



WEEKLY STUDY

The Book of Acts - Week Three

We continued in the first chapter of Acts this week as the disciples were waiting for the Holy Spirit and preparing their band as best they could for the unknown events ahead. As you read this week, notice that the disciples were not hiding, they were waiting. They were not cowering or defeated, but motivated and vigilant. If you find yourself waiting on the next big move from God, consider how you are waiting...how would the story of your season of waiting be told by others?

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:

- More than 450 children will learn about the love of Jesus at Vacation Bible School this week! Pray that seeds are planted for a life of following him with boldness and confidence. Lift up the dozens and dozens of volunteers who will lead them!

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 1.12-13a (NIV)

Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.¹³ When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying.

- Most people think this walk was only about 1 kilometer (¾ of a mile) which was the distance allowed for travel on the Sabbath. Whether or not this upstairs room was the same one where Jesus shared his last supper with them, what happened in this room changed the world. Over the course of this week we will see how the disciple's prayer and faithful action in this room set the stage for the movement of the Holy Spirit. Is there a room or a place (perhaps a spot in nature) that holds this kind of significance in your faith story?

- **Prayer Prompt:** "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?' ²² tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' ²³ For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over." (Joshua 4.21-23)
- *God, Thank you for the places that remind me of your faithfulness. May I plant rocks of remembrance for generations to come. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 1.13b-14 (NIV)

Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

- There are a few interesting things about this list of disciples. It is the same as the list of disciples given in Luke, except it excludes Judas (the one who betrayed Jesus), and it shifts the order of the two sets of brothers. Peter and Andrew, James and John were two sets of brothers but the order is shuffled here. Perhaps this signifies the new kind of brotherhood they were experiencing as their collective future calling was taking shape. But like all truly great leaders of the church, it is less about their names and all about what they did. Here, they joined constantly in prayer. They were careful to avoid getting ahead of Jesus' instructions. Have you ever had to put your plans on hold in order to pray for God's way?

- **Prayer Prompt:** This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. (1 John 5.14)
- *Lord hear my prayer and lead me into your good will and purpose today. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 1.15-19 (NIV)

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)¹⁶ and said, “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.¹⁷ He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

¹⁸ (With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.¹⁹ Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

- It’s amazing how this movement sparked by Jesus was already growing even before Pentecost. The number of 120 followers was important because by Jewish law, 120 were required for the start of a new community. Peter was careful to note the scriptural basis for the actions they must take in the upper room. As he put Judas’ actions in the context of the larger Biblical story, surely Peter was recalling the times in which Jesus opened up the Scripture and revealed how it all was pointing to the days in which they were living. It seems that Peter had a new fervor for understanding and interpreting the Word of God... something that was setting the stage for the first Christian sermon that he would preach just days later. Do you love the Word of God? Have you experienced moments of clarity and revelation when studying the Bible?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Oh, how I love your law!
I meditate on it all day long.**
⁹⁸ **Your commands are always with me
and make me wiser than my enemies. (Psalm 119.97-98)**
- *Oh God, your Word has become for me a lifeline and a source of inspiration. May it serve as a lens for me to see your activity in the world today. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 1.20 (NIV)

“For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:

*“‘May his place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in it,’*

and,

“‘May another take his place of leadership.’

- Peter quoted from Psalm 69.25 to show David's prayer-response to one who would come up against God's king. The deserted place echoes the name given to the field where Judas is said to have died (Field of Blood). And Peter referenced Psalm 109 as a way of discerning what the disciples must do next...they needed to replace Judas. We have seen Peter speak boldly before, but this leadership moment seems different. He seemed to be in tune with all that Jesus had prepared them for. When have you seen a spiritual leader rise to the occasion and speak in a way that seemed to be beyond themselves?
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- **Prayer Prompt: The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: “This is what the LORD says: (Jeremiah 2.1-2)**
- *God, if you call me to serve as your mouthpiece, give me words and boldness that are beyond my own ability and training. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 1.21-22 (NIV)

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²²beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

- The disciple who would replace Judas as an apostle needed to be a witness to the resurrection of Jesus, and someone who had been with them throughout Jesus' earthly ministry. It was a luxury that such people existed. They lived in the moment of Jesus, the Son of God walking around on the earth. We wouldn't qualify based on this criteria, and yet we are able to give witness to the resurrected Jesus. Where and when have you seen evidence that Jesus defeated death through the empty tomb?
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- **Prayer Prompt: In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5.16)**
- *Lord God, although I wasn't on earth to see the physical resurrection of Jesus, will you allow my life to serve as a witness to the truth of the biggest event in history? Amen.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 1.22-26 (NIV)

So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.²⁴ Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.”²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

- The method of choosing the replacement for Judas might seem strange and even “unspiritual”. There was biblical precedence for this practice that dates back to the Old Testament. There was a belief that (when decisions were not moral in nature) God’s will could be discerned through methods that otherwise look like chance. This seems to be the last time lots were cast for discernment in the New Testament. The key was that they set the choice before God. “Show us God which of these two you have chosen” As disciples, we rely on the Spirit of God, and discernment through community when it comes to making decisions. How does your community help you discern the will of God and the direction of the Holy Spirit?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12.2)**
- *God, surround me with others who seek your will. Give me confidence to be led and give me your grace to correct my path. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob shared that in the waiting of the early church and in our own waiting together we are:

1. purposeful (walked back to the place where they were staying, selected a replacement for Judas)
 2. prayerful (prayed constantly)
 3. Unified (by the resurrection of Jesus)
- How has this been true for your group?
 - When are you tempted to be more frantic in your waiting?
 - How have you as a group been persevering in your prayer?