



WEEKLY STUDY

The Book of Acts - Week Eight

This week we discovered the first time that followers of Jesus were called Christians. As we study and pray this week, we will consider whether or not those who witness our lives would say the same about us. Would we be labeled as one whose life is defined by the Jesus that we follow?

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:

- Pray for Christians around the world for whom this label is not a compliment but an accusation.
Pray for those who suffer daily for their faith in Jesus.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 11.22-26 (NIV)

News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴ He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

- The label of “Christian” used to describe disciples of Jesus was a name given by non-disciples. The people around the disciples saw that they were re-presenting Jesus (or at least trying to) with the way they lived. If you happen to be paying attention to the people near you in the check-out line or at a local sporting event, what are the signs that tell you about what or who they follow? Clothing? How they talk? How they treat their spouse or children? How they speak to the clerk? You might wonder what those who came up with the label of “Christian” saw in the disciples. Would others say the same about you?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you (2 Corinthians 13.5)**
- *God, I want others to see Jesus when they look at me. Highlight the parts of me that best reflect him and remove anything that does not. Amen.*

TUESDAY: PSALM 100 (NIV)

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

² *Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.*

³ *Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

⁴ *Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

⁵ *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

- “Who do you belong to?” It’s a question we’d ask a young child that seems to have wandered off on his own. It is also the realization that many parents come to when they realize they are not as much in control of their children as they want to believe. “Oh, you belong to God.” We are God’s. He has made us. We are his people. How is this reality reflected in the way you live your life?
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- **Prayer Prompt:** if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. (Romans 8.10-11)
 - *God, I belong to you. If I get lost, I want to be returned to you, my loving Father. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ISAIAH 43.1-3 (NIV)

But now, this is what the Lord says—

he who created you, Jacob,

he who formed you, Israel:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

²*When you pass through the waters,*

I will be with you;

and when you pass through the rivers,

they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire,

you will not be burned;

the flames will not set you ablaze.

³*For I am the Lord your God,*

the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

- When we have one of our many conversations about baptism at Providence, we often talk about Jesus’ baptism by John. We read about God, the Father speaking over Jesus and saying, “This is my Son, whom I love, and in whom I’m well pleased.” That same claim is made over us in the waters of baptism. God claims you! God knows you and says that you belong to Him. What does this promise mean to you?
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- **Prayer Prompt:** I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2.20)
- *God, What a gift it is to be known and loved by you. Remind me when I forget that you have made me to be a place where your Son can live and be known to the world. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ROMANS 14.8-9, (NIV)

If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. ⁹ For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

- We don't really like to think about life and death. The fact that this earthly life is finite can be scary, and a truth we'd rather avoid. But this claim from Paul can help us to see the larger picture. Whether we live or die, we belong to God. We will always belong to God, in this life and in the next. How does this change in perspective impact the way you live your daily life?
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- **Prayer Prompt: To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1.27)**
- *God, You are Lord over my whole life. You are Lord over my eternal life. Give me boldness to live for you today. Amen.*

FRIDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 3.21-23 (NIV)

So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

- A friend of mine was once recognized as a Christian. A random man in a bookstore just saw it on him. He walked up to him and said, I can tell that you are a Christian. Sometimes our identity just comes to the surface like a person in our parent's home town spotting familial resemblance. How are people able to know that "you are of Christ"?
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- **Prayer Prompt: I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you (Galatians 4.19)**
- *God, you know me better than anyone else ever could. You know my allegiances and my tendencies, you know my heart. I give my heart to you. Mold me more and more into the image of Jesus. Amen.*

SATURDAY: JOHN 13-34-35 (NIV)

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”³⁵
By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

- Has the command to love one another become like background noise in your world? Sometimes we hear a simple teaching so often that we assume we are living it out. It's not always easy to love one another well, but it is the good work Christ has called us to. Is there anyone you find it especially challenging to love? In the space below ask God to show you how to love even your enemies.

- **Prayer Prompt: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6.27-28)**
- *Lord God, Would you show me the way to love my enemies? Move in my heart today that I might point to Jesus with my life. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Make a list of all of the labels you “wear”. How are you known in your home, community, workplace?
- What are the things you would like to be known for? How do you wear the name “Christian”?
- Take several minutes to share the ways you see Jesus in one another.