



WEEKLY STUDY

The Book of Acts - Week One

This week we have embarked on the next stage of the Jesus-story with Luke as our guide. Luke wrote both the Gospel According to Luke and The Acts of the Apostles (the Book of Acts). You'll notice that he bridged the two volumes of his writings with the ascension of Jesus. Next week we'll actually get to the account of his last words to his disciples before he was taken up in a cloud(!). But for this week, we'll get ourselves acquainted with the scope of Acts and its connection to who we are as the church today.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Please join in prayer for those impacted by the most recent storms in our region. May God walk closely with those who have lost loved ones and livelihoods.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 1.1-3 (NIV)

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.³ After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

- When describing his first book (the Book of Luke), Luke said that it was “about all that Jesus **began** to do and to teach”. This seems to imply that book two (Acts) is about the **continuation** of Jesus’ work and teaching through his followers. It is possible to read these writings from Luke as a historical document. But it is much more to the point to see ourselves as a part of the continuation. This is our story! Can you imagine being present with the early disciples when Jesus was engaging in his last face to face conversations with them? Would you ask any questions of Jesus?
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- **Prayer Prompt: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.” (Micah 4.2)**
- *God, would you allow me to be swept up in your story today? I love the gift of your Word to us that gives us life and hope and fills us with wonder. Amen.*

TUESDAY: LUKE 1.1-4 (NIV)

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

- Both Luke and Acts are addressed to this name Theophilus, a name which means Lover of God. For centuries, people have wondered who this person was, or if in fact it was a single person at all. It could be that as you read it, you are meant to put on this label, “lover of God”. Can you imagine writing a short book that would be read for thousands of years? I wonder if Luke had any idea that you and I would be so moved and changed by his words. Luke knew that we would need the certainty that comes from faith in Jesus. Record your gratitude for any certainty that you have been given, and ask for mercy in the places where you have doubts.
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- **Prayer Prompt: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God¹ may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3.16-17)**
- *Almighty God, I thank you for the many records and reports of your redeeming work through Jesus. May those reports continue in my life today. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: LUKE 24.49 (ESV)

“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

- Jesus had just shared this promise with his disciples and we read it again this week in Acts. In the promise is the hope that once Jesus is no longer walking around on earth, his followers will have power beyond anything they had imagined. I’m guessing they didn’t have in mind what it would look like or feel like (how could they have known?), but they knew it would be worth waiting for. Is there a sense that you are waiting to be clothed with power from on high in any area of your life?

- **Prayer Prompt: Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD. (Psalm 27.14)**
- *Almighty God, you have sent the Holy Spirit into this world, into the church and into my life. Guide me to lean into that power and to enjoy your presence. Amen.*

THURSDAY: JOHN 14.16-18 (NIV)

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

- As difficult as it would have been for the disciples to see Jesus depart after his resurrection, this promise surely gave them hope. Few promises last forever. Few gifts survive beyond a single season. But the gift of the Holy Spirit lasts forever. The Spirit of truth that Jesus promised is still with us today. Its presence is how we know we are not alone. We are not left here to fend for ourselves. These words often bring comfort in times of grief and loneliness. When have you felt that you were all alone? When have you sensed the presence of the Advocate?

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- **Prayer Prompt: In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. (Romans 8.26)**
 - *God, thank you for the Holy Spirit. I lean on your Spirit when words are hard to come by. He translates the longing and confusion that I often feel into language only you can understand! Amen .*

FRIDAY: REVELATION 21.3 (NIV)

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

- Just when it seemed like the most obvious sign of God’s presence on earth was leaving, we received the promise of an even more consistent presence (one that couldn’t be arrested and put to death) in the Holy Spirit. God’s dwelling place truly is among the people. Do you know how groundbreaking this is? No other religion would dare perceive a god mingling with its creation. And our God desires to know us and be known by us...forever. And yet we long for the return of His Son, the obvious sign of God’s presence. Revelation gives words to that longing and an image of its fulfillment. How does the Holy Spirit help you in waiting for Jesus to come and set all things right in the world?
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- **Prayer Prompt: He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” (Revelation 21.5)**
- *Lord God, with those around the throne we say come Lord Jesus! Come and make everything new! Amen.*

SATURDAY: MATTHEW 3.11 (NIV)

“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

- As Luke moves us towards the account of the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, we hear the echoes of John the Baptist declaring that Jesus would pour out the Holy Spirit on the disciples as he formed his church. To John’s followers the promise of a baptism of fire might have sounded strange and even a little threatening. But the fire that was to come at Pentecost ushered in great gifts that catapulted the movement forward...to this very day. Have you experienced the baptism of water and the Holy Spirit? If so, how do you carry that with you? What about a baptism of fire? What might that look like in your life?
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- **Prayer Prompt: So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3.27)**
 - *God, your invitation to the waters of baptism draws me into a Spirit-filled life. May I live life empowered by your spirit for Kingdom work. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Below you'll see how commentator William Baker outlines the entire book of Acts. Look through the structure and consider the following questions together.

- What do you notice about the three sections of the outline? How are they connected to Jesus' instructions to the disciples?
- Are there any other themes that arise from the headings of each smaller section?
- Have you studied Acts before? What is your experience with the book of Acts?

- I. The Witness to Christ in and around Jerusalem (1:1–7:60)
 - A. Introduction and Instructions (1:1–8)
 - B. The Ascension (1:9–11)
 - C. The Selection of Judas's Replacement (1:12–26)
 - D. Pentecost: Birth of the Church (2:1–47)
 - E. First Encounter of the Church with the Religious Leaders (3:1–4:35)
 - F. Ananias and Sapphira: A Case of Discipline (4:36–5:16)
 - G. Second Encounter of the Church with the Religious Leaders (5:17–42)
 - H. The Seven Servants: An Example of Problem-Solving (6:1–7)
 - I. Stephen: The First Clash with Judaism (6:8–7:60)
- II. The Witness to Christ in Judea and Samaria (8:1–12:25)
 - A. Saul the Persecutor and Philip the Evangelist (8:1–40)
 - B. The Conversion of Saul (9:1–31)
 - C. Peter's Ministry in Judea (9:32–11:18)
 - D. The Antioch Church: Barnabas's Ministry (11:19–30)
 - E. Peter's Miraculous Deliverance (12:1–25)
- III. The Witness to Christ to the Ends of the Earth (13:1–28:31)
 - A. Paul's First Missionary Journey (13:1–14:28)
 - B. The Jerusalem Council: An Example of Theological Peace-Making (15:1–35)
 - C. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (15:36–18:22)
 - D. Paul's Third Missionary Journey (18:23–21:14)
 - E. Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem and Incarceration at Caesarea (21:15–26:32)
 - F. Paul's Voyage to Rome (27:1–28:10)
 - G. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:11–31)

William H. Baker, "Acts," in Evangelical Commentary on the Bible, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 885.