danger of riches in Luke 6:20–26; 8:14; 12:13–21; 16:10–13, 19–31; 18:18–30; 21:3–4.
- **Key Words:** _____

- **Key Passages:** 4:32-5:11, 8:9-24, 19:18-41, 20:17-35, 24:24-27

APPLY

Think through application of these truths to your everyday life in specific, practical ways. Consider the following questions as you prayerfully review what you learned this past month. Journal your thoughts.

- How does this truth apply to my life?
- Does my life—the way I *think* and the way I *live*—show that I really believe this truth? Remember that “a belief not practiced is not a belief at all.”
- In what ways does my life need to change to better reflect this truth?
- Are there any action steps I need to take?
- Is there any sin I need to confess and forsake?
- How can I be more intentional in obeying God in this area?

RESPOND

Life-changing Bible study will always produce humility and gratitude. These heart attitudes are expressed in worship—through prayer and singing. Take time to respond to God, praising Him and asking for His help to grow and change in the areas where the Spirit has convicted you. You may find it beneficial to actually write out your response to God in your journal.

SHARE

Thoughtfully consider the following group discussion questions and be ready to openly share what you are learning with other believers. Remember that discipleship is simply speaking God’s

truth into each other's lives.

1. In both Acts and Luke we see unbelievers (as well as believers) being challenged about the harmful effects of riches. In many cases, wealth hinders them from coming to Christ in faith for salvation. Why do you think that is true?
2. It is certainly not wrong to have money or be wealthy. These are gracious gifts from God. But what are the dangers of prosperity for a believer? How can wealth be a hindrance for Christians? What are some things that "having a lot of stuff" might cause us to miss in our Christian experience?
3. According to what you found in Acts, how should believers relate to money and material things?
4. The early church was very generous with their resources. They used what God had given them to minister to the needs of others – not only in their local congregations but to believers in other cities as well (Acts 2:44-45, 4:34-35, 11:29). Why do you think these believers were so quick to give to the needs of others? When comparing yourself with these believers, how generous are you? Does anything need to change about how you view and use your possessions?
5. Read Philippians 4:11-13. When reading this passage we tend to focus on learning to be content when we are

“brought low” or are “facing hunger and need.” But Paul says he has also had to learn “the secret of facing plenty” and “abundance.” Why do you think Paul tells us we must learn to be content when we “abound”? (Remember that the opposite of contentment is covetousness.) What is the secret of having plenty and even abounding in God’s good physical gifts while still being godly?

6. Even in the secular world, minimalism has become a popular trend. As one author defines it, *“Minimalism is a tool used to rid yourself of life’s excess in favor of focusing on what’s important so you can find happiness, fulfillment, and freedom.”* How do you think Jesus views materialism? Is the right response to American prosperity for believers to get rid of most of their possessions in order to help people in poverty? If not, what can we do to guard against the dangers of our prosperous culture?
7. If you have children, or work with children, how can you help counter the materialistic mindset that is so pervasive in our culture? Write down three specific action steps you can take to help a young person “think Bible” and “live Bible” in this area.
8. To help each other change in a concrete way, share one action step that you are personally asking God to help you take as a result of what you have learned this month.

Study Review | Lesson 9

The Bible is full of admonitions to remember:

1 Chronicles 16:12 – ***Remember** the wondrous works that He has done, His miracles and the judgments He uttered.*

Isaiah 46:9 – ***Remember** the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.*

Luke 24:6 – *He is not here, but has risen. **Remember** how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.*

John 15:20 – ***Remember** the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*

John 16:4 – *But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may **remember** that I told them to you.*

Acts 20:35 – *...**remember** the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’*

Ephesians 2:11-13 – *Therefore **remember** that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—**remember** that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

2 Timothy 2:8 – ***Remember** Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.*

Jude 17 – *But you must **remember**, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Why so many admonitions to remember? God knows how prone we are to forget His truth – and that has nothing to do with age! Take time to **remember** what the Lord taught you through His Word over the past eight months. Review your journal, especially the sections where you wrote out your personal application and your responses to God. As you look back over each lesson, write down 1) at least one main truth that impacted your thinking from that lesson, and 2) one concrete way that you want to change because of that truth.

Do you have a plan, by God's grace, to live out the truths that He has shown you? Do you need to utilize the body of Christ to support you as you grow in these areas? Sharing transparently with your group or another person will open the door for accountability.

Lesson 1: The Power of the Resurrection

Main truth(s) that impacted my thinking:

How I want to change, by God's grace:

Lesson 2: What is the Gospel?

Main truth(s) that impacted my thinking:

How I want to change, by God's grace:

Lesson 3: The Triumph of the Gospel

Main truth(s) that impacted my thinking:

How I want to change, by God's grace:

Lesson 4: The Comforter Has Come

Main truth(s) that impacted my thinking:

How I want to change, by God's grace:

Lesson 5: Prayer's Power

Main truth(s) that impacted my thinking:

How I want to change, by God's grace:

Lesson 6: Discipleship in Everyday Life (pt.1)

Main truth(s) that impacted my thinking:

How I want to change, by God's grace:

Lesson 7: Discipleship in Everyday Life (pt.2)

Main truth(s) that impacted my thinking:

How I want to change, by God's grace:

Lesson 8: The Danger of Riches

Main truth(s) that impacted my thinking:

How I want to change, by God’s grace:

We are the Church / Lesson 10

As with any book of the Bible, even after eight months of study there are always more spiritual treasures to uncover. This lesson is provided for those who would like to do some further exploration in Acts. Of course, there are many other themes that could be considered; an introduction to the book of Acts in a good study Bible can help you find other possible themes you may want to trace out. You may also want to consider setting this study aside for a time and returning to it in a few years. You'll be surprised how fresh and rich the book of Acts will be to your heart all over again!

PREPARE

Prayer prepares our hearts to receive and respond to God's truth. Before beginning your study, humbly ask the Lord to open your eyes to His truth and to give you spiritual understanding.

Psalms 143:10a *Teach me to do your will, for you are my God!*

SEARCH

Prayerfully read through Acts. In your journal, record the answers that you discover to this question: ***What are the main characteristics of the early church?***

- In earlier lessons we focused on the relationship of the church to unbelievers as they sought to carry out Christ's mission to take the gospel to the world. This month our focus is more on the church itself and their relationships within the body. How did they interact with fellow believers? What did they do together? What attitudes and activities does Luke highlight?
- Look for the ways various members of the body cared for each other (i.e., Barnabas, Tabitha, the church in

Antioch, etc.).

- Many accusations are brought against believers throughout the book of Acts. Identify instances where even unbelievers defend the personal integrity of the disciples.
- **Key Words:** _____
- **Key Passages:** 1:12-14; 2:42-47; 4:23-37; 5:12-16; 6:1-7; 9:10-31, 36-43; 11:19-26; 12:25-13:3; 15:22-35; 18:12-15

APPLY

Think through application of these truths to your everyday life in specific, practical ways. Consider the following questions as you prayerfully review what you learned this past month. Journal your thoughts.

- How does this truth apply to my life?
- Does my life—the way I *think* and the way I *live*—show that I really believe this truth? Remember that “a belief not practiced is not a belief at all.”
- In what ways does my life need to change to better reflect this truth?
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RESPOND

Life-changing Bible study will always produce humility and gratitude. These heart attitudes are expressed in worship—through prayer and singing. Take time to respond to God, praising Him and asking for His help to grow and change in

the areas where the Spirit has convicted you. You may find it beneficial to actually write out your response to God in your journal.

SHARE

Thoughtfully consider the following questions. Although you are no longer formally meeting with your group, you may want to find another believer with whom you can share what you are learning. Remember that discipleship is simply speaking God's truth into each other's lives.

1. Record one impacting truth from your reading focus this past month. What did God show you that changed your thinking?
2. Why is personal integrity such an important factor in being a faithful witness for Christ?
3. Acts records a great variety of ways that believers in the early church cared for one another – both physically and spiritually. List several ways the body of Christ has cared for you this past year.
4. When considering the ways individuals served other believers – like the deacons caring for the needs of the widows or Barnabas taking Saul under his wing or Tabitha caring for the physical needs of others – is there a spiritual gift that God has given you that you need to start using to minister to the body of Christ at Bethany? How will you take an active part in caring for the body of Christ?

5. "Body life" goes both ways. We must serve, but we also must allow others to serve us. Are there some needs you have that God wants to use your church body to help meet? Do you make it easy or difficult for people to serve you? Do you allow individuals in your church family to speak truth into your life? Are you open and transparent about your needs with others or are you trying to pridefully bear your burdens on your own?

6. Luke often describes the early church as a group of believers who were in "one accord" (1:14, 2:1, 2:46, 4:24, 5:12, 8:6, 15:25). One accord, or *homothymadon* in Greek, is a compound word derived from two familiar words: the same + passion. It contains the idea of unanimous agreement; having the same mind about something; being totally unified. Interestingly, the same Greek word is used a number of times to describe groups of people who were unified in rejecting the gospel (7:57, 18:12, 19:29). In Acts 1:14, Luke makes the strong assertion that the believers in the early church were *all* in unity with one another. That is amazing! Only the gospel could bring such unity. Consider your relationships within your local body of believers. Can you affirm with Luke that you are in complete unity with other believers? Do you share a unanimous passion for the advance of the gospel? Is there anyone you would have a hard time praying with or working alongside? What steps do you personally need to take so that your life better reflects this unified group of believers?

